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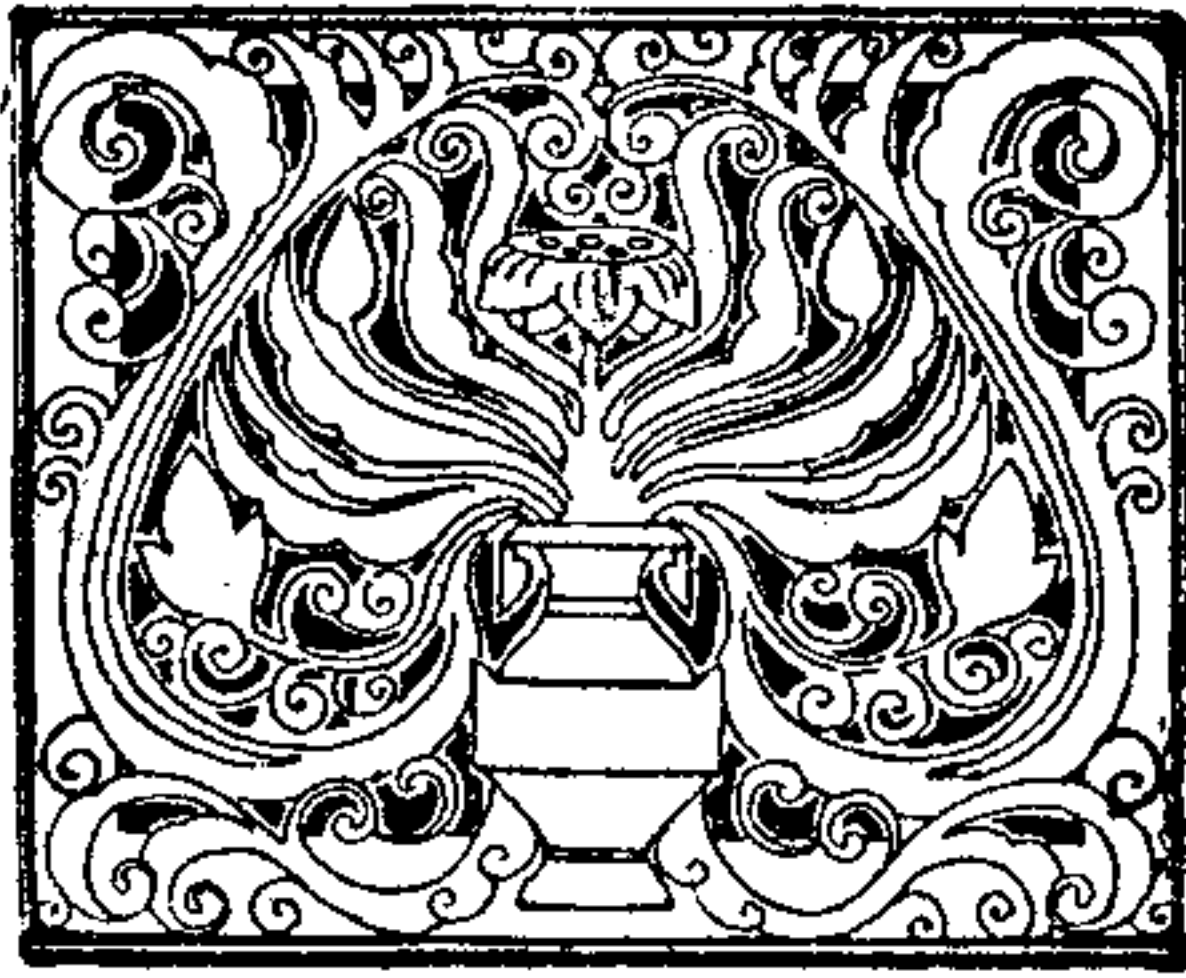
# **Prabuddha Bharata**

*OR*

**AWAKENED INDIA**



**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS**



# Prabuddha Bharata

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*Reflections of Mounts Shwetwana, Thailu,  
Sudarsan in a lake in Tapovan ground, Central  
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Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.

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# Prabuddha Bharata

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No. III

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

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'Do you know how many Sadhus, the world-renouncing Sannyasins and Vairagis, used to come here formerly? Since the construction of railways, they do not come this way. But, before that, all holy men used to come by the road along the side of the Ganga to bathe in the confluence of the Ganga and the sea and pay their obeisance to Sri Jagannath at Puri. All of them invariably came and rested for a couple of days at Rasmani's garden. Some of them, again, stayed much longer. Do you know why? Sadhus do not stay at a place where Bhiksha<sup>1</sup> and secluded places for answering nature's calls are not easily available. They maintain their bodies by Bhiksha only. That is why they fix their seats where Bhiksha is easily available....

'It was convenient to have Bhiksha at Rasmani's garden and there was no scarcity of water by the grace of the mother Ganga. Again, there were good secluded places to their liking in the neighbourhood. Sadhus therefore used to stay here in those days. Again, word travelled from mouth to mouth—one Sadhu spoke of the place to another and, meeting a third coming in this direction, the second told him of it—and Rasmani's garden became well known to the Sadhus as a good place of rest for them on the way to Ganga-sagar and Puri.'

•

'At one time a desire arose in my mind that I should supply the aspirants of all communities with all the necessities of Sadhana [spiritual practice]. They would get all those things, become free from anxiety and practise Sadhana for the realization of God; and I would see it and be happy. I consulted Mathur about it. He said: "Where is the difficulty, father? I'll arrange everything just now. Give whatever you like to anyone." Over and above the already existing arrangement about supplying of uncooked rice, pulses, flour, etc., to each Sadhu, according to his liking, from the store of

<sup>1</sup> Sannyasins beg food from door to door, as they go. But theirs is Adainya-Bhiksha, i.e., begging minus the attendant humiliation. With the Lord's name on their lips (Narayana Hari), they stand for a reasonable time at the door and then without the least pain or pleasure, they move on.

the temple, Mathur made provision for water-pots, Kamandalus,<sup>2</sup> blankets, seats and even intoxicants, such as hemp and hemp-leaves for those who would take them, and wine etc., for the Tantric worshippers. Many Tantric aspirants used to come at that time and hold Chakras, the holy circles. I used to supply them with peeled ginger and onion, parched rice and pulses which were necessary for their Sadhanas, and look on while they worshipped the Divine Mother with these and called on Her. Again, on many occasions they took me to their circle and placed me at the head of it. They requested me to take consecrated wine, but desisted from making such requests when they came to know that I felt God-intoxicated at the very mention of wine and, therefore, could not take it. As one who sat with them had to take consecrated wine, I put a mark of it on my forehead, smelt it, or, at most, sprinkled it with my fingers into my mouth and poured it into their drinking cups. As soon as they drank it, some applied their minds, I found, to the thought of the Goddess, became absorbed in counting beads or meditation on Her, while others, far from calling on the Divine Mother, greedily drank too much and at last became drunk. One day they behaved too improperly, whereupon I stopped giving them wine, etc., any more. But I always saw Rajkumar<sup>3</sup> sit for Japa and abstain from applying his mind to anything else as soon as he took it. But afterwards he had, it seemed, some inclination for name and fame. It was quite natural, for he had his wife and children, and on account of wants at home he had to pay a little attention to the acquisition of money. In any case, he used to take wine only because it was helpful to his Sadhana. He, I saw, never took it greedily or behaved improperly.'

\*

'The Divine Mother would put me in such a state that sometimes my mind would come down from the Nitya [absolute] to the Lila [relative], and sometimes go up from the Lila to the Nitya.

'Sometimes, when the mind descended to the Lila, I would meditate day and night on Sita and Rama. At those times I would constantly behold the forms of Sita and Rama. Ramlala<sup>4</sup> was my constant companion. Sometimes I would bathe Him and sometimes feed Him.

'Again, I used to be absorbed in the ideal of Radha and Krishna and would constantly see their forms. Or again, I would be absorbed in Gauranga. He is the harmonization of two ideals: the Purusha and Prakriti. At such times I would always see the form of Gauranga.'

---

<sup>2</sup> Water-pot (or pitcher) specially used by ascetics—made of gourd-shell.

<sup>3</sup> i.e., Achalananda—a well-known contemporary Tantrik devotee and teacher.

<sup>4</sup> A metal image of the Boy Rama, given to Sri Ramakrishna during his sadhana period by a Vaishnava saint.

---

## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*What are these ideas of religion and God and searching for the hereafter? Why does man look for a God? Why does man, in every nation, in every state of society, want a perfect ideal somewhere, either in man, in God, or elsewhere? Because that idea is within you. It was your own heart beating and you did not know; you were mistaking it for something external. It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him. After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. Not to become pure, you are pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already. Nature is like that screen which is hiding the reality beyond. Every good thought that you think or act upon is simply tearing the veil, as it were; and the purity, the Infinity, the God behind, manifests Itself more and more.*

*Vivekananda*

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE UPANISADS

EDITORIAL

### EMBODIMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF THE UPANISHADS

Of the many religious renaissance movements witnessed by history, one of the mightiest began in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In its power and sweep it very well bids to rival the renaissance ushered in by the Buddha. The originator of this renaissance is Sri Ramakrishna, who in his short span of fifty years re-lived the religious life of all humanity, particularly that of the Hindu people. Vedānta philosophy, based on the spiritual truths embodied in the Upaniṣads, not only forms the basis of Hinduism, with its numerous sects and denominations, but also contains the core-principles of all other religions. Through his unparalleled spiritual struggles and realizations, Sri Ramakrishna became a living representation of the spirit of the Upaniṣads. Not that he had studied these texts or was instructed in them with their various Sanskrit commentaries, in the traditional way. He had little to do with book learning and panditry. Just as the seers and sages of the Upaniṣads had realized those spiritual principles and truths, Sri Ramakrishna experienced them within himself through his self-discipline, concentration, purity, and the resulting superconsciousness. Vedāntic scholars who listened to his enlightening talks—or merely came into his presence— marvelled at his spiritual insights and wisdom. His own youthful disciples, some of whom had deep acquaintance with the Upaniṣads and their commentaries, equally marvelled at the Vedāntic wisdom of their Great Master. Swami Vivekananda, the chief among the disciples and easily the most learned of them all in the philosophies of East and West, found in Sri Ramakrishna the soul of the Upaniṣads, the key to the understanding

of the harmony underlying the apparently divergent teachings thereof :

'...I, through the grace of God, had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one whose whole life was such an interpretation, whose life, a thousandfold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact the spirit of the Upanishads living in a human form.'<sup>1</sup>

Swami Turiyananda, another great monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was from his early boyhood given to an orthodox life of discipline and study of the *Gītā*, the Upanishads, and the works of Śaṅkara. He loved this life so much that he once even began to think that visits to his Master were a distraction! Sri Ramakrishna came to know of this and at the next opportunity revealed thus to Turiyananda the true spirit of Vedānta :

'Well, I hear you are now given much to the discussion of the Vedānta. That is very good. But does it not amount to this—Brahman is real, the world unreal? Or is it anything else?'<sup>2</sup>

These simple words, spoken directly from the Master's personal experience of Vedāntic truths, took away the breath of Turiyananda, who had been labouring under the impression that to understand Vedānta—what to speak of winning liberation—one had to study the difficult Vedāntic texts and other related subjects. Now he came to know that the essential thing about Vedānta was to get a firm conviction about the reality of Brahman and the impermanence of the phenomenal world, and to make that conviction a fact of experience through meditation. Swami Turiyananda

later said that that was 'a turning-point in my life'.

#### A 'DHIRA' OF THE UPANISHADIC TYPE

*Dhīra*, as used in the Upanishads, denotes the man of discrimination (*vivekin*), of one-pointed resolution, and ultimate wisdom. He is the spiritual pioneer who sets out in search of the treasure of the immortal Ātman and successfully completes the search. From first to last, the *dhīra* is characterized especially by the quality of spiritual discrimination. At the beginning, he discriminates between the pleasant, the ephemeral, and the good, the eternal,—and chooses only the latter.<sup>3</sup> Seeing impermanence and death all around, he seeks the permanent and the immortal.<sup>4</sup> This is sought within his own self, by the control of the senses, by purification and concentration of mind. During this inward search, his power of discrimination becomes even sharper, so that by its strength he is able to separate the Ātman, the 'smokeless light', from its coverings of ego, intelligence, thoughts, and body—'as the central stalk from a blade of grass'.<sup>5</sup> When he is able to identify himself with the Ātman, he becomes freed from ignorance, bondage, and death—'such *dhīras* (persons of discrimination), ever devoted to the Self, behold everywhere the omnipresent Brahman and in the end enter into It, which is all this'.<sup>6</sup>

If one carefully studies the course of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual search from the beginning to its fulfilment, one cannot fail to note the full manifestation of the *dhīra's* qualities in him. His discriminative mind very early determined that God alone is the permanent Substance and the world with

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. III (1960), pp. 323-4

<sup>2</sup> Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), p. 367

<sup>3</sup> *vide Katha-upanishad*, II. 2

<sup>4</sup> *vide ibid.*, IV. 1

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* VI. 17; also *vide Kena-upanishad*, I. 2

<sup>6</sup> *Mundaka-upanishad*. III. ii. 5 (also *vide Brhadāranyaka-upanishad*, IV. 8

its pleasures and possessions is impermanent. So he resolved to seek only God, and not to rest till he had realized Him in full. He had a brilliant intellect, but, perceiving at an early age the hollowness of a formal education, he turned away from it. The worldly scheme of education which only helps in earning of money or honour, he called a mere 'bread-winning education'. When he was pressed by his elder brother to give serious attention to his curricular studies, he incisively replied: 'I do not want to learn the art of "bundling rice and plantain". What I do want is to achieve that which produces right knowledge and enables man to attain the aim of his life.' Though he most probably had not then heard or read about what the Upaniṣad calls the 'higher knowledge' (*parā-vidyā*)<sup>7</sup> which enables one to attain the Imperishable—that is, Brahman—clearly, his discriminative mind and hankering for liberation were guiding him towards that.

Thus, as he entered upon his long series of rigorous spiritual disciplines, he kept unsheathed, as it were, the shining sword of discrimination. He cut off one by one from his mind, all attachments to passion and possessions, which he saw were obstacles in the path of his divine realization. He renounced money and the joys of the flesh altogether. When he saw that without overcoming the pride of caste and egoism he could not have the divine vision, he went to the extent of stripping himself of the sacred thread—the emblem of his brāhmanahood; and later he quietly started cleaning the latrine of a scavenger's family. As result of such austere practices, he could, when he sat for meditation, very easily detach his consciousness from sense-impressions and other distractions. And after long struggle, through such disciplines and with the consuming yearning

for God—which the Vedānta texts call *mumukṣutā*, the desire for liberation—he had the first vision of the Divine Mother, the Goal of all these spiritual practices, in Her impersonal aspect. He perceived and got merged into an all-pervading ocean of light and consciousness.

In later days when disciples gathered round him and sought spiritual guidance, he asked them to cultivate discrimination thus:

'...you must practise discrimination. "Woman and gold" is impermanent. God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money? Food, clothes, and a dwelling-place—nothing more. You cannot realize God with its help. Therefore money can never be the goal of life...

'Consider—what is there in money or in a beautiful body? Discriminate and you will find that even the body of a beautiful woman consists of bones, flesh, fat, and other disagreeable things. Why should a man give up God and direct his attention to such things? Why should a man forget God for their sake?'<sup>8</sup>

#### SATYAKAMA'S STORY RE-ENACTED

Sri Ramakrishna, as the readers of his biography will have noticed, yearned and struggled and attained the vision of the Divine Mother without the help or guidance of any guru whatsoever. Even for four or five years following the time he became a regular priest at the Kālī Temple, he was still, as it were, guided completely from within. In this respect his life closely resembles the spiritual quest and fulfilment of Satyakāma, a Upaniṣadic sage.<sup>9</sup>

Satyakāma, as a young lad, wishing to go and study the Vedas under a teacher, wanted to learn from his mother about his

<sup>8</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Madras Math, 1947), p. 7

<sup>9</sup> *vide Chāndogya-upanishad*, IV, iv-ix

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, I, i, 5



ancestry. But his mother said: 'I do not know, my child, of what ancestry you are. In my youth I was preoccupied with many household duties and with attending on guests when I conceived you. I do not therefore know your ancestry. I am Jabālā by name and you are Satyakāma. So you may speak of yourself as Satyakāma Jabālā.' So the young boy went to a sage, Hāridrumata Gautama, and requested him to teach him the Vedas. When Gautama asked Satyakāma about his ancestry he repeated frankly what his mother had told him, though it meant the imminent risk of his being rejected by the guru. But on the contrary, Gautama was greatly pleased at the truthfulness of the boy and said: 'None but a brāhmaṇa could speak such a damaging truth about himself. You are a brāhmaṇa and I will initiate you and teach you. You have not swerved from truth.' The story goes on, that Gautama gave Satyakāma four hundred lean and weak cows to care for and the disciple took them to the forest. He said to himself that he would not return until they had increased to a thousand. Then he spent many years in the forest with the herd. One day the bull of the herd said to him that their strength had now reached a thousand, so he should take them back to the teacher. Further, Satyakāma received instruction from the bull about one aspect of Brahman. He was then on subsequent days taught by the fire, a swan, and a diver bird about the other aspects of Brahman. When he finally returned to the teacher, the latter was struck by his very appearance and greeted him thus: 'Satyakāma, dear boy, you shine like one who knows Brahman. Who has taught you?' 'Beings other than men,' replied the boy. 'But I wish, revered Sir, that you alone should teach me. For I have heard from persons like your good self that only knowledge which is learnt from a teacher

(*ācārya*) leads to the highest good.' Of course Gautama taught him, but it was the same knowledge, and 'nothing whatsoever was omitted'.

Though Satyakāma doubtless thought he was taught the knowledge of Brahman by a bull, fire, etc., and not by any man, yet the real fact seems to lie elsewhere. According to deeper psychological and spiritual laws, we know it was Satyakāma's own pure mind which had become his teacher. Great spiritual teachers point out that the 'higher mind' in pure aspirants becomes their teacher. It is no wonder that such a phenomenon occurred in Sri Ramakrishna, whose mind was firmly set on realizing God and who was pure as purity itself. Sri Ramakrishna later thus revealed to his devotees this spiritual marvel:

'The figure of a young Sannyasin looking like me used to come out again and again from within me and instruct me on all matters; when he emerged, sometimes I had a little consciousness and, at other times, lost it altogether and lay inert, only seeing and hearing his actions and words; when afterwards he entered this gross body, I regained full consciousness. The Brahmani, Tota Puri and others came and taught me afterwards what I had heard from him previously—they taught me what I had already known. It seems from this that they came as Gurus in my life in order that the authority of the scriptures, such as the Vedas, might be maintained by my honouring their injunctions.'<sup>10</sup>

#### MONASTICISM FORTIFIED

Renunciation is one of the most basic teachings of the Upaniṣads, to which they return again and again. In its perfect form it is represented by the monastic ideal in them. Since it is not possible to attain the highest knowledge without perfect renunciation—without renouncing all desires and enjoyments, here and here-

10 Saradananda: op. cit., p. 168

after—therefore the spirit of renunciation is so much emphasized. ‘Not by work nor by progeny nor by wealth’, says the *Kaivalya-upaniṣad*, ‘but by renunciation alone some attained immortality.’ Says Yājñavalkya, a great Upaniṣadic sage:

‘The knowers of Brahman of olden times did not wish for offspring, thinking, “What shall we do with offspring—we who have attained this Self, this World?” They gave up their desire for sons, for wealth, and for the worlds, and led the life of religious mendicants. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds; for both these, indeed, are but desires.’ ‘Therefore he who knows It (Brahman) as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient, and collected; he sees the Self in his own self; he sees all as the Self.’<sup>11</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna represents in his life, in this age, the highest ideal of renunciation upheld by the Upaniṣads. In him the desire for wealth and social security, name and glory, was rooted out. By looking upon all women as the images of the Divine Mother and by directing all the love in his human heart towards God as Mother, Sri Ramakrishna completely conquered the sex-instinct. Thus he had become a perfect *sannyāsin* in spirit. Still, when his Vedāntic teacher Tota Puri came to Dakshineswar, and offered to initiate him into *sannyāsa* in the traditional way, he readily agreed. After the performance of the *virajā-homa*, he received the vows of complete renunciation with the ochre robe and thus came to uphold the institution of monasticism as well as its spirit.<sup>12</sup> ‘Renunciation’, says Swami Vivekananda, ‘is the very soul of the Upanishads.’ Sri Ramakrishna was a reincarnation of that soul. Having been established in the knowledge

of the all-pervading Brahman, he maintained a relationship with his wife which was entirely spiritual. He saw in her—as in all—the blissful Brahman alone. Thus came to be realized in his life the truth contained in the following verse of the Upaniṣad:

‘Thou art woman, Thou art man; Thou art youth and maiden too. Thou as an old man totterest along on a staff; it is Thou alone who, when born, assumest diverse forms.’<sup>13</sup>

Swami Vivekananda, in the course of a dialogue with one of his disciples, once revealed how Sri Ramakrishna used especially to inculcate this spirit of uncompromising renunciation and dispassion in his young disciples who were to become monks:

‘When he used to instruct his Sannyasin disciples, he would rise from his seat and look about to see if any householder disciple was coming that way or not. If he found none, then in glowing words he would depict the glory of renunciation and austerity. As a result of the rousing power of that fiery dispassion, we have renounced the world and become averse to worldliness.’<sup>14</sup>

Further interpreting the deep significance for humanity of Sri Ramakrishna’s burning spirit of renunciation, Swamiji said:

‘That man [Sri Ramakrishna] was the embodiment of renunciation... He was a triumphant example, a living realization of the complete conquest of lust and desire for money. He was beyond all ideas of either, and such men are necessary for this century. Such renunciation is necessary in these days when men have begun to think that they cannot live a month without what they call “necessities”, and which they are increasing out of all proportion. It is neces-

is not attained by one devoid of strength, nor through inadvertence, nor through knowledge unassociated with monasticism...’

<sup>11</sup> *Brhadāranyaka-upaniṣad*, IV. iv. 22-3

<sup>12</sup> vide *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, III. ii. 4—‘This Self

<sup>13</sup> *Svetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, IV. 3

<sup>14</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 262

sary in a time like this that a man should arise to demonstrate to the sceptics of the world that there yet breathes a man who does not care a straw for all the gold or all the fame that is in the universe. Yet there are such men.'<sup>15</sup>

#### TRUTHFULNESS, THE MEANS TO THE HIGHEST

'Speaking the truth...do not swerve from the truth'—is a typical commandment of one Upaniṣad to all spiritual seekers.<sup>16</sup> 'He who speaks untruth', says another Upaniṣad, 'withers to the very root.'<sup>17</sup> Because truth is the basis of the individual's character as well as of social intercourse. Truthfulness in the sense of 'giving utterance to what is actually perceived, without hypocrisy or intent to injure others' is a basic virtue. But truthfulness has a higher value and a deeper significance when it becomes one of the most powerful means of realizing the divine Truth. The *Kena-upaniṣad* declares that 'truth is the abode of the Upaniṣad'.<sup>18</sup> Here truth, as Śankara explains, means freedom from deceit and crookedness in speech, mind, and action, for the wisdom taught in the Upaniṣads abides in those who are free from deceit and who are holy, and not in those who are devilish in nature and deceitful. The importance of truthfulness for realizing the highest Reality is declared thus in the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*:

'Truth alone prevails, not falsehood. By truth the path is laid out, the Way of the Gods, on which the seers, whose every desire is satisfied, proceed to the highest Abode of the True.'<sup>19</sup>

From his early boyhood Sri Ramakrishna showed a remarkable devotion to

truth. Partly he seems to have inherited this quality from his father, who was ardently devoted to truth and refused to deviate from it even under most trying circumstances. Sri Ramakrishna's sharp power of discernment early revealed to him that if he was to realize God, the embodiment of absolute truth, he could not deviate even by a hair's breadth from relative truth. Naturally, then, he brought about a perfect conformity between his thoughts, words, and actions. Being guileless and straightforward, he remained an utter stranger to crookedness and deceit. Truthfulness became so natural in his life that even unconsciously he could not commit a wrong. Regarding his devotion to truth, Sri Ramakrishna used to say:

'After my vision of the Divine Mother, I prayed to Her, taking a flower in my hands: "Mother, here is Thy knowledge and here is Thy ignorance. Take them both, and give me only pure love. Here is Thy holiness and here is Thy unholiness. Take them both, Mother, and give me pure love. Here is Thy good and here is Thy evil. Take them both, Mother, and give me pure love. Here is Thy righteousness and here is Thy unrighteousness. Take them both, Mother, and give me pure love." I mentioned all these, but I could not say: "Mother, here is Thy truth and here is Thy falsehood. Take them both." I gave up everything at Her feet but could not bring myself to give up truth.'<sup>20</sup>

He often advised his devotees and disciples, both householders and would-be monks, to stick to truth, for 'truthfulness constitutes the spiritual discipline of the Kaliyuga'. 'If a man clings tenaciously to truth,' he assured, 'he ultimately realizes God.'

#### SELF-REALIZATION AND JIVANMUKTI

The Ātman—which is the same as Brahman—is the unchangeable truth be-

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, vol. IV (1962), p. 184

<sup>16</sup> *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, I. xi. 7

<sup>17</sup> *Praśna-upaniṣad*, VI. I

<sup>18</sup> IV. 8

<sup>19</sup> III, i. 6

<sup>20</sup> *The Gospel*, p. 255

hind all phenomena, individual and cosmic. The Upaniṣads not only teach thus the reality of the Ātman, but also point the way for Its realization. 'This Ātman is to be realized'—after hearing Its truth from a competent teacher, and pondering over it, one must meditate on Its real nature. Through the process of '*neti, neti*' ('not this, not this'), the spiritual aspirant has to divest the Ātman, the substrate-Truth, of all superimpositions. Even the very ego is to be negated in this process. Then is realized the truth of the statement *Tat tvam asi* (That thou art)—the Ātman is identical with Brahman, Existence-consciousness-bliss Absolute. Realizing this, one becomes really liberated. 'Whosoever departs from this world,' says Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, 'without knowing this Imperishable, is miserable. But he who departs from this world after knowing the Imperishable is a knower of Brahman.'<sup>21</sup> The sage in the *Kena-upaniṣad* declares:

'If a man knows the Ātman here, he then attains the true goal of life. If he does not know It here, a great destruction awaits him. Having realized the Self in every being, the wise relinquish the world and become immortal.'<sup>22</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna, under the guidance of his Vedāntic guru, Tota Puri, realized this knowledge of the identity of Ātman with Brahman, by merging his ego completely in the Absolute. As Sri Ramakrishna himself later said, he found it at first impossible to free the mind from the blissful form of the Divine Mother. But Tota was not an easy-going type of guru. He scolded the disciple severely for his 'weakness' and, pressing the pointed end of a broken piece of glass between his eyebrows, told him to concentrate on that point and free the mind of all forms and

modifications. Sri Ramakrishna tried hard again. As the form of the Divine Mother re-appeared in his mind, he—the *dhīra* that he was—severed it in two 'with the sword of Knowledge'. He at the same time, we must note, merged in Brahman his own child-of-God ego which was the only remaining 'obstacle' in the path to *nirvikalpa-samādhi*. Thus the last hurdle being crossed, Sri Ramakrishna merged into the state of perfect union with Brahman, the highest state of consciousness spoken of by Vedāntic sages. When his mind finally came back to ordinary consciousness, he discovered that 'Brahman indeed is all this'—the so-called phenomenal universe. When he had ascended to the level of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, he had followed the process of '*neti, neti*'; but now when he came down to the normal waking consciousness, he began to perceive that the same Brahman had become everything ('*iti, iti*', 'this, this'). As he once explained it to a young disciple:

'You see, in one form He is the Absolute and in another He is the Relative. What does Vedānta teach? Brahman alone is real and the world illusory, isn't that so? But as long as God keeps the "ego of a devotee" in a man, the Relative is also real. When He completely effaces the ego, then what *is* remains. That cannot be described by the tongue. But as long as God keeps the ego, one must accept all. By removing the outer sheaths of the plantain-tree, you reach the inner pith. As long as the tree contains sheaths, it also contains pith. So too, as long as it contains pith, it also contains sheaths. The pith goes with the sheaths, and the sheaths go with the pith. In the same way, when you speak of the Nitya, it is understood that the Lila also exists; and when you speak of the Lila, it is understood that the Nitya also exists. 'It is He alone who has become the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is actionless, I call Him Brahman; when He creates, preserves, and destroys, I

<sup>21</sup> III, viii, 10

<sup>22</sup> II, 5

call Him Sakti. Brahman and Sakti are not different from each other. Water is water, whether it is still or moving.'<sup>23</sup>

The goal of *jīvanmukti* (liberation in life), placed before humanity by the Upaniṣadic sages, was once again demonstrated by Sri Ramakrishna to be practical. By realizing his identity with the Infinite, he had shattered all bodily and psychological bonds,—in short, all bondage that *māyā* can bind a soul with. Living in the body, yet he was not of it. Disease or death held no terrors for him. Having attained the Infinite, he went beyond the 'gravitational field' of earthly desires and temptations. Boundless was his bliss, and limitless his wisdom. A great pandit, who was inspired by Sri Ramakrishna's example to renounce all for God-realization, had this feeling when he witnessed the Master's state of attained *jīvanmukti*: 'Ah, how free from anxiety he lives, knowing what one should know and understand in life! Even death has been conquered by him; it can no longer hold before him the horrible shadow of the "night of destruction".'<sup>24</sup> 'M', the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, has recorded his impression at the end of a visit to Dakshineswar, when he came back to ask the Master something

before finally taking his leave. 'M' says, 'In the dim light the Master, all alone, was pacing the hall, rejoicing in the self—as the lion lives and roams alone in the forest.' Referring to the greatest knowers of Brahman, the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad* says: 'The wise man who knows Him does not babble. Revelling in the Self, delighting in the Self, performing actions [for the good of others], he is the foremost among the knowers of Brahman.'<sup>25</sup>

#### THE FULFILMENT OF THE INDIAN SAGES

Renounce, conquer the lower self, attain the knowledge of the true self, the *Ātman*—this is the essential message of the Upaniṣadic sages. This is the message that India needs most today for her own survival. And this is the message that India has to give to the whole world for its survival. 'Renunciation and spirituality', said Swami Vivekananda once, 'are the two great ideas of India, and it is because India clings to these ideas that all her mistakes count for so little.'<sup>26</sup> Sri Ramakrishna, 'the fulfilment of the Indian sages',—as Swamiji referred to him once—has made these two ideas living vibrant realities, and thereby proved in these modern times the validity of the truths taught in the Upaniṣads.

<sup>23</sup> *The Gospel*, p. 784

<sup>24</sup> Saradananda: op. cit., p. 545

<sup>25</sup> III. i. 4

<sup>26</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 372

## LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta  
7/10/22

My dear P—,

I am glad to receive yours of the 15th Āśvin.<sup>1</sup> Accept please my blessings and love and convey the same to all.

You write that you are endeavouring to learn Homoeopathy—, that is indeed excellent. Take it for granted that in this regard you have my special approval. From this undertaking a lot of service to all will result: certainly during malaria outbreaks this will prove very beneficial for the common people. With great zeal you can engage yourself in it as much as time permits. Sriman R— is buying for you medicine, books, etc.

All well here. I hope you and all else at your home are in good shape. Trust your daughter is surely well.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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<sup>1</sup> Bengali month, usually in September-October.

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SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta  
25 Kārttik, 1322 <sup>2</sup>

Sriman K—,

I was glad to receive your letter of the 17th Kārttik. If many famine-stricken people are coming to your Ashrama, seeking help, then sending some persons to survey the situation in all those villages from which these people are coming, you must estimate the numbers of the famine-affected people—that is to say, those who don't have resources for eating even once a day. These, then, you have to help by regularly doling out rice. If, owing to lack of hands at the Ashrama, you are unable to undertake this work, then let me know,— I shall try to make suitable arrangement. If again, you feel that the time has not yet arrived for this type of relief work, then give me the news, assessing the situation, after some days.

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<sup>2</sup> Kārttik: Bengali month following Āśvin. 1322, Bengali Era, here coincides with A.D. 1915.

I am glad to learn that the Holy Mother has given you *sannyāsa* (monastic vows). Even before this you had been living like a *sannyāsin* (monk), and now it is fine that you have taken the vows to live that way for all time... Do not feel sad that you are kept immersed in karma (work) [by the Lord]. There is nothing else like karma for purifying the mind. Therefore you are to think thus: 'Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] has to my good fortune placed me in this kind of situation. And later also, I shall remain as He will keep me. May His will be fulfilled!' Utter dependence on Him [the Lord] is called *sannyāsa*.

Accept my blessings and convey the same to the others residing in the Ashrama.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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### SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta  
1/11/25

My dear—,

I was glad to receive yours of 28 October. Know that my blessings are always on you. I am keeping well.

I am answering your questions here:

(1) The words of all those persons who have realized God constitute the Veda. They are called *āpta-puruṣas* and the Veda is called *āpta-vākya* (words of the *āptas*). Religion has to be practised continuously, with faith in their words. Or else, to grasp everything through our own impure intellect which is attached to sense-objects, and to practise religion relying on its dictates, will bring no fruit whatsoever. Therefore, giving up your effort to understand every statement, and placing complete faith and dependence on the words of Sri Sri Thakur, go on doing *sādhana* (spiritual practice). Sri Sri Thakur used to say, 'Prārabdha exists, and there also exists *kṛpā*.'<sup>3</sup> Through *kṛpā*, *prārabdha* can be worked out with very little suffering.

(2) ...

(3) If while trying to concentrate the mind on the object of meditation, you get a state like drowsiness, but yet there is joy, in that case it cannot be called lassitude or inertia. Though it is not a high state, still it is good. And through daily practice it will be gotten rid of.

(4) If while performing *japa* (repetition of the mantra) you feel like meditating, then do that [meditation] by all means. The means for bringing the fickle mind under control are dispassion and practice (*vairāgya* and *abhyāsa*). This statement is in the *Gītā*. There is no other way.

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<sup>3</sup> *Prārabdha* is that part of a soul's accumulated fund of karma which has begun to act in one's present embodiment, and must work itself out therein. *Kṛpā* (lit., grace) here refers to grace of God.

(5) There is no need to practise *prāṇāyāma* (control of vital force through breathing exercises). At least Sri Sri Thakur did not ask us to practise that. When the mind becomes one-pointed out of love for the Iṣṭa (Chosen Deity), then breath control comes of itself.

It is not necessary for you at all that all these questions be answered, nor do I have time to do that for you. Daily go on doing your *japa* and meditation and become pure in body, mind and speech—if you can do this you will realize the Truth or Reality. Faith, firm faith in the words of Sri Sri Thakur—know that this alone is needed.

Give a little attention to your own studies. Know them also to constitute a limb of spiritual life. Because, if you cannot, by acquiring worldly education, make provision for coarse food and clothing, then meditation on and thought of God will become impossible.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

## AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—XII

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

In reply to a devotee's letter, Bābā<sup>1</sup> was discussing with his secretary what to write to him:

'Perform *japa* (repetition of the mantra) as much as you can without straining. There is no hard and fast rule as to time and place in practising *japa*. Meditation is not so easy.'

The mind will be restless. You have learnt from the *Gītā* what Arjuna says to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: 'The mind, O Kṛṣṇa, is restless, turbulent, powerful, and obstinate. To control it is as hard, it seems to me, as to control the wind.' And the reply to that was, 'O mighty Arjuna, the mind is restless and hard to control; but by practice and by dispassion... it can be restrained.'<sup>2</sup> Practice is essential; intense dispassion is also necessary, otherwise no progress is possible. It is the nature of

the mind to think of this and that. Haven't you read in the *Kāthopanīṣad*, 'The Creator made our senses outgoing'?

All our senses are turned outward. They have to be turned inward by the help of outside objects. That is the reason for the prevalence of all the paraphernalia of *pūjā* and *ārati* (worship and waving of lights) in temples: lamps and incense, fruits and flowers—all these are necessary to keep the mind occupied with the Deity.

The mind of man runs after enjoyment. Enjoyment is to be sublimated into divine experience. If the objects are enjoyed with the Iṣṭa (Chosen Deity), how will *an-iṣṭa* (undesirable things or evil) come? Rather, more good impressions will be left upon the mind.

Not that you will not meditate. You must meditate on one or other subject. For example: meditate on the thought that you are performing *ārati* to your Chosen Deity—first with a lighted flame, then with incense and camphor, after that with a

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

<sup>2</sup>*Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 34-5



*cāmara* (yak-tail fan). Go on with that; don't let it end. If, after a long time, you are tired of it, begin the offering of *puṣpāñjali*: think that you are offering handfuls of flowers of different colours; think again that you are garlanding the Deity, offering to Him or Her food of various kinds. This uninterrupted current of thinking is one kind of meditation.

Dirt is in the mind much as it is in a dirty room. You have to clean it sometimes with a broom, or sometimes with water. Some ideas of the mind are to be swept out forcibly, others are to be washed away with tears. With tearful prayers you have to say to Him: 'O Lord, why do such ideas come to my mind? With these there You will never come into my mind. So make my mind pure and clean. Come and appear to me.' You have to say this with tears. That is how our Master taught us.

He wants to perform *japa* at night. Let him do it. What if he feels sleepy? Let him sleep. If he is very keen about it, he should get up and walk briskly. If he feels sleepy while sitting, let him walk and perform *japa*.

At night you have to take a little less food and try to maintain always an attitude of prayer—a current of higher thoughts. And another idea must occupy your mind, that in this very life I must see God—I must finish my task of calling upon Him:

O Mother, how shall I call on You?  
Teach me to call upon You in such a way  
That I may end my calling You  
With a single call, once and for all.

\*

Some other devotees came and the topic turned to Śiva and His smoking of narcotics. Bābā said:

People allege that Śiva takes *gāñjā* and *bhāng*, (Indian hemp and its intoxicating

leaves). Does He really take them? O no, no. But what harm if He takes them? He who could drink the poison at the time of the churning of the ocean, He who has as His ornament the blue mark of poison on His throat—who is named Nilakaṇṭha because of this—, for Him narcotics are nothing. Do you know the real truth? In course of time, such narcotics as *dhutura*<sup>3</sup> and *bhāng*, became symbolic of the primordial poison—the inherent ignorance and misery of worldly life.

A Swami had come with two candidates for initiation. In the morning Bābā was cutting jokes with the Swami:

People come here with various ideas. Many come because it costs them little here. A candidate for initiation came to Belur Math this time. I asked him: 'Why have you come here? Haven't you your ancestral guru?' He replied, 'His demands are too high.' 'How much?' I enquired. 'Rupees two hundred,' was the answer. At last I told him, 'Go and pray earnestly to him and he will agree to a lesser amount.' He came smiling a few days later and reported, 'He has agreed for Rupees twenty.'

A devotee with his wife took initiation from the Holy Mother and placed two rupees at her feet. For this Golap-Ma shouted at them; thus we came to know of it and they became very much ashamed and corrected themselves. The Mother used to say: 'Men of the world love money very much. Let them have it and try to be happy with it till they learn otherwise.'

Now about initiation Bābā said something very interesting:

What is initiation? It is introducing the devotee to the Deity he loves and desires. I show the Mother to one who wants a Mother, and the Father to whomever

<sup>3</sup> A plant with narcotic properties related to stramonium. Also spelt 'datura' in English dictionaries.

wants a Father. Our Master is Father and Mother as well. This is initiation.

Again he began to cut jokes with the Swami:

Why have you taken all the trouble of bringing these devotees here from distant East Bengal for initiation? You could easily have given it. We are disciples of the Master, and you are a disciple of the Mother! I have been to the Himalayas; and you are still in the Himalayas.

The morning passed off in this way and of course the devotees were initiated in due time.

14 December, 1936

During the Durgā-pūjā many devotees had come from all directions. From among them, one group continued their stay for some weeks. The family had suffered a bereavement. In the joyful company of Bābā and the peaceful atmosphere of the Sargachi Ashrama much of their mental agony had been assuaged. From Durgā-pūjā to Kālī-pūjā, then on to the Jagaddhātrī-pūjā, the Ashrama had worn a festive appearance. With winter approaching, these guests had begun to leave one by one, and the Ashramites alone now remained with Bābā.

This day in the evening, Bābā said to the inmates of the Ashrama:

Come, I will tell you many things. Every evening come to me just after *ārati*. The company of *sādhus* (holy men) is very necessary. We have sought to come in contact with *sādhus* wherever possible. Without *sādhu-saṅga* (holy company) how can any good thing come to you?

‘O Tulsī, in this world five jewels are the best:

Company of *sadhus*, Words of God, Compassion, Humility, and Doing good to others.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Translation of a Hindi couplet of Tulsīdās, the great saint and devotee of Śrī Rāma. The poet is here addressing his own mind. —Ed.

Thus Swamiji used to say: From *sādhu-saṅga* come the words of God—discussion about God incarnate and His life and *līlā* (sport)—His teachings; from *sādhu-saṅga* comes the feeling of compassion, that is, love and consideration for all; similarly comes the feeling of humility, that God is so great and I am so little. Lastly comes the spirit of doing good to others; but the source of all is *sādhu-saṅga*. It is from *sādhu-saṅga* that the first spiritual awakening takes place. In the worldly life, people are all absorbed in the desire for enjoyment. How will this desire be burnt? Some heat is necessary first, to dry up the mind soaked with thoughts of enjoyment. The *sādhu* gives you that heat.

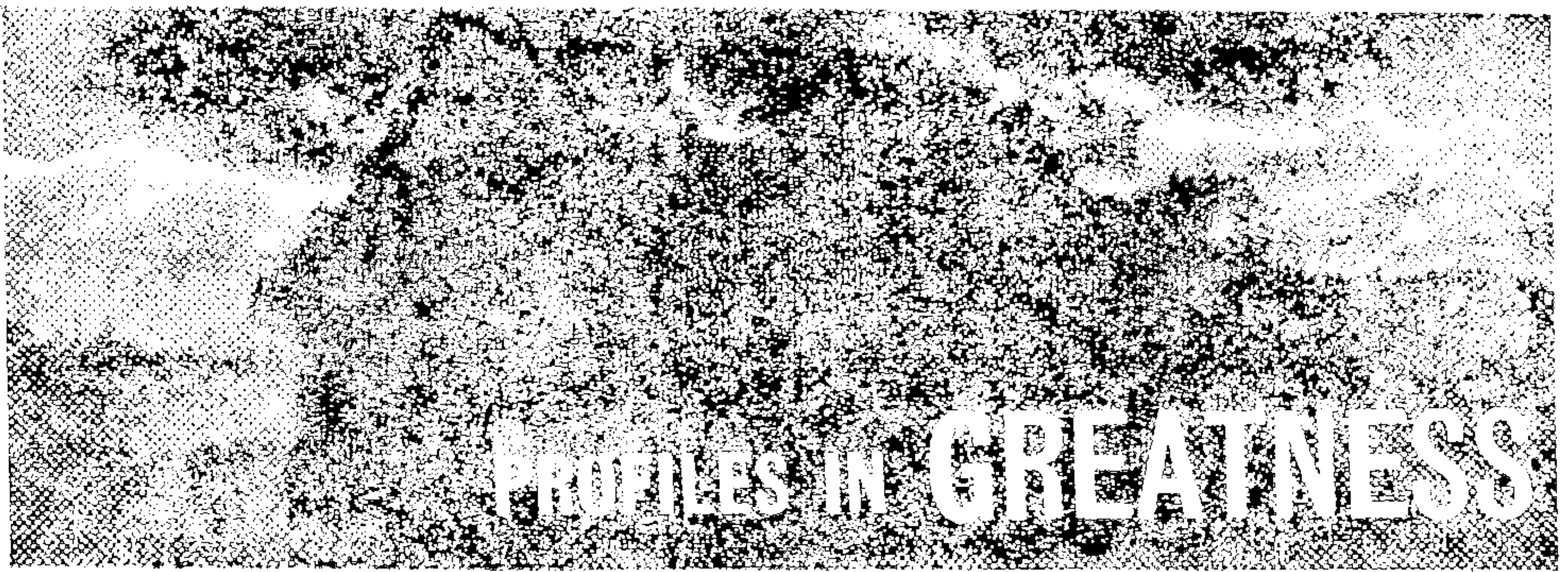
But then if your mind is like a flint, it is a different tale. It may remain a thousand years under water, but it will emit fire when you strike it. How many such are there? Not many.

After a period of silence he resumed:

You see, it is upon renunciation that the foundation of all great work is built. Never have I taken a full meal in any house at Berhampur, never have I purchased my own clothes from the Ashrama money. Swami Brahmananda sent me my clothes. Never have I slept on a soft bed. I have fed others, clothed others, and tried my best to keep others in comfort. You cannot understand anything by seeing the present arrangement here of bedding and clothing.

Just see how M— collected rice for the Ashrama from Berhampur. In the morning he took a little *mudī* (puffed rice), and in the afternoon he cooked his own food out of the rice he collected. The college boys saw this suffering of his and decided to arrange for the collection. Just see. They saw this spirit of renunciation and suffering for a noble cause, and then they

(Continued on p. 110)



### 'A REAL LIONESS'

'What the world wants today, is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go?' 'Why should one fear? If this is true, what else could matter? *If it is not true, what do our lives matter?*'

These challenging words issuing forth from the mighty Swami Vivekananda to a question-class in London in 1896, found their response from at least one of them—a Miss Margaret Noble, an Irish-born school-teacher, young, talented and spirited. Her eagerness for truth had brought her into contact with many great people but it was Swami Vivekananda and his pure and bold message that finally drew her to him like a magnet. She soon recognized 'the heroic fibre of the man' and decided to make herself 'a servant of his love for his own people'. It was she who later became the celebrated SISTER NIVEDITA.

Swamiji heartily appreciated her offer of service and also indicated that there would be a need for it. But he left her in no doubt as to the tremendously challenging nature of the task, both physically and mentally. In two of the early letters he wrote her we find:

'Sacrifice in the past has been the Law; it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to

sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all...The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt.' '...the difficulties are many. You cannot form any idea of the misery, the superstition, and the slavery that are here. You will be in the midst of a mass of half-naked men and women with quaint ideas of caste and isolation, shunning the white skin through fear or hatred and hated by them intensely. On the other hand, you will be looked upon by the white as a crank, and every one of your movements will be watched with suspicion...the climate is fearfully hot...Not one European comfort is to be had in places out of the cities. If, in spite of all this, you dare venture into the work, you are welcome, a hundred times welcome.'

At the same time he also expressed how highly he rated her:

'Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman, a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially ... Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.'

Both his warning and his expression of faith in her proved prophetic.

\*

From the time she arrived in India and

entered into her new life, Sister Nivedita had to contend with not only expected obstacles and opposition from ignorant and biased quarters but also with certain elements in her own make-up which needed drastic re-casting. And her Guru appeared to become a different person when he took up the task of training and re-moulding her for the task ahead. Previously she had known him only as a friend and beloved teacher—and she had perhaps half-expected him to remain so for ever. But she found things different now. The reason for this was that Swamiji wanted her to take up the task of service not in a patronizing spirit, nor out of any mere personal devotion and allegiance to himself. He wanted her to be totally at one with the people whom she went to serve and to dedicate herself to them, to India, and to Truth. So he set about breaking all personal attachment and bonds, all racial and personal preconceptions and prejudices, in preparation for her leonine task. Knowing fully as he did her very special qualities, he set for her correspondingly lofty standards and proceeded to exert tremendous pressure on her to measure up to these: 'I am not going to water down my ideals. I am going to dictate terms', '*...you have to forget your own past, and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory!*', 'Mind! No loaves and fishes! No glamour of the world! All this must be cut short. It must be rooted out', 'Yes, you have faith, but you have not that burning enthusiasm that you need. You want to be consumed with energy', 'Our yellow garb is the robe of death on the field of battle. Death for the Cause is our goal, not success'—these were some of his fiery admonitions to her at various times.

His blessing to her was equally fiery and non-personal: 'Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!'

He rebuked and attacked many of her cherished deep-rooted preconceptions—literary, social, historical. He would not compromise his views or even adopt a gentler method of teaching. Nor was she of a nature submissive enough to accept humbly all that he said. The result was she became depressed, suffered and even began to doubt herself. She felt he was unsympathetic and even silently hostile! But, happily, this phase was over before long and she came out of the ordeal a purer gold, endowed with an understanding which could discern the purpose and method of his training. She realized for the first time that 'the great teachers may destroy in us a personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place'.

All this ordeal, this *tapas*, bore its own ample fruit. It helped her to imbibe some of the noblest ideals of her Guru and express them in her own way, in full freedom. Out of it, she came forth a free and flaming spirit, worthy of her great Master and worthy of the name he gave her at the time of monastic initiation, namely, 'Nivedita', the Dedicated.

Thus she became dedicated to the *cause* most dear to him.

'My mission is to bring manhood to my people,' he had once told her. 'I will help you, Swami,' she had offered. 'I know it,' he had endorsed. Later he stressed, 'Never forget! The word is "woman and the people".' Her life and work testify to the fact that she took upon herself the burden of his work and remained true to it till the last. No truer memorial inscription could there be to her than the one which stands near Darjeeling, where she passed away, 'Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India'.

\*

The Guru had inspired her with the fiery mantras, 'Sacrifice', 'Dedication', 'Courage',

### 'Selfless Love'.

It was March 1899. Bubonic plague had broken out in Calcutta, a new and terrifying experience to the people. However, under the inspiring guidance of Swamiji, a group of monks and student-volunteers had taken up sanitation and relief work, braving death. And Nivedita was in the thick of it. She not only inspected all the work done but on occasions herself started the cleaning work in the lanes. Touched by what he saw, the District Medical Officer Dr. R. G. Kar recorded:

'During this calamity, the compassionate figure of Nivedita was seen in every slum of the Baghbazar locality. She helped others..., without giving a thought to her own condition. At one time, when her own diet consisted only of milk and fruits, she gave up milk to meet the medical expenses of a patient...I had been to see a plague-stricken patient...Sister Nivedita had come to enquire about the arrangements made for the patient and to take upon herself the task of nursing him... When I went...again in the afternoon, I saw Sister Nivedita sitting with the child in her lap, in the damp and weather-beaten hut in that unhealthy locality...Day in and day out, night after night, she remained engaged in nursing the child in that hut, having abandoned her own house...Her nursing never slackened even when death was a certainty.'

Nivedita too gave a full description of the same episode in an article of hers, 'The Plague', but omitting all reference to herself!

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Swamiji cast off his physical body in 1902. But his ideals and ideas had taken root in Sister Nivedita. 'Man-making', 'Re-awakening India in all her glory', and 'Conquest of the world by India's spirituality'—these she took up and started working them out. From 'man-making' she went on to 'nation-making'. She had seen for herself clearly the evil effects of

foreign rule and the necessity of political freedom as an indispensable prerequisite for India's complete regeneration. To this end she moved about the country, like a powerful current, infusing strength and courage, life and creativity among men and women, students and teachers, writers and thinkers, artists and scientists, national leaders and workers, conservatives and revolutionaries. India thus found a champion in an unexpected quarter—in a Britisher! Naturally the British government did not take to this kindly; her movements were watched by the police and her mail censored and opened.

To the women she declared:

'The lofty character of Indian women are amongst the grandest possessions of national life.' 'It was his [Swamiji's] conviction that the future of India depended even more on Indian women than on Indian men. And his faith in us all was immense.' 'The quiet, silent lives of women, living in their homes like Tapasvinis [women ascetics], proud only to be faithful, ambitious only to be perfect, have done more to preserve the Dharma and cause it to flourish than any battles that have been fought outside.' 'Today in a special manner she [Mother India] calls on her daughters to come forward...to aid her with a great *Shraddha* [faith].'

How was this to be done?

'In the first place let Hindu mothers renew in their sons the thirst for Brahmacharya [ideal of purity and self-control] without which our nation is shorn of her ancient strength. No country in the world has an ideal of the student's life so high as in this country and if it be allowed to die out of India where shall the world look to restore it? In Brahmacharya is the secret of all strength, all greatness. Let every mother determine that her sons shall be great! And secondly can we not cultivate in our children and ourselves a vast compassion? This compassion will make us eager to know the sorrows of all men, the griefs of our land and the dangers to which,

in these modern days, our religion is exposed; and this growing knowledge will produce strong workers, working for work's sake, ready to die, if only they may serve their country and fellowmen.'

She felt her task was to awaken the nation, not just to influence a few women. At Madras she declared:

'...so also in social matters...what changes are necessary you [Indians] are fully competent to make for yourselves, and no outsider has the right to advise or interfere.' 'Your national customs require no apology. Stand by them. Your great men yield in nothing to the great men of other countries. Glory in them, love them, encourage them to the top of your bent.'

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She missed no opportunity of meeting young students and addressing youth meetings. They should ask themselves, she told them, what India expected of them. She laid special stress on the necessity of physical training and on 'manhood' being the secret of life. She urged them to remember that the good of the country should be their aim.

'Don't seek it by literary pursuits or clever writing of articles, or oratory. There are too many among you who are fit for these things. Think that the whole country is your country, and your country needs work. Struggle for knowledge, for strength, for happiness and prosperity. Let all these be your aim in life. By no means be found sleeping when the cry comes for battle!'

No wonder the young men constantly clustered round her for inspiration and guidance and many looked upon her as their 'guru'.

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To the people in general she declared:

'My object is to make you think and think...I have come here to help you in thinking out for yourself, for I have a belief in the power of right thought ...A foreigner cannot help you and you

must help yourselves.'

She belonged to all India and all Indians belonged to her. She offered her co-operation and guidance to all national forces. The emergence of India as a strong and powerful nation was the supreme goal towards which she wanted to see the country progress; she was not interested in a particular method. The Swadeshi movement had her whole-hearted support in principle as well as in practice. To her the vow of Swadeshi was a *tapas* and dharma. 'The note of manliness and self-help is sounded throughout the Swadeshi Movement. There is here no begging for help, no cringing for concessions,' she exulted.

At one time, she told Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the historian:

'Never lower your flag to any foreigner. In whatever department of life you work, try to be pre-eminent in it; try not to have to bow to a foreign authority or copy a foreign model. Keep this spirit alive in your heart.'

She warned against division into different parties, aping the western concept of opposing parties. 'Young India has yet to realize that hers is not a movement of partisan politics at all, but a national, that is to say, a unanimous programme.' She could never forgive factionalism and believed in the great need and efficacy of presenting a united front. Most important, the national struggle should have a positive and not a negative basis:

'The nation shall be united, not in a common weakness, not in a common misfortune or grievance, but in a great, overflowing...consciousness of the common nationality, the common heritage, the common struggle, the common life, aye! the common destiny and the common hope.'

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'Sacrifice of the bravest and the best', 'Burning love, selfless...that will make every word tell like a *thunderbolt*'—these words of her Guru, charged with his spirit,

had entered her very soul, and oriented all her actions towards the cause of India's freedom.

The idea of a national flag took hold of her, a national flag expressing India's national ideals and unity. She made the 'Vajra', the 'thunderbolt' the symbol on the flag, because according to ancient tradition it signified 'honour, purity, sanctity and energy'. Her imagination had been particularly fired by a well-known mythological legend. The Devas, or the gods, in their search after a potent weapon to conquer their otherwise invincible foe Vṛtra, were told that only a weapon fashioned out of the backbone of the great sage and *tapasvin* (a man of austerity) Dadhīcī could provide the answer. The gods did not hesitate to approach the sage and make the unbelievable request for his backbone so that they might save themselves! Smilingly the holy one listened to this preposterous request and smilingly he acceded to it, making the supreme sacrifice for the good of others, for the welfare of the world. So, Nivedita exhorted, the secret of real strength consists in such an utter selflessness, such absolute sacrifice and such should be free India's strength. She further amplified:

'Let us strive only for selflessness, and we become the weapon in the hands of the gods...It is not the thunderbolt that is invincible, but the hand that hurls it...Mother! Mother! Take away from us this self! Let not fame or gain or pleasure have dominion over us!'

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'Fearlessness'—that is what she learnt from her fearless Guru, and that is what she, the lioness, in turn, taught and imparted to those who came in her sphere of influence. She could never brook cowardliness.

To the children at her school in Calcutta, she would relate stories of Rajput heroines who sacrificed themselves to protect their

own and their country's honour. And she would add: 'You must all be brave like them. Oh, daughters of Bharata! You all vow to be like the Kshatriya women!'

To some of the girls who once went to bathe in the river but became afraid when they saw big waves, she said: 'Why are you afraid? Don't fear the big waves. Good boatmen remain firm at the helm and go over the waves safely. If in our lives we too learn to remain steadfast, then we will have no fear in life—never.'

In 1905, when the country rose in protest against the partition of Bengal, and the Swadeshi movement was started, Nivedita not only spoke of it as *tapas* and *dharma* but also introduced the spinning in her own school. The old lady who supervised the programme was called 'Charkha-Ma'. The government had banned the use of 'Vande Mataram', which later on became the national song; but Nivedita daringly introduced it in her daily school prayers.

To Dinesh Sen, the author of *A History of Bengali Language and Literature*, when he went to have his manuscript corrected by her, she said: 'In my political views I differ from you completely...your cowardliness only pains me...still I like you... Why? Because you have worked for your country and unknowingly you have proved yourself to be a true patriot!' The same Dinesh Sen once ran away when a bull came to attack, leaving Nivedita behind unprotected. Some one else had to drive it away. She didn't spare him. 'Dinesh Babu, your bravery has brightened the race of men today! You saved your life by leaving an unprotected lady to face an angry bull. Your action will become a fit memorial to your courage no doubt!' she taunted.

When some British scientists joined to belittle the work of the most famous Indian Botanist Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, and tried by fair and foul means to discredit

him, Nivedita boldly championed his cause. Later she helped in revising and editing his scientific works. Though older in years, this great man of science, in times of difficulty and depression, would go to Nivedita for courage and cheer, as to a mother, and she would address him as 'Little Child'. Her last birthday greeting to him was: 'Be ever victorious. Be a light unto the people...be filled with peace.'

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How her great Guru left the impress of his personality and spirit on her and how she took up his mission as her own, can be glimpsed through one of her prayers: 'God grant me to speak brave words in my Guru's name before I die, words with his life flowing through them, untainted, unimpaired—that I may feel, passing into eternity, that I have not disappointed him!' So does the chapter 'The Voice of the Mother' of her remarkable work, *Kali the Mother*:

'Look for no mercy for thyself, and I shall make thee bearer of great vessels of mercy to others. Accept bravely thine own darkness and thy lamp shall cheer many. Fulfil gladly the meanest service, and leave high places unsought...Shrink from no demand that the task makes on thee...Strong, fearless, resolute...know...that I Kali, the giver of manhood, the giver of womanhood...am thy Mother!'

It is the Guru speaking to and through the disciple!

How truly and faithfully she expressed his ideals in her own life becomes revealed by some of the heartfelt tributes paid to her by her great contemporaries.

Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh, the revolutionary patriot, said:

'If the dry bones are beginning to stir, it is because Sister Nivedita breathed the fire of life into them...If we are

conscious of a budding national life, at the present day, it is in no small measure due to the teaching of Sister Nivedita.'

The great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore observed:

'We have been blessed in that we have witnessed that unconquered nobility of man in Sister Nivedita...The life which Sister Nivedita gave for us was a very great life...Every moment of every day, she gave whatever was best in her, whatever was noblest. For this she underwent all the privation and austerity that we associate with man...She was in fact a Mother of the People. We had not seen before an embodiment of the spirit of motherhood which, passing beyond the limits of the family, can spread itself over the whole country.'

The noted British journalist Mr. Nevinson described her thus, 'There was, indeed, something flame-like about her, and not only her language but her whole vital personality often reminded me of fire...' Mr. Ratcliffe, the Editor of *The Statesman* wrote of her glowingly: '...her open-eyed and impassioned search for truth...the courage that never quailed, the noble compassionate heart...putting heart into the helpless and defeated, showing to the young and perplexed the star of a glowing faith and purpose, royally spending all the powers of a rich intelligence and an overflowing humanity for all who called upon her in their need. And some among them count it an honour beyond all price that they were permitted to share, in however imperfect a measure, the mind and confidence of this radiant child of God.'

—SWAMI SASTRANANDA

SOURCES: *Sister Nivedita* by Pravrajika Atmaprana  
*The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*  
*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*



# INNER LIGHT

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

What is the function of light? It is to reveal objects covered by darkness, to illuminate spots or areas which are obscure. When we bring a candle into a dark room, at once we see what things there are in the room. The function of physical light then, has two aspects—removal of darkness and bringing to vision the unseen. This concept of the function of light we often project metaphorically to mental and moral levels. Thus, we speak of the light of conscience. When the mind is troubled and cannot decide what is wrong and what is right, a kind of darkness has blocked the mind. We need an inner light to show our way. We call it conscience. Like light, it at once dispels the shadow of confusion and promotes clear action. Love, likewise, is a light. When a person is lonely and there is nobody to care for him, no one with whom he can communicate, life for him really becomes dark. If now, unexpectedly, some people appear who can love, understand and care for him, his darkness disappears. He is ushered into a new hope and joy. The world becomes, at once, meaningful. That is what the light of love does.

So, also, we speak of the light of compassion, the light of truth, the light of peace, the light of knowledge, and so on. In each case a darkness is lifted and a positive experience of hope, joy, and fulfilment comes into being. These lights are some of the aspects of inner light which is more powerful than physical light. My world may be dark with regard to material achievement, yet my life may be shining in joy and peace because of the moral and spiritual lights that have been kindled in me.

The most important and significant inner

light is the light of consciousness. The Upaniṣads call it our true Self. It is that central light in the core of our personality which is illuminating all our experience—including that of physical light. Even though we are dealing with consciousness all the time, it is very difficult to understand its real nature. Consciousness is the fundamental ground of all existence. This inmost light in us illuminates our thoughts, emotions, aspirations, and actions. It has neither beginning nor end. It is eternal, infinite, and shining all the time. What we call physical light—the light of the sun or of the moon, the light of lightning, the light of stars—, even all these lights are 'illuminated' (known) by that inmost light of man, namely, his consciousness.

Vedānta classifies our normal experiences into three levels of consciousness—waking, dream, and deep sleep. When we are awake our consciousness is always associated with some object, which may be a sight, a sound, a smell, a thought, or an emotion. Anything we know—outside or inside—has first to be 'covered' with consciousness, so to say. When we look into our mind, we see a ceaseless stream of consciousness or 'experience' rolling on and on. In the language of philosophy, we call it objective consciousness since it is related to objects. Now, when we go into the dream state, a similar thing happens—only in a different way: there are unbroken chains of knowledge and experience just as in the waking state; but when we come back to waking, we see that those experiences were not real. The most absurd things happened which somehow passed off as real. But so long as the dream lasted, it was as true as waking.

Now, who is this that is the dreamer?

It cannot be the waking mind. How can the rational, waking mind, which knows the pros and cons of everything, be fooled by the incoherent happenings in the dream state? It seems that, when we go into the dream state, another mind is created, and that dream mind is also rational—on the dream level. It is a great creator too and can add reality to ideas. The ideas that emerge from the dream mind are objective realities just as in the waking state.

Deep sleep also is an experience. There, too, there is the light of consciousness. It is an experience of peace and tranquillity. In sleep, we do not have any objective experience as we have in waking or dream. Not only do we forget our body as in dream. We forget our worries, our anxieties, our duties, our responsibilities. This periodical forgetfulness of waking identity is necessary for our life. Sleep is important, not merely for biological life but for the psychological life as well. Incessant movement of the mind in diverse ways, as experienced in waking and in dream, is a tiresome burden. Man needs a relief from this. Sleep gives him this relief—this pause from 'knowing'. Otherwise he would be crushed by the weight of objective experience, by the weight of his 'knowing'. In sleep we have a kind of complete forgetfulness of everything. We are not conscious of our body, of our mind, of our ego, of our past, of our future, of time and space—of anything. That is sleep. But it is also an experience, though not like the experience of waking and dream. When we come back to waking, we say to ourselves, 'Oh, what a wonderful sleep I had! I wish I could have slept two hours longer.' Just as we wipe out the writing on a blackboard and keep it clean for future use, so it is necessary, for the very functioning of life as well as for peace of mind, to wipe out our waking and dream experiences for some time. We do not scrutinize and

analyse our sleep experiences deeply. In a naive way we say: 'Oh, sleep was so peaceful. I was so relaxed.' But we do not ask: 'What was this "I"? Was this the waking "I"?' The waking 'I' always needs objective experience—sight, sound, smell, and so on. It is intensely busy. The dream 'I' also needs the 'objects' of memories from waking or those of its own creation. The experiencer of deep sleep can neither be the waking 'I' nor the dream 'I'. It is another phase of our personality, you may say. Recalling our own experience in sleep, we can boldly say that *we* did not vanish during that interval. In this phase of consciousness we had no objective knowledge, as we do in waking or dream, but we cannot deny that there was an implicit knowledge of self-existence and peace without the mediation of what we usually call mind.

Vedānta advises the spiritual seeker on the path of knowledge, to co-ordinate and analyse these three experiences of waking, dream and sleep, and find out therefrom his real identity. Close examination of the three states brings us the insight that in the human personality there must be an element which is common to waking, dream, and sleep. This common element is the true perceiver of the experiences in the three states. In dream, a person does not remember his waking self; in sleep, both his waking and dream selves are obliterated. Still, in his heart of hearts, the person feels an inexplicable continuity of identity throughout the three states. This perceiver, the witness of the three states, is the inmost light in us—the light of eternal consciousness. The Vedāntic scriptures, over and over again, describe the glory of this Light—our true Self. The consciousness that we experience in our waking and dream states, and even that which underlies our deep sleep, is just a

distorted, broken consciousness. But our true Self is pure consciousness—consciousness without any objectivity. It is not bound by time or space or natural laws. It is the most fundamental reality in this world or any other.

The sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (called 'Dhyāna-yoga') prescribes basic ways of finding this inner Light. By the practice of concentration, we have to withdraw the mind from distracting thoughts and direct it to the Ātman—the shining Self within us. A little faith is necessary here because in the beginning we do not have any idea of that inner Light. But if we have patience and perseverance, and devotion to the Ideal, the mind develops inwardness and transparency, and is slowly able to touch the spiritual reality within.

Self-knowledge can also be attained by reflective reasoning (*vicāra*). The *Kena-upaniṣad* begins with this question: 'Who is it that is enabling the mind to think, the *prāṇa* (vital energy) to function, the ears to hear, the eyes to see?' The answer is found by discriminating between the 'seer' and the 'seen'—the changeless and the changing. The senses and the mind, we find, are in a constant state of motion, but the Self is the steady Witness. Consciousness is not merely some sort of vibration in the brain. Brain-action is possible only because of consciousness and not vice versa. Consciousness is knowledge without any objective content. All objective knowledge, we are finally driven to see, has its source in the Self—the inmost Light of Consciousness.

In all periods of India's spiritual history there have been men and women who discovered this truth of the Self. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* we read about the experiences of the sage, Vāmadeva: 'It was I who had become the sun, and Manu (the progenitor of humanity).' This 'I' is not the waking 'I' or the dream 'I'

but the true Self—the infinite Reality, eternal consciousness holding everything as existence-knowledge. Another sage proclaims in the *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*:

'Hear, oh ye children of immortality, even gods and angels, I have discovered my true Self, that ancient, infinite Being within my heart, that Light of all lights beyond all darkness. By finding Him, one can conquer death. There is no other way.'

Immortality is not a theological concept. It is not a state that we attain after our death. It is a truth which we have to know here. We have to find for ourselves that we are really timeless, deathless. As long as our mind remains in *māyā*, or ignorance, the whole world is a world of phenomena with beginnings and endings. But when we have discovered the changeless Truth, death loses all its terror. That which is the eternal Light of Consciousness is, indeed, immortality. Whatever is, is in the Self; the Self is the totality (*sarvam*). Says the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, 'If anyone makes the slightest differentiation in It (the Self), there is fear for him.'

Now, since God is so often described as Light, He must be that Light of Consciousness. Who but a God of Light could have created this universe of light? All things that were created and are being created are objects of knowledge; in other words, they shine in consciousness. Time, space, matter, energy, life and so on are, according to Vedānta, forms of the fundamental Reality—Consciousness.

When we are ignorant, we are helplessly bound by little things. Our body is just a little clod of earth. How insignificant it is compared to the vast outer universe. So, when we think of ourselves as material bodies, we are really small. We are constantly afraid of the impacts of matter and energy. Similarly, when we look upon ourselves as psychological entities, we are bound to be obsessed by a sense of littleness

and fear. The individual mind has really very little capacity of understanding. Again, it is always disturbed by tensions and passions. Naturally we feel insignificant and frustrated—how little we know compared to the vast accumulation of the knowledge of mankind! If we can understand our true Self as that all-embracing pure consciousness, the Light of all lights, all our experiences become reversed. Our identity then is no more with the body or the mind: we have become limitless. The world cannot terrify us any more. We have gone to the source of all knowledge.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the function of light is to reveal. Any piece of knowledge is really a kind of light. In our mind there are unnumbered dark chambers. A person who has never studied biology has in his mind, a region of darkness, so far as biology is concerned. If he studies that subject that chamber becomes more or less illumined. Knowledge of astronomy, in this way, can become

another illumined chamber. All the knowledge we are acquiring is a sort of progressive nonetheless partial illumination of our mind. But Self-knowledge is total illumination. As the *Mundaka-upaniṣad* tells us, by knowing the Self nothing remains unknown to us. This is not possible in the sphere of objective knowledge. In no field of investigation can we ever have complete knowledge. Think of the study of atoms. The more we investigate this field, the more we are dragged into the mysterious sub-atomic world. You study a particular flower. At one time you think you have got all the data about that flower, but soon you find that unexpected data are coming—the flower, before your very eyes, has become infinite, as it were. Some of the new data contradict the old findings. This is the case in every field of knowledge. Finality is only in Self-knowledge. When you have reached the inmost Light, you feel—you *know*—spontaneously, that there is no more any dark spot anywhere.

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## PILGRIMAGE TO THE SHRINE OF AMARNATH

MRS. JEAN POHLI

Man's search for God has continued since the beginning of time. In India, this quest frequently takes the form of a physical pilgrimage to a Tirtha, or Holy Place. Individuals may go to remote secluded spots in search of solace, and a special personal 'tonic' of spiritual renewal and strength. Again, thousands of pilgrims may travel hundreds of miles facing arduous obstacles—minimal food and shelter, exhausting climbs to almost inaccessible heights—to reach a goal. Perhaps this will be the birthplace of a great Saint, perhaps a cherished relic, perhaps a Tirtha where strong vibrations of sacred-

ness emanate in waves to inspire and uplift the seeker.

An indomitable, secure, fearless faith seems to surround such pilgrims and firmly hold and guide them unwaveringly towards the goal, despite the hundreds of hazards and hurdles in the way. These latter are very real. High altitudes with their rarefied atmosphere require faster and faster breathing and heart-rates; the racing and at times irregular pulse may defy correct tabulation. Unpredictable weather, especially in the Himalayas, may suddenly without warning drop the temperature precipitously. A brilliantly warm,

sunny day can yield abruptly to a vicious, blinding sleeting rain or freezing snow-storm. The possibility of illness hovers menacingly along the way, with no medical care available. Physical exhaustion naturally will assail foot-weary or saddle-sore pilgrims who can only see endless miles of travel ahead of them before any possible sight of their projected goal.

Yet this apparent inaccessibility of the goal, and all the hazards intervening, seem only to spur the pilgrim onwards, so that his soul may soar to an elevation beyond the awesome grandeur of the Tirtha: the obstacles in his path seem only to become tests of his determination. Such a goal—with such a path—is Amarnath Cave, the holy abode of Lord Siva, the Lord of Immortality,<sup>1</sup> high in the interior of the Kashmir Himalayas.

The Amarnath Yatra (pilgrimage, lit., journey) has been a lifetime dream of multitudes of deeply spiritual people for centuries. At least two reasons for this may be seen: it seems to epitomize the extreme difficulties lying in the pathway of spiritual aspirants; yet, like them, the pilgrim knows that the goal is accessible despite all impediments, because others have reached it and returned unscathed—full of the tidings that one can and must reach his Goal through faith, ardour, and persistent effort.

This pilgrimage takes place annually, and generally in the month of August. For years the Government has been giving official help to the thousands of pilgrims visiting the shrine at the most auspicious time of the full moon of Sravan (the month usually coinciding with August). Under this sponsorship, proper medical and other care is available, but usually not to smaller groups proceeding at other times on their own initiative. Such was our

group of eight, travelling unaccompanied almost two weeks before the full-moon day (Purnima). We were however blessed with sunshine, particularly intense in this rarefied air, and escaped the drenching rains and high winds which followed the thousands who started a few days after our return.

One morning at 4.30, with mounting anticipation and suppressed excitement, we began our two-hour car journey from Srinagar to Pahalgam, 'the village of the shepherds'. Through the Pahalgam valley flow two rivers, and tall pine trees cover the gentle slopes. Slowly our eyes lifted to the distant white glaciers waiting silently thousands of feet above.

The bumpy road from Pahalgam to Chandanwari is now motorable by jeep or by car, but previously was negotiable only on foot or by pony. Thick groves of pines covered the hills, and the Lidar River roared below as we bounced along this pebbled road toward Chandanwari where all vehicles would have to be left behind. This was a 2,000 foot ascent from Pahalgam; and on arrival at Chandanwari we were shown a map outlining the entire area and showing us our forthcoming journey in linear detail.

Pack horses were here available to carry gear of all sorts, ranging from food supplies, bedding and extra clothing and tents to umbrellas and camera equipment. Those pilgrims hardy enough to climb by foot, might carry a few necessary items in a back-pack, but most also required ponies to supply their tents and other needs in campgrounds along the way. Groups of pilgrims were moving in slow determination upwards from Chandanwari; and on many a face was seen a look of expectancy and anticipation which could well strike a spark of infectious joy in the heart of other pilgrims.

For pilgrims travelling on foot, many

<sup>1</sup> *Lit.*, Lord of Immortals.

overnight campgrounds with pitched tents were necessary, as distances across such terrain are relatively great. During the peak season of the pilgrimage, several thousand people would encamp thus, rapidly creating small canvas villages, then before dawn leaving the areas just as rapidly, with hardly a trace of their night's halt remaining.

From Chandanwari at the outset one must cross a natural ice bridge under which a fast-racing stream cascaded downhill. Slowly, carefully the sure-footed ponies picked their way over slippery rocks, small rivulets, around narrow slanted pathways, balancing themselves precariously near the edges of nothingness. One must conquer the uphill lunge of the horse, sitting high on his shoulders, before having suddenly to reverse the maneuver as a downward descent begins!

The ascent was gradual and slow, but the ponies could make only approximately two miles an hour, as each hoof had to be located firmly before the next step was ventured. This gave the pilgrim rider ample opportunity to observe and absorb the magnificent beauties of the Himalayas, with the foreground of densely forested hillsides, trusting his safety necessarily to his fourlegged friend.

Less than a mile from Chandanwari began a steep climb towards Pishu Ghati, one of the most difficult parts of the journey. But in what exhilaration of accomplishment one delights after each precarious ascent is conquered! From elevation of 9,500 feet at Chandanwari to the highest point of 14,500 at Mahagunus, wide panoramas often spread before the eyes of the pilgrim. The Himalayas in their vastness fill one with wonder and a humble respect for the Creator of this geological masterpiece. Jagged, rugged stark ridges were in contrast to the soaring grandeur of the snow-crested peaks, towering 20,000 and

more feet high, seemingly touching the vivid blue of the cloudless ocean of sky. Again, periodically the sky would become dotted with puffy wisps of milk-white clouds. And any time, a cloudburst might come unexpectedly, completely drenching in its ferocity, only to cease as suddenly as it began, having brought a stiff, rapidly drying breeze.

From Pishu Ghati top to Sheshnag Lake, the going was relatively easy. In the distance could be seen the surprisingly vivid turquoise green of Sheshnag Lake at 11,730 feet elevation, reflecting the icy peaks in its placid mirror-surface. Two small glaciers feed this lake and some pilgrims occasionally report seeing the fabled divine Serpent of Vishnu (Shesha), streaking through the calm waters. At sundown, the lake reflects the snow on the mountain peaks turned pink by the setting sun—a breathtaking sight!

But gradually the stately pines below Sheshnag were left behind, and the climb above the tree-line brought a different kind of silence, which penetrated deeply, creating an all-pervading calm. The treeless mountains in their barren beauty, have yet cradled in their laps acres of meadows filled at this season with a profusion of coloured wild flowers. Soft pinks, blues and lavenders, intermingled with purple violets and lemon-yellow buttercups, give softness and warmth to the otherwise desolate surroundings. The silence seemed to captivate the pilgrims, inculcating a rare 'in-depth' feeling as they climbed nearer and nearer to their goal.

The mountain pass of Mahagunus—meaning 'Great Serpent' in Kashmiri—was really like a serpent as it wound its way upwards to 14,500 feet. The Government had at intervals placed signs of encouragement to the weary, struggling pilgrim, reading, 'Relax, you're almost there!' A rest was required at the top plateau, as breath-

ing had become extremely laboured and one needed to slowly absorb the pervasive strength which seemed to emanate from the beauty of the exquisite surroundings.

The slow, four-mile descent from Mahagunus to Panchatarni was slippery and wet from a sudden, short but heavy rain squall. The rest house, a welcome sight in the distance towards the end of the long fourteen-hour day, seemed to our exhausted group of eight, even farther away than it was. Panchatarni is the 'Place of Five Streams', in each of which the more zealous pilgrims would take a dip, passing from one stream to another in wet clothes despite the intense cold. Our small group did not observe this age-old rite, but went immediately and wearily toward our shelter for the night.

Here we gathered together all the experiences, too numerous to isolate in our minds, that had taken us step by step from a long-cherished desire for making pilgrimage to Amarnath, to the actual realization that tomorrow, with Siva's grace, this dream would become a living reality.

But the sharp cold soon filtered into the rest house and hurried us into the warmth of our sleeping bags after a steaming cup of hot chocolate had begun to alleviate the shivers. Dense darkness settled over the house and the indescribable quiet of the Himalayas pulled the blanket of night around the exhausted travellers. Thoughts of the morrow drifted through our minds before we fell at last into deep sleep. Intense anticipation and longing to touch the feet of Lord Siva dominated my thinking, as images of the Great White God floated dreamily by. Would Siva be visible to us, as He was to Swami Vivekananda? Swamiji 'entered the cave and came face to face there with the Lord Himself'.<sup>2</sup>

Visualizing these powerful thoughts was hardly conducive to sleep or even dream! But physical exhaustion conquered all, and seemingly in a matter of minutes, night became the dawning of the day of days.

The early-morning riser had to look thousands of feet above him to glimpse the sun slowly beginning to spread its feeble rays over the top crests of the peaks. Shivering partly from the icy chill still lingering from the night, and partly from anticipation of the day to come, the early one returned expectantly to the other awakening pilgrims. A meditative, spiritual mood seemed to permeate our group as we prepared for the climax of our pilgrimage.

The last four miles from Panchatarni to Amarnath Cave, appeared to have been created as especially arduous, for a final test to the pilgrim's determination. A particularly steep incline covered with large slippery stones, caused horses to step gingerly so as not to stumble, and the rider consciously had to keep an especially firm rein control on his pony. This narrow winding upward path came to a crest, and immediately began a steep downward descent, equally precarious. But the anticipation of the cherished goal almost within reach, seemed to banish all concern, as if to prove that one's little share of tranquillity was somehow deserved. The previous night's thoughts seemed to become more real. A magnetic, enveloping feeling of timelessness seemed to grip the pilgrim, and the barrenness of the surroundings only added to the current of expectancy as one drew nearer to this Siva of the Eternal Himalayas.

Suddenly these thoughts were merged into the reality as, there in the distance, nestling in an austere grey-white rock, was the opening to the mysterious Cave of Amarnath. Through a snowy gorge, over one last glacier and past a fast running

<sup>2</sup> His Eastern and Western Disciples: *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1949), p. 604.

stream of icy water where some pilgrims bathe in spite of the unbearable cold—and then, there it was, barely a hundred yards up a series of terraced, stone steps!

As one climbs the man-made stairs to the cave, breathing becomes difficult at 13,500 feet elevation, slowing the final steps of the pilgrim—as though purposely arranged so that he could savour the mounting feeling of reverence as the goal came within reach. If he were lucky he might glimpse the flight of the two doves, from crevice to crevice in the rock outside the cave, symbolizing Siva and Parvati and considered most auspicious.

Shoes and socks were removed to enter the sacred precincts of the cave before approaching the natural Emblem of Siva. Icy water dripping from the ceiling of the cave brought to our icicle-cold feet a warming numbness. But this numbing of the body only heightened the keen awareness that our pilgrim quest had come to an end.

Nature had carved out of solid rock this abode of Siva, approximately 200 feet high, 200 feet wide, and 100 feet in depth. And on the right side of the cave, secure in a natural niche, stood a shining, pure white ice pillar, over seven feet high and about four in thickness. Snow pigeons fluttered in and out of the cave occasionally. Surrounding the Linga (Emblem of Siva) was a railing, and to the left was a place where pilgrims fasten pieces of cloth, pictures of themselves, or notes conveying a wish that might hopefully be fulfilled—even to the boon of immortality.

Since there were so few in our group, we were permitted to stand within touching distance of the Great White God. I was unprepared for such overpowering magnetism and potency as it emanated. Time seemed to stand still, and the goal of the human yearning for immortality to be with-

in one's very grasp. The soul seemed to find peace and for a moment to become one with the Supreme.

Thus Darshan was moving and meaningful. Holy chanting in Sanskrit by a Hindu pundit and a Mohammedan priest echoed throughout the cave, after which a Rakhi<sup>3</sup> of red and yellow thread was tied around each pilgrim's left wrist. Rock candy, raisins and cash were part of our offering to the Lord, and during the chants the pilgrims gently tossed flower petals and Bel leaves to the Lord. Everyone left finally with enough Prasad (offered food)—consisting of sugar candy, dry almonds, pieces of dried coconut, and raisins—to take home to family and friends.

Outside the Cave there were no booths, no vendors selling wares, icons, pictures or incense; nor any other distractions for the pilgrims. Emerging, after Darshan, from the home of the Lord of Peace, into the warmth of the brilliant sun, one clutched closely the reverent, fulfilling feelings that had absorbed, sobered, and permeated the pilgrim drawing him deep into spiritual thought, continuing throughout his return journey from Amarnath.

One can never be quite the same again after entering the Himalayas, completing the strenuous pilgrimage to Amarnath, and actually touching the Lord of Immortality. The joyous pilgrim descended from the mountain-shrine, carrying with him a spiritual exaltation, knowing he had experienced a momentary lifting of the veil which gave a glimpse into Reality.

Swami Premananda has quoted Sri Ramakrishna as saying: 'He who has no God within will not find Him in a holy city. He who has the Lord in his heart will find him there. Men bring sanctity

<sup>3</sup> A ritual thread, usually varicoloured, which is tied around one's wrist on certain festive occasions, or on undertaking a vow, or visiting a *tirtha*.



with them to a place and make it holy. It is men's purity that makes a place of pilgrimage, otherwise how can a place purify a man?'<sup>4</sup> This search to find God takes a variety of forms in the spiritual aspirant's struggle, one of which is certainly pilgrimage to holy places. Thus the multitudes of pilgrims with Him in their hearts have over the centuries sanctified these Tirthas; and those who believe that visiting such a place will make them holy, have already ignited in themselves the spark that will gradually become an all-consuming fire of divine yearning, opening the door to God-realization.

'The supreme ideal of human life is to know God...', says Swami Brahmananda. 'He shines forth always and everywhere. He dwells within you, He dwells within me, He dwells within all creatures, and in the plants and herbs as well... The one supreme Spirit pervades everything. Make Him your ideal, Him and Him alone.'<sup>5</sup> This summation could be the motto of each pilgrim as the steadfastly moves towards Truth. Coming in touch with Immortality, if only for an instant, can be an overwhelming and uplifting experience, and lead to the realization that in reality man is one with God.

<sup>4</sup> Dhan Gopal Mukherji: *The Face of Silence* (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1926), p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> Swami Prabhavananda: *The Eternal Companion* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1945), p. 136.

(Continued from p. 95)

also became inspired to help.

In Puri I had a vision of Mother Lakṣmī (Goddess of wealth), with various kinds of food and clothing. When I reported this to Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] he said to me: 'No more have you to think about

this sort of thing. With Mother Lakṣmī's grace, there will be no more want in your Ashrama.' Really since that time there has been no want here. Whatever was necessary would come to the Ashrama in time.

# THE SOCIETAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARLY BUDDHIST SANGHA

MRS. NANCY ANN NAYAR

## PART II

The Buddhist Sangha as described in Part I of this paper was unlike anything that had arisen on the Indian scene—a religious corporation based on democratic principles and real communal life, guided by the rules of the extensive and elaborate *Vinayapitaka*. Yet, as R. C. Majumdar has written 'its (the sangha's) roots lay deep in the soil of India'.<sup>27</sup> In this part of the paper we will discuss just what those roots were and the extent to which organization and ceremony were adapted from Hindu or local tribal society.

*Pre-Buddhist mendicants.* There is no prototype of the religious wanderer in Vedic literature, and the whole trend of Brahmanical literature (with the exception of some late Upanishads) indicates that Aryan life and society did not regard religious mendicancy favourably. Only at the time of the later Upanishads did the institution of the Four Ashramas become well-developed, and the Brahmanical *sannyasin* appear.<sup>28</sup>

By 600 B.C. religious mendicancy was widespread. Sukumar Dutt attributes the rise of *sramanas* (wandering religious teachers, also called *samanas*)—especially

strong in Eastern India—to the incomplete Aryanization of the local peoples.<sup>29</sup> His theory is this: Aryanization took place in two different stages in Eastern India. Aryan ideas and thought spread rapidly among the non-Aryans but the 'modification or replacement of non-Aryan institutions by the Aryan' was a much slower process.<sup>30</sup> While Aryan philosophies had reached the people in Eastern India by 600 B.C., the Aryan institutions of learning, that is, residences of learned Brahmans, *acariyas* and gurus, and corporate universities had not. As it is doubtful that analogous institutions existed among the tribes, then Dutt thinks it is reasonable to presume that the impact of Aryan thought gave rise to a new class of men who went about discussing philosophy and teaching the uneducated. Thus, these functions of the *sramanas* were similar to those which the Brahmanas exercised in Western India.<sup>31</sup>

Northeast India had numerous *sramanas* seeking converts to their particular philosophy or sect. One who had left the household state and become a wandering mendicant (*parivrajaka*) would seek out such a leader of a sect (*gana*, sangha), accepting him as master and recognizing his teaching as the true one. At first the Buddha and his followers formed a sangha which was little different from the many other teacher-pupil groups in the area. In the early days the *Sakyaputtiya samanasa*, as they were called, were bound by loyalty

<sup>27</sup> R. C. Majumdar: *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (K. L. Mukhopadhyay & Co., Calcutta, 1969), p. 271

<sup>28</sup> *vide* Sukumar Dutt: *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1962), pp. 38-40. (Although the learned author is quoting this authority, we must record our disagreement with them on this point. The institution of the four Ashramas, including Sannyasa, was very well developed even at the time of the earliest Upanishads. The *Brihadaranyaka-upanishad* alone would provide irrefutable evidence for this. *Ed.*)

<sup>29</sup> *vide* Sukumar Dutt: *Early Buddhist Monachism* (Asia Publishing House, London, 1960), p. 56

<sup>30</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>31</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, pp. 54-5

to their *sattha* (master) and his teachings. Their rules of conduct, which were later on to become so important in their organization into a corporate body, were as yet of a general nature only and not distinctively Buddhist.<sup>32</sup> But as converts increased in number the Buddha charged them with the mission to 'go forth and wander about for the good of the Many; the happiness of the Many—in compassion for the world—for the good, the welfare, the happiness of gods and men',<sup>33</sup> and the Buddhist sangha gradually differentiated itself from the other *ganas* and sanghas as we shall now see. Though its members were initially part of and indistinguishable from the *parivrajakas*, the gradual move to a new mode of religious existence was beginning.

*From eremitical to cenobitical life: Uposatha and Vassa Vasa.* The sangha, in its gradual differentiation from other religious groups of the time, evolved into a unique community. Yet the key institutions responsible for this growth from a community-like-all-the-others to a unique cenobium, were adoptions or adaptations of ceremonies and customs long in use on the subcontinent. Two adaptations from the Hindu religious tradition, which we have already described, the *uposatha* ceremony and the *vassa vasa* (rain retreat), illustrate well the fact that the Buddha for the most part built his sangha on traditions already well-established in the area. They also show how he altered the function of the adopted traditions so that after a period of years they became almost unrecognizable.

It is clear in the *Vinaya* Texts that the *uposatha* ceremony was adapted from a similar one practised by another *parivrajaka* sect. The Buddha, according to the 'Mahavagga', instituted this ceremony for Buddhist Bhikkhus at the explicit request of King Bimbisara:

At that time the Blessed Buddha dwelt near Ragagaha, on the Giggakuta mountain. At that time the Paribbagakas belonging to the Titthiya schools assembled on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each half month and recited their Dhamma. The people went to them in order to hear the Dhamma. They were filled with favour towards, and were filled with faith in the Paribbagakas belonging to Titthiya schools; the Paribbagakas belonging to Titthiya schools gained adherents...Now when the Magadha King Seniya Bimbisara was alone, and had retired into solitude, the following consideration presented itself to his mind: 'The Paribbagakas belonging to Titthiya schools assemble now on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each half month and recite their Dhamma. The people go to them in order to hear the Dhamma. They are filled with favour towards, and are filled with faith in, the Paribbagakas who belong to Titthiya schools; the Paribbagakas who belong to Titthiya schools gain adherents. What if the Reverend Ones (the Buddhist Bhikkhus) were to assemble also on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each half month.'

Then the Magadha King Seniya Bimbisara went to the place where the Blessed One was; having approached him and having respectfully saluted the Blessed One, he sat down near him. Sitting near him the Magadha King Seniya Bimbisara said to the Blessed One: 'Lord, when I was alone and had retired into solitude, the following consideration presented itself to my mind: "The Paribbagakas, etc...What if the Reverend Ones were to assemble also on (these days of the month)." ...Then the Blessed One taught, incited, animated and gladdened the Magadha King Seniya Bimbisara by religious discourse...(and then) addressed the Bhikkhus: 'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus, that you assemble on the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth day of each month.'<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35

<sup>34</sup> *Vinaya Texts*, in T. W. Rhys Davids & Hermann Oldenberg, eds.: *Sacred Books of The East* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1965)—Mahavagga II, 1, 1-4

Neither of Buddhist nor of *parivrajaka* origin, the *uposatha* ceremony was an outgrowth of an ancient Vedic ceremonial ritual. In the Vedic age the days of Full Moon and New Moon were regarded as auspicious for performing the sacrifice, and the two Vedic sacrifices—*purnamasa* and *darsa*—used to be offered on these days. The days—called *vrata* or preparatory days—preceding the sacrifice were ceremonially observed by the priest by fasting and spending the night in the fire-room. The *vrata* day has been held sacred in India since very primitive times. Legend in the *Satapatha-Brahmana* even has it that the gods themselves dwell with the priest on these days.<sup>35</sup> It appears that the institution existed even among those who did not practice the Aryan sacrificial cult. On these sacred days, e.g., the Jainas would retire into the *posadha-sala* to observe the four abstinences (eating, luxuries, sexual intercourse, and daily work). Similarly, Buddhist laymen would observe the Eight Silas.<sup>36</sup> As the Eight *Silas* were part of the normal everyday life of the *sramana*, a substitute for observing the ‘sanctity’ of the days was found. That substitute was religious discourse.<sup>37</sup> Brahmanical *sannyasins* often ‘rehearsed’ Upanishads, while each of the *parivrajaka* sects would ‘rehearse’ their own canonical texts. Buddha at first requested that the monks recite the Dhamma on these *uposatha* days, just as the other *parivrajakas* did. Later, when their general rules of conduct had developed into a more specific and elaborate code of law known as the ‘Patimokkha’, the form of the *uposatha* was changed, and the recitation of the ‘Patimokkha’ in a confessional liturgy became the main feature of the ceremony. Each

section of the ‘Patimokkha’ was read out, and at the end of each section the monks were asked three times if they were pure in the matter. Any offences committed against the rule had to be confessed. The confessional doctrine has two parts—religious and disciplinary. The first is concerned with absolution, the second with disciplining of the offender. (It is still not known how breakers of the rule were dealt with in terms of discipline before the Order had evolved to the stage where each Bhikkhu was considered to belong to a particular sangha.)<sup>38</sup> The *uposatha*, thus, became a confessional service, an instrument of sangha discipline and a rite of communal solidarity. It is very interesting to note that once the *Vinaya* code had become fully developed and accepted as the source of monastic law, the original disciplinary function of the *uposatha* ceremony was outgrown, and it continued only as an expression of communal solidarity.

Once the attendance became compulsory, and the validity of the ceremony depended on complete attendance, the *uposatha* ceremony led to the demarcation of boundaries, which would later become important as each local individual sangha began to function as a separate unit.

An outgrowth of an ancient Vedic ceremony, the *uposatha* had in reality a function that was entirely new. Further, the different Buddhist sanghas which had grown up all over the northern part of India now had a particular observance that concerned them all. As a factor of unity among the different Buddhist sanghas, the *uposatha* was thus further important.<sup>39</sup>

Probably the most important factor in the transition from wandering life to

<sup>35</sup> *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 82

<sup>36</sup> *vide* *ibid.*,

<sup>37</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 83

<sup>38</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 85

<sup>39</sup> *vide* Gokuldas De: *Democracy in Early Buddhist Sangha* (Calcutta University, 1955), p. 63

monasticism was the institution of the *vassa vasa*. This is another example which illustrates how a traditional institution was adopted, and then almost entirely changed in its function. But while the *uposatha* ceremony was mainly restricted to the life of the Order of Bhikkhus, the *vassa vasa* had an important impact on sangha-laity relations. *Parivrajakas* of all sects observed the annual 'rain retreat', that is, the stoppage of wandering during the monsoon rains. Adopted initially as necessity, it acquired over the years some ceremonial significance.

According to the *Maha Govind Suttanta*, the idea had long ago come into being that anyone who spent the *vassa vasa* in constant meditation without changing his seat, concentrating on the thought of love towards all beings, would meet and converse with Brahma, that is, would attain the highest level of spirituality.<sup>40</sup> The rain retreat rules for the Brahmanical ascetic state only that he must remain in 'fixed residence' during the duration of the monsoon season.<sup>41</sup> The Jainas, on the other hand, had more elaborate rules, but no regulations requiring 'living together' during this season, but no 'especially made lodgings' were allowed.<sup>42</sup>

The Buddha himself observed *vassa vasa* from the beginning, but apparently did not prescribe it for the community as a whole until around the nineteenth year of his mission.<sup>43</sup> Promulgation of the *vassa vasa* is ascribed in the *Vinaya* to the demand of the people, who did not like the monks to be walking on and hence destroying the newly grown vegetation and insect life so abundant at that time of the year:

<sup>40</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>41</sup> *vide* *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 101

<sup>42</sup> *vide* Deo: *History of Jaina Monachism*, quoted in *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p. 54

<sup>43</sup> *vide* De: *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90

At that time the Blessed One dwelt at Ragagaha, in the Veluvana, in the Kalandakanivapa. At that time the retreat during the rainy season had not yet been instituted by the Blessed One for the Bhikkhus. Thus the Bhikkhus went on their travels alike during winter, summer, and the rainy season. People were annoyed, murmured, and became angry saying, 'How can the Sakyaputtiya Samanas go on their travels alike during winter, summer, and the rainy season? They crush the green herbs, they hurt vegetable life, they destroy the life of many small living things. Shall the ascetics who belong to Tittiya schools, whose doctrine is ill preached, retire during the rainy season and arrange places for themselves to live in? Shall the birds make their nests on the summits of the trees, and retire during the rainy season, and arrange themselves places to live in; and yet the Sakyaputtiya samanas go on their travels alike during winter, summer, and the rainy season, crushing the green herbs, hurting vegetable life, and destroying the life of many small things?'<sup>44</sup>

However, it is clear from the rules on the subject that it was not instituted primarily in order to enable the Bhikkhus to practice *ahimsa* (non-violence). In fact, the monks were merely confined in groups to certain geographical areas called *avasas*. Within the area (which usually consisted of a 15 mile radius from an *uposatha* center) they were free to move as usual.<sup>45</sup> This marking out of boundaries had an impact on the development of monastic life. As the retirement to the *avasa* became a mandatory requirement, groups of monks became attached to certain areas or *avasas* and would return to them each year. Furthermore, specially built residences were allowed, as they were not in Jainism, and the generosity of the laity was often expressed in the building of shelters for the monks.

<sup>44</sup> *Vinaya Texts*, Mahavagga, III, 1, 1-2

<sup>45</sup> *vide* De: *op. cit.*, p. 90

The rules covering the *vassa vasa* were many, but primarily it was intended to be spent by groups of Bhikkhus together, 'living in the midst of friends and relatives'.<sup>46</sup> This provided for a period of close and reconciling contact between the monks and the laity. Emphasis was placed on maintaining this contact at all times during the retreat, and the insignificant position of the layman as regards the *uposatha* ceremony was more than compensated for during this period when they offered shelter and food to the monks. An opportunity was had by the laity to see and become acquainted with the Bhikkhus first hand, and hence become acquainted with the teaching and practice of Buddhism.

The ceremony of *pavarana* (Vedic *parana* which means breaking off an observance or vow with feasts and celebration) was instituted at the same time as the *vassa vasa*.<sup>47</sup> Solemnizing the termination of the rain retreat was an ancient custom, as the Suttanta literature points out: '...in ancient days and also in the days which were still more ancient, on the full moon day of *uposatha* when *pavarana* was held in the night, the entire body of gods belonging to the heaven of Thirty-three sat in their assembly called Sudhamma making it full, etc.'<sup>48</sup> Little more is known about the origins of this ceremony, but its adoption as an instrument for increasing and expressing good relations between the sangha and the laity made it a valuable instrument in the propagation of Buddhism.

*From structure to institution: Vinaya and the Sanghakamma.* The *uposatha* and the *vassa vasa* both contributed to and expressed the increase in communal solidarity. As the monks, in local groups, became more and more conscious of their

unity, and as that unity was more closely expressed in living together in a fixed area during one season of the year, the need for additional rules and regulations, for an additional organizational structure, gradually made itself felt. Once again the Buddha and the monks who followed him turned to the local society and its traditions for inspiration.

As the society of Bhikkhus gradually evolved, so too did its rule of law—probably over a period of a century or a century and a half.<sup>49</sup> The *Vinaya* is a difficult text to study because rules seemingly inconsistent with each other or apparently belonging to different stages of the monastic life are placed together on the assumption that all had been spoken by the Buddha. There are two particular features of the *Vinaya* which are of interest here. First is the particular form of the law, and second the development of its authority.

The form of laying down a rule of law is peculiar in the *Vinaya*, and there is no precedent for it in the Brahmanical legal codes.<sup>50</sup> Each rule is in the form of a statement by the Buddha after a case in point has already arisen. Really he acts not as a law-giver but as a judge. Uniform use of the Buddha's name to give legitimacy to newer rules led to the practice of placing all rules in the setting of legends about the Buddha. Legalistic and formalistic in style, the *Vinaya*, as Sukumar Dutt has commented, 'enshrines a fossilized relic of the mode of law-making prevalent in primitive societies'.<sup>51</sup> It is not known to what extent the form of the *Vinaya* was influenced by the law which prevailed among the people of the Buddha (Sakyas), though it is known that the people of that area did possess a body of law because it

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92

<sup>47</sup> *vide ibid.*, p. 102

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101

<sup>49</sup> *vide Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 13-14

<sup>50</sup> *vide Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p. 75

<sup>51</sup> *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 25

is referred to in the Hindu Law Code.<sup>52</sup>

During the lifetime of the Buddha he was, as far as we know, the sole source of the law. After his death, no known locus of authority existed in the sangha as a source of law, and yet it is certain that the *Vinaya* developed and grew for some years after his death. The *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta* lists four Mahapadesas or sources of Dhamma and *Vinaya*, and suggests that any rule arising from any of these sources should be compared with *Vinaya*: '(1) Direct promulgation by Buddha (2) Promulgation of a rule by a sangha containing elderly and leading men at an avasa (3) Promulgation of a rule by a number of elderly and learned bhikkhus versed in canon law at an avasa (4) Promulgation of a rule by a learned teacher of the canon at an avasa.'<sup>53</sup> As Rahula has explained, 'The *Vinaya* was not ultimate truth, but only a convention agreed upon for the smooth conduct of a particular community.'<sup>54</sup>

Having grown from a body of general rules on moral conduct, the law was given its final form and authority by its adoption as the *regula* of the Order at the Council at Rajagriha. From that time on, the *Vinaya* (Pali Canon) could neither be changed nor added to. Though given final and permanent form, the lack of recognition of the *Vinaya* as 'ultimate truth' is best illustrated by the story from the *Vinaya* Texts telling of the reason for making it unchangeable:

...The venerable Maha Kassapa laid a resolution before the Samgha: 'Let the venerable Samgha hear me. There are certain of our precepts which relate to matters in which the laity are concerned. Now the laity know of us that "such and such things are proper for

you Samanas who are Sakyaputtayas, and such and such things are not". If we were to revoke the lesser and minor precepts, it will be said to us: "A set of precepts was laid down for his disciples by the Samana Gotama to endure until the smoke should rise from his funeral pyre. So long as their teacher remained with these men, so long did they train themselves in the precepts. Since their teacher has passed away from them, no longer do they now train themselves in the precepts."'<sup>55</sup>

The *Vinaya* law was administered by the democratic assemblies discussed in Part I of this paper. Scholars are fairly well agreed that this Bhikkhu assembly is modelled after the form of government that prevailed among the peoples where the Buddha and many of his disciples were born. These people are variously referred to as 'clans' (Rhys Davids), 'tribes' (Sukumar Dutt), and 'republics' (K. P. Jayaswal). The Buddha's originality consisted not in the conception of the democratic constitution of the sangha, but in transferring and applying the constitution of the political corporation to the religious bodies.

The highly developed rules and procedures of the Bhikkhu assembly indicate that it must have originated in a milieu where such a form of government was not a new thing.<sup>56</sup> But the most compelling reason for accepting this theory is found in the *Vinaya* Texts themselves. When the envoy of the King of Magadha asked the Buddha his opinion as to the advisability of invading the Vajjis (one of the local democratic tribes) the Buddha addressed his reply to his closest disciple:

'So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians (1) hold full and frequent assemblies, (2) So long as they meet together in concord and rise in concord and carry

<sup>52</sup> *vide loc.*, cit.

<sup>53</sup> *Early Buddhist Monachism*, pp. 19-21

<sup>54</sup> Walpola Rahula: *History of Buddhism in Ceylon—the Anuradhapura Period* (M. D. Gunasena & Co., Colombo, 1956), p. 156

<sup>5</sup> *Vinaya Texts*, Kullavagga XI, 1, 1

<sup>56</sup> *vide* U. N. Ghoshal: *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1965), p. 265

out Vajjian business in concord (3) So long as they enact nothing not already established, abrogate nothing that has been already enacted and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of the Vajjians, as established in former days (4) So long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian Elders and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words (5) So long as no women or girls belonging to them are detained among them by force or abducted (that is, law and not force reigns) (6) So long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian Chaityas (that is, follow the established religion) (7) So long as the rightful protection, defence and support shall be fully provided for the Arhants amongst them (that is, follow the established practice and keep out Brahminic religious systems) So long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline but to prosper.<sup>57</sup>

Soon after the envoy had left, the Buddha called a meeting of the Sangha and addressed them. He spoke of the same seven conditions for the welfare of the community applying each to the Buddhist Sangha.

Though not much is known regarding the technicalities of procedure in the political assemblies, information on voting procedure and majority rule can be had from this example of the Sakya assembly in session. When the question of surrender to the King of Kosala was being discussed opinion was divided. The Sakyas, having decided to find out the opinion of the majority of the people, held a vote on the subject. The Sakyas said: 'Let us all assemble and deliberate whether we shall open the gates (to the King). When they had assembled some said "Open them". Others advised not doing so. Some said "As there are various opinions,

we will find out the opinion of the majority. So they set about by voting on the subject..." Voting in favour of capitulation, the city capitulated.'<sup>58</sup>

This quotation also gives evidence of the decline of the republics, and a rise of monarchies around the time of the Buddha. In fact, the Sakyas, the republican people from whom the Buddha came, lost their independence to the King of Kosala in the Buddha's lifetime.<sup>59</sup> That the organizers of the sangha were trying to perpetuate the features of tribal life when it was becoming obsolete through social evolution is the thesis that has been advanced by the Bengali Marxist scholar D. P. Chattopadhyaya,<sup>60</sup> but, as Sukumar Dutt indicates, this is still largely a matter of speculation.<sup>61</sup> For whatever reason, however, it remains clear that the Buddha and his followers chose as the model for the Buddhist sangha the republican assembly of their peoples.

*Sangha hierarchy and entry into the Order.* Except for those offices filled by assembly election, the only hierarchy that existed in the sangha was the thera-novice, or teacher-pupil one. Rules regulating the relationship between the *acariya* and his pupil are 'an exact replica of the Brahminical system'.<sup>62</sup> All members of the sangha were tied together by bonds of *nissaya* (spiritual tutelage)—either as pupils or as teachers.<sup>63</sup> The institution of the *nissaya* is best illustrated in the *Vinaya* Texts. As the popularity of Buddhism grew it began to attract some who were not really prepared to live the monastic life. People had been complaining about the

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 86

<sup>59</sup> *vide ibid.*, p. 43

<sup>60</sup> *vide Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p. 87

<sup>61</sup> *vide loc. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 149

<sup>63</sup> *vide De: op. cit.*, p. 35

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in K. P. Jayaswal: *Hindu Polity* (Bangalore Printing & Publishing Co., Bangalore City, 1967), pp. 40-1



improper behaviour of some of the monks. Buddha, in response to these complaints is said to have replied:

'I prescribe, O Bhikkhus (that young Bhikkhus choose) an upagghaya (or preceptor). The upagghaya, O Bhikkhus, ought to consider the *saddhivihārika* (pupil) as a son; the *saddhivihārika* ought to consider the upagghaya as a father. These two, united by mutual reverence, confidence, and communion of life will progress, advance and reach a high stage in this doctrine and discipline.'<sup>64</sup>

For young men to lead a strict life under the direction of a 'guru' was not an unusual phenomenon in India at the time. The really innovative factor was that the young man usually stayed on and continued his later life as a monk, never to return to the householder state.<sup>65</sup>

Membership in the sangha was open to anyone and this was in itself a repudiation of the caste system, which by the Buddha's time had become a bulwark of Aryan religion and society. The life of an ascetic was permitted in Brahmanical religion for all the higher classes, but there is no evidence whatsoever that the lowest class, the Sudras, were allowed to practice it.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, as a general practice one could become a *sannyasin* only after having passed through the householder stage (*ashrama*) of life. The *sramanas*, though, as opposed to the Brahmanas, did not require any age or stage except that of mature mind and body, and regarded the ascetic life as open to all regardless of class or caste.<sup>67</sup> So while the Buddha's sangha, which did not restrict its membership on caste or class basis, was revolutionary as regards Brahmanical religion,

classlessness was not only not revolutionary to *sramanism*, but was the accepted thing.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Buddha grew up in a Hindu world and in the interpretation of his enlightenment experience did not hesitate to make use of Hindu terminology and Hindu concepts such as *samsara* and *karma*. Yet the experience which he was articulating represented a radical departure from the Hindu world-view. What the Buddha really did was to use Hindu terminology while radically changing the meaning of the philosophical concepts expressed.

Yet for the Buddha a philosophy and teachings (Dhamma) were important only as aids to reach *nirvana*, and it was the sangha which was the 'living stream through which Dhamma flows to humanity. The sangha is the point at which the Dhamma makes direct contact with humanity, it is the bridge between living man and absolute truth.'<sup>68</sup> The development of the Buddha's *parivrajaka* band into a full-fledged monastic order took place through traditions well established in the India of sixth century B.C. The *uposatha* ceremony, of Vedic origin and originally connected with the sanctity of the *vrata* days preceding the Aryan sacrifice, was adopted by the Buddha as occasion for recitation of the Dhamma. Yet over the years it changed in its function altogether. When the recitation of the 'Patimokkha' became the centre of the *uposatha* ceremony, *uposatha* became the chief disciplinary tool of the Order, as well as a creator and expression of communal solidarity.

So too did the *vassa vasa* have a long  
(Continued on p. 135)

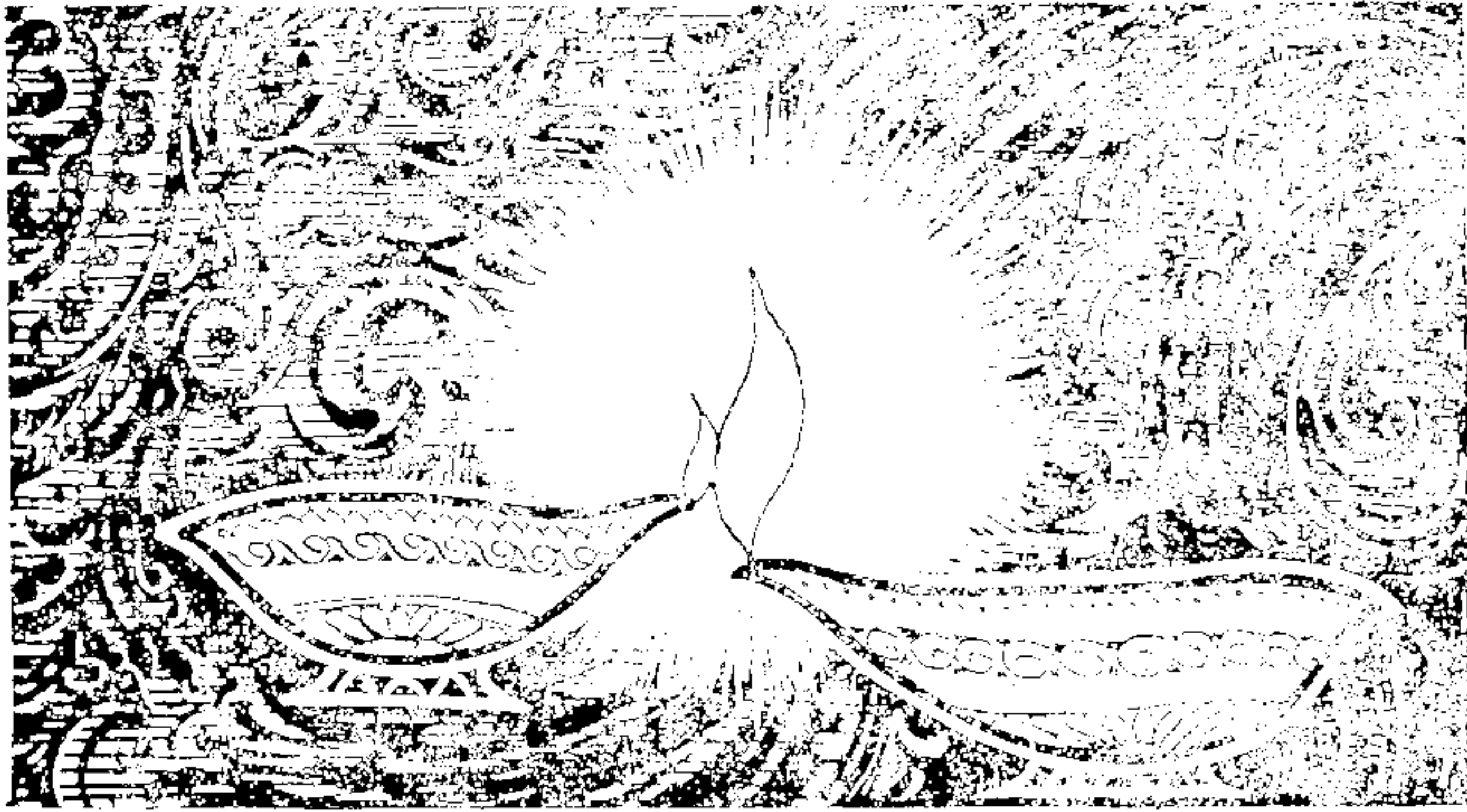
<sup>64</sup> *Vinaya Texts*, Mahavagga, I, 25, 7

<sup>65</sup> *vide* De: op. cit., p. 44

<sup>66</sup> *vide* Majumdar: op. cit., p. 274

<sup>67</sup> *vide* G. S. P. Misra: *The Age of Vinaya* (Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1972), pp. 38-9

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth W. Morgan, ed: *The Path of the Buddha* (Ronald Press Co., New York, 1956), p. 74.



## ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

### SITA WINS HER EXILE

With great difficulty Śrī Rāma had persuaded his mother Kausalyā to permit him to go into exile to redeem his father's pledge. Finally she blessed him and prayed to the various gods for his welfare in the forest during the long fourteen years. Then Śrī Rāma proceeded to his own palace where Sītā was eagerly awaiting him, blissfully unaware of his news. But as she watched him entering the decorated hall with head bent down, she began to feel ominous fears, and stood up, her limbs shaking. She gazed at the face of Śrī Rāma, clouded with anxiety.

At the sight of Sītā, Śrī Rāma could no longer contain his feelings: his grief became manifest. His countenance became pale and he perspired. Seeing him in such plight, Sītā asked: What is this, my Lord? Your coronation is fixed for today: how cheerful and happy you should be on such an auspicious day! Why do you seem so disheartened? All the arrangements for the coronation have been made. Then why do you look so strangely? This has never happened so with you before. Why does not your lovely face shine as is its wont? Why no exultant minstrels singing your praises, nor ministers, citizens of Ayodhyā, and country-folk following you about? Why have no holy brāhmaṇas

duly anointed your head; why no chariot, no elephant, nor even any servants awaiting you? What is the cause of all this?

Śrī Rāma: O Sītā! My dear father is sending me into the forest. On a previous occasion he had granted two boons to Kaikeyī [youngest of Dasaratha's wives]. When the arrangements for my coronation were in progress, she reminded him of the boons, and prevailed on him to grant them immediately. With one she chose a forest life of fourteen years for me; and with the other, coronation for her son Bharata.

Thus, I have come to take leave of you, on my way to the lonely forest of Daṇḍaka. I pray you do not praise me in the presence of Bharata. Prosperous men do not tolerate glorification of others. Therefore I say, never praise my virtues before Bharata—nor even to your friends. Try always to please him with your behaviour.

When I have gone to the forest, O blessed lady, you should spend your days in vows, in fasts, in worship of the gods according to the scriptures. O sinless one, you should show proper respect to our parents. My mother is old, and this grief of separation from me has shattered her nerves. She needs your service and attention. Those other mothers of mine [Sumitrā and Kaikeyī] should daily be

saluted by you; and Bharata and Śatru-ghna, dearer to me than life, you should look on as your brothers. You should give no offence to Bharata, who will be the king henceforth. Kings are won over by pleasing behaviour and diligent service. So behave according to the will of Bharata and spend your days following dharma and truth.

Thus admonished, Sītā was for once aroused to indignation against her beloved husband, and said:

You should not give advice which makes me look so small! Your words really amuse me: they do not at all befit a warrior-prince like you. I do not like even to listen to them since they seem to bring disgrace on you. Oh noble one, father, mother, brothers, sons, daughters-in-law, follow their own destinies, enjoying the results of their good actions. But a wife shares only the fortune of her husband! When you are asked to go into a forest, that decree applies to me also. Neither father nor mother, nor son nor friends nor even her own body are of real help to a woman: the husband is her only refuge. If you are going today to the forest I shall be in front of you treading on the grass and the thorns. Do not be angry with me, thinking me obstinate—nor envy my courage! Knowing there is no sin in me, take me with you to the forest. For a woman, protection at the feet of her husband is superior even to living at the top of a palace, or even in the heavens. My parents instructed me long ago in many ways, about how to conduct myself with you; please therefore do not tell me about it. With no protection but you, I shall go into that forest, however dangerous. Serving you with self-restraint, practising sacred vows, I shall live happily, as if in my paternal home. You can very well protect others in the forest: it will not be hard for you to protect me there also.

Happily indeed will I live, eating fruits and roots, wandering over hills, bathing in lakes, enjoying your company and serving you. Nor will I inconvenience you in any way: I will walk always ahead of you, and take my meals only after you have finished yours. If I have to live with you in a forest for up to a hundred thousand years, I shall never be unhappy; but without you, heaven I shall never like!

Then soothing with kind words the lady whose tears were dimming her eyes, Rāma replied:

O Sītā! You are born in a noble family and are devoted to dharma. Do stay here, following that dharma, and make me happy. Not that you would be the least burden to me; but I fear for you the many dangers and difficulties in forest-life, especially for one so delicate. It is an abode of constant misery. Ferocious animals roam there, pouncing on people when they find the opportunity. Alligators haunt the rivers, which are marshy and hard to cross. The paths are rugged, and covered with creepers and thorns: walking on such paths will exhaust you. Again, you have no comforts of a palace: you have to sleep on dry leaves only, and sometimes not even fruits or roots will be available. So, at times one will lose all patience and be at one's wits' end. Such and many other physical sufferings are there in the forest.

Again, the scriptural rules for forest-dwellers are most austere. With matted hair, clad only in bark of trees, one must fast often, bathe thrice daily, worship the gods and manes daily, and offer hospitality to any and all guests. And all this has to be done only with articles prepared by oneself: one must build one's own altar, gather the wild-flowers for worship from the perilous jungle, etc.

Meanwhile one is harassed by mosquitoes, gnats, worms, and scorpions. Yet

amidst all this, the ascetic has to abandon anger and greed and must not fear even that which deserves to be dreaded! So, do desist from this your idea of following me into the forest.

But Sītā could not be deterred. She resumed:

The dangers and difficulties which you have described will all prove disguised blessings, since I have your company and your love. With your bow and arrows, everyone is afraid of you. Then why not the animals, however ferocious? Elders have instructed me about my dharma, and that is just why I want to go with you now. If I am separated from you, I shall give up my life. If I am with you, even an enemy like Indra, king of the gods, will not dare approach us. And you yourself have taught me that a wife separated from her husband cannot live.

When I was still with my parents I heard a prophecy from a brāhmaṇa that I would have to dwell in the forest. Since then, I have been always eager for that. Let those words now be fulfilled, my darling husband.

I surely know the life in the forest is not smooth or pleasant. But that life will be sorrow and grief only for those who have no control over their minds and bodies. When I came here, I expressed my desire to spend some time in the forest; and you agreed to the idea. So in one sense you have already acquiesced in my present request, even beforehand. It is a prospect of great joy to me to serve my husband in the forest. O sinless one! You are my husband: if I follow you in love to the forest, all my sins will be burnt up because for a woman her husband is the highest god. The scriptures say that one who is given to a man in a righteous marriage becomes his wife here and hereafter. I am your wedded wife and am devoted to you. What then is the reason

for not allowing me to accompany you? O Rāma! I share your fate—joy or sorrow, it does not matter. If I get happiness or misery, then both are the same to me. So please take me with you. If you do not, then I shall take poison, or enter into the fire, or drown myself in the water.

Still Śrī Rāma did not consent. On the contrary he again tried to persuade Sītā to stay at home. But this only increased her grief and agitation. Though she was shedding tears in torrents, her extreme loving anxiety for Śrī Rāma and her wounded pride, took the form of anger. She suddenly burst out at him thus:

Did my father ever think that his son-in-law was a 'man' only in outward form but inside full of feminine spirit? If you go away leaving me here, people will remark, 'Rāma, though he shines like the sun, lacks in supreme valour and spirit.' Though such remarks be false and meaningless, how much torture would they not cause me! Why are you so dejected? Whom do you fear, that you do not wish to take me with you—your wife who is entirely dependent on you? Know me to be like Sāvitrī who followed Satyavān, her husband (even beyond death). I am not like unchaste women who are attached to their paramours and bring disgrace to their families. I cannot, even in thought, look to any other man but you. I was married to you at an early age and since then have lived with you. Do you want to hand over to others such a chaste and pure wife?

You are advising me to follow and please Bharata for whom you are being held down. You may obey and follow him, but I shall not. If you want to undergo penances, or live in a forest, or in heaven, I shall always be with you. When I walk in the forest with you I shall feel no more discomfort than when strolling in a garden. In your company the pricks of thorns will be as pleasing as the touch of

cotton or soft deer-skin. The dust that will settle on my body in the wildest storms will be to me like sandalwood dust. Can the softest beds be more comfortable than forest-turf, if you are near? Whatever fruits, roots or leaves you may gather with your hands, whether plenty or scanty, will be like nectar to me. Whatever fruits the seasons may provide will satisfy me. I shall never be nostalgic about my parents or palatial comforts. You will never see me going against your wishes: I shall not be a burden or a worry to you. Any place with you is verily heaven, but without you it will be hell. Having known my true love for you—which robs even the forest of its terror—, if you still will not take me with you, I will drink poison today: I will never live under anyone else's control. If you go to the forest leaving me here, I am sure I shall die of grief. When death then is certain, better to die in your presence. I am not able to withstand the pangs of separation for even an hour; how shall I bear them for fourteen years?

Speaking thus, Sītā could not control herself any more. Embracing Śrī Rāma again and again, she wept bitterly. And, overcome at last, Śrī Rāma lovingly reassured her:

O dear! I shall not accept the pleasures of heaven if they bring sorrow to you. I am not afraid of anyone in the universe. Though quite capable of protecting you in the forest, yet I did not want to bring that life on you without knowing your own

opinion. If you are born to share with me the life of the forest, then it is as impossible for me to renounce you as it is for a realized soul to renounce compassion. Like the great men of yore I shall follow my dharma, taking you with me to the forest.

It is truth alone that drives me to embrace the forest-life. A son should obey his parents. Disobeying them and living here is not possible for me. One gets dharma (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), and *kāma* (desire) by worshipping one's own parents. Serving one's father, mother, and teacher is the greatest means of one's welfare even surpassing other means like truth, charity, or sacrifice. So I wish to follow the command of my father who is devoted to dharma and truth. This is the highest dharma for me.

At first I had thought of not taking you with me; but having seen your resolve, my own determination has melted. Your decision is worthy of you and of our noble families. O dear one! your resolve has made you even dearer to me. Now, as you are to be my partner in asceticism, go and distribute your jewellery, cloths, and other valuables to the brāhmaṇas and the servants. Get ready quickly: do not delay.

Overjoyed thus to hear her husband's consent, Sītā with a happy face went to the inner apartments to follow Śrī Rāma's instructions.

SOURCE: Vālmīkī's *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam*. 'Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa': Chapters 26 through 30.

# THE FUTURE AND THE NOW

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

'Thou art the Primal Being, who appearest as this universe.  
Thou art beyond time.  
Indivisible, infinite, the Adorable One—  
Let a man meditate on thee within his heart,  
Let him consecrate himself to thee,  
And thou, the infinite Lord, wilt make thyself known to him.'

—*Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*

Many persons in India meditate in the morning and in the evening. It is said that when day fades away into night, and when night breaks into day, there is a special calmness in nature: meditation done at that time becomes very effective. In modern city life, we have little experience of sun and sunlight; sunlight is overpowered by the electric lights in our rooms. We do not see the sun and the moon. We have no idea what really happens at dawn or evening twilight. Even if you can sit quietly and imagine a vast open space with the sun going down, your mind will become a bit calm; you will think in a different way. In the same way, it is helpful to imagine the dawn. Many persons have no idea what the dawn is. For them it means turning on the electric lights and hearing the sounds of motor traffic. When you are in a peaceful place, amid natural surroundings, you feel spiritually uplifted. At the junction of day and night, night and dawn, there is a different atmosphere. It gives us a different feeling, if we are a bit introspective.

In the same way, a special feeling comes to us when one year ends and another year begins. Unconsciously we begin to think, 'Let us try to make the coming year better.' Some persons make New Year's resolutions, only to break them in one week's time. Even so, some little feeling

comes when the New Year arrives. We begin to think about what we should do, how we will do it, and perhaps also why we should do that.

At the coming of the New Year we think of the future, in terms of fear and of hope. We are afraid that the coming year may not be good enough. But in spite of that, we begin to feel that perhaps it will be a better year than last. Those especially who have struggled in the previous year think that perhaps the coming year will be better. In this way, we are tossed between hopes and fears, anticipations and misgivings.

Some persons go to consult astrologers, to know what the planets predict. It is a time-honoured tradition. Everywhere, more or less, a certain type of persons does that. They go with the idea that their hopes will be confirmed; when unpleasant prospects are mentioned, they become frightened. Astrologers are careful not to speak of their clients' fears too bluntly. They speak of them cautiously, in a vague way.

But whatever the astrologers may say, the most certain thing about the future is uncertainty. Our most careful calculations cannot give us an accurate picture of what the future will really be. It is the most uncertain of all uncertain things. This is natural. Our vision is so limited, our

ideas are so vague, our resources are so meagre. With these handicaps, we want to build our future. But we cannot build the edifice of our life on a preconceived, rigid blueprint. Nobody does, nobody can.

Not that failures will always come. Sometimes success comes beyond one's farthest dreams: tremendous success comes. But failures also come unexpectedly. Some persons, in their childhood, are very bright and intelligent; yet their lives become miserable failures. Other persons seem dull and stupid in their childhood. Nobody thinks that there is any prospect of their becoming bright. Yet afterwards they become extremely successful, even world-famous. Some of the world's most famous persons did not give any indication in their childhood that they would become great at all.

From that standpoint, life is not an achievement: it is an unfoldment, something that is coming out. Swami Vivekananda defines life as 'the struggle of a being to unfold and develop itself under circumstances which tend to press it down'. Life is a struggle between the inside world and the outside world. By that struggle our lives unfold. Because we do not know what is dormant in us, we cannot be sure what will come out. This is the very nature of life.

Life means struggle, and struggle is the source of success. In spite of fundamental handicaps, man has achieved much. His success has been tremendous in certain fields. You may or may not call it progress, but the achievements resulting from that great struggle have been tremendous. Man has not rested satisfied with the *status quo*. He has not been afraid of uncertainties. This indicates that there is something within man which cannot own defeat. Life means struggle against defeat; it means disavowing defeat, driving away even the prospect of defeat. After all, our failures

are not defeats. Failures give us experience, they are part of our education. If we take a long-range view of life, we see that our failures have their lessons. If we are sensible, we will not repeat those mistakes which caused previous failures. We will be cautious in similar circumstances, knowing what will bring what. From that standpoint there is no such thing as failure. Man has within him an indomitable spirit. All his achievements are the outcome of that spirit.

Nevertheless, we do not know the future; we have to struggle against uncertainty. And the question arises whether all our achievements, all these indications of progress, have given us satisfaction. We may achieve some success. But with that success often comes pride, as well as humiliation—humiliation in the sense that we find that we do not get what we really want. If we simply look at history, or even at the morning newspaper, we can find out whether or not man's achievements have given him satisfaction. Yes, man has knowledge but not wisdom. Man has success, but with that has come pride, which spoils everything. Man has plenty, but the majority of mankind still lives in poverty. Man has power but no peace of mind. These are the plain facts, which we cannot refute, however much we try.

This situation is the outcome of the basic fact that we cannot see far into the future. Nations make Five-Year Plans or Ten-Year Plans. Even Five-Year Plans do not succeed, let alone Ten-Year Plans. Unforeseeable events come in and make a mockery of all our plans. Even when we get what we wanted, we feel frustrated. We think we shall get peace and joy and everything that is covetable, if only we can achieve certain things. We enjoy those things, we get satisfaction or pride for a small period, and then the same restlessness comes again. We struggle and struggle

and do not get final satisfaction, unmixed joy. We feel that if we go to a cool Himalayan retreat we shall have peace. But no, the mind is there. Wherever we go, we carry our mind, and with that mind we cannot see far into the future. Yet we are always hoping regarding the future.

Some persons try to accommodate themselves to this situation. They say that time and change are fundamental to human existence. We live in time—unpredictable time—, and so our life will always be a mixture of happiness and unhappiness, success and failure. Time is a fundamental fact of creation; thus we have to adjust ourselves to the uncertainty of the future. We can never be sure of ourselves.

Nevertheless, there is within us an indomitable spirit: there is always the feeling, provided that we are healthy in body and mind, that our difficulties *can* be overcome. But the bare fact is that till now, living with the consciousness of time, we have not found real peace, real joy. Nor any sure promise of these in future.

Therefore, we are advised, don't think of the future. Make a tentative plan, and concentrate on the present. Those who can concentrate on the present, without dreaming idle dreams of the future, will succeed. 'Trust no future, however pleasant; act, act in the living present.' This is a very practical attitude. We waste a lot of time and energy by dreaming of the future. It seems that all our happiness lies in dreaming of the future, and all our misery comes from fear of the future. But more often than not, what we fear does not come; what we hope for also does not come. So the practical course is to concentrate all our energies on the present, on the *now*, letting all our plans be tentative. Logically, we can put forth much greater energy if we do not waste our time through fears and hopes about the future. In this way, inner unfoldment will come: what is there

will come out.

But still the question arises: what is meant by the future, and by the past? Why should we concentrate on the now? The simple fact is that we do not know what the future will be, and we cannot bring back the past. If we are wise enough, we can learn from our past experiences and try to put the lessons of those experiences into our present action. This is necessary even for material success, although material success will not give us ultimate happiness. It will bring us happiness mixed with worry, frustration, and boredom. Some persons are ready to be satisfied with that; others will try to go beyond that.

Our real difficulty is that we have no idea what time *is*. Within time there will always be this mixture of success and failure, joy and misery, hope and fear. Then can we go beyond time? Is there *anything* beyond time?

According to Vedānta, time is a creation of the human mind. This human mind divides time into past, present, and future. Time, space, and causation constitute Māyā, or cosmic ignorance. Kant, in a similar way, said that time, space, and causation are the three modes or categories of thought. What is more, time is basically measured by our thoughts. If we stop our activities and try to watch our mind, various thoughts will begin to come, one after another. This is called succession, and this succession is a measure of time. In order to calculate this measurement, man has created seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, and so on.

Such being the case, even if we could see far into the future, our problems would not be solved. The future simply means the extension of time. 'Eternal heaven' means infinite extension of this same time, or in other words, infinite extension of this limited, changing mind. That will not



give us real safety, real immunity against difficulties. True infinity is timelessness. Timelessness is God. God has no past, present, or future; in him there is only one tense, the eternal now. Behind our consciousness of time also is the eternal now. Even before time was born there was existence. Time was born when creation began. Before that there was no time; only the timeless *now* existed.

Our fundamental problem is how to go back to that timeless state, how to cross the border from time into timelessness. What can we do?

Having been convinced that the eternal *now* is the important thing, let us concentrate on living in the present. This is important even for material success. It is much more so for building up spiritual life. We cannot build up our edifice on uncertainties. The only certainty is the now, the present. So Christ said, 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.' Concentrate on the now, on the present. When you take proper care of the bricks, putting one on top of the other, the edifice will be built up. Depend on the morrow to take care of itself. Ignore the future completely. Let timelessness take care of itself. That will give you peace of mind.

Of course very few people can help thinking of the morrow; but let us all try: the secret of mental peace is there, the practical method of work also is there. Cardinal J. H. Newman said in his famous hymn:

'Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling  
gloom,

Lead Thou me on...

Keep Thou my feet: I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for  
me.'

This is a very practical attitude. Karma-yoga teaches us to think not of the result, but only of the action, to 'work for work's

sake'. If we can forget the future altogether and concentrate our whole attention on the present action, we can find out the secret of the now, the secret of time itself. We can go to the heart of creation and get the knowledge of pure being. Spiritual knowledge comes not only through meditation and prayer; it also comes through Karma-yoga, or work done with the right attitude.

Yoga means concentration. If we can concentrate completely on the present and forget the future, knowledge of truth flashes forth within us. It is said that if you know what one moment *is*, you know all time. Patañjali says in his *Yoga-sūtras* that one who has become omnipresent, who knows his oneness with all existence, has no past, present, or future. Time has been stopped. He has only the sense of the eternal present. Because we are in ignorance, we think in terms of past, present and future; but when concentration is complete, time is stopped. Then we know the secret of creation, the secret of existence. Patañjali tells us how to reach this goal by means of meditation. What is the philosophy of meditation? When you meditate intensely, you begin to forget the environment. Your thoughts are concentrated on the object of meditation and other thoughts are eliminated. Concentration becomes so deep that you even forget that you are trying to concentrate. When you succeed in meditation, you forget time altogether. It is not like forgetting time in sleep. You go to the very centre of time, where past and future cease to exist.

What is the result? When we forget the future, at once we get peace of mind, even in our ordinary activities. To the extent that we can forget the future, both our hopes and our fears are eliminated. Hopes are deceptive; fears are also deceptive. To the extent that we can forget the future and concentrate on the now, we get peace of

mind. This happens because of the fact that within us there is timelessness; within us there is the soul, which is eternal existence. Outside this creation, as well as within it, though invisible to us, is the eternal presence of God. Within us is this same divinity which is beyond time, space, and causation, eternally existent, eternally present. Therefore, the moment we begin to forget the past and the future, we get joy and peace. A person working in that spirit is never disturbed by anything. In the same way, a person meditating with concentration gets peace. For the time being at least, one gets serene peace which cannot be had from any other source. Those who have real meditation know this. They get great joy when the mind enters into the depths of its being, when time is forgotten, when they reach the timeless, infinite existence of God.

The same realization comes by prayer. By prayer we begin to feel the presence of the divine. We come into closer contact with that existence which is not ordinary existence, which does not exist in time, which exists always. Thus in prayer also, concentration on the present is important; and if concentration is perfect, the secrets of nature are revealed to us.

Still there is one very important distinction we must make. For success in secular life we have to do a certain amount of action. This depends on time. We have to sow a seed. The seed must sprout and grow. Then only fruits will come. We cannot hasten this process much; it takes its own time. To become a scholar, one has to study for some years. Those who are brilliant may do it in a comparatively short time; but some time is needed. However, in spiritual life time is not a necessary factor. Spiritual success can come at any time. If your yearning is sufficiently intense, you can get it quickly. If your desire is strong enough, the secret will be

revealed to you in no time.

This is logically so true, philosophically so accurate. Apparently we live in the domain of time. But *timelessness is in us*; that is our reality. Therefore, if we long for reality, for truth, intensely enough, we reach it. This does not depend upon time. We have not necessarily to do so many hours of meditation for so many years. We now have to do such practices only because we have not that degree of intensity. But those who have realized truth say that if we are earnest enough, simply by one prayer we can get the realization.

In a Bengali village I once heard a song, 'Teach me how to pray, O Divine Mother, so that by one prayer I can realize Thee!' The very conception is tremendous. Why should we have to pray many times? If we are really sincere, one prayer is enough. Lin Yutang, the Chinese writer, wrote of an incident in his childhood. He was a Christian, though his mother was a Buddhist. His mother repeated the name of Buddha a certain number of times every day. One day, just to tease his mother, he began to say, 'Mother, Mother', over and over. His mother asked, 'Why are you calling me so much?' And he replied, 'Why do you repeat the name of Buddha so many times? Doesn't Buddha hear when you call once?' This is very logical. Why have we to repeat God's name many times? If we call on Him with sufficient intensity, He listens to us—*surely* He listens to us. Here the time factor does not apply.

This is extremely important to know for those who want to develop spiritual life. All saints say the same thing. Christ said, 'Ask and it shall be given unto you.' A great saint of recent times was asked about the repetition of the holy name. He replied that if you can say it only once with sufficient intensity, that is enough. But because we cannot call forth so much inten-

sity from within us, because we still live within the jurisdiction of time, we have to continue doing our spiritual practice regularly, just to get rid of the illusion of time, to get rid of our ignorance. Even so, it is a great consolation to remember that our real nature is timelessness. And we can realize that, if only we are intense enough in our spiritual longing. As it is, we live in time; but we *can* go beyond time. All our spiritual practices, all our struggles are to create that intensity in us, in our spiritual outlook.

Ultimate spiritual success will not come until we reach a point where we cannot brook the delay of one minute. St. Augustine said, 'Why tomorrow? Why tomorrow?' A Hindu saint said, 'If tomorrow, why not today? And if today, why not just now?' In spiritual life, the intensity of our yearning gradually increases until, as Caitanya said, 'One moment of separation from Thee seems like a thousand years.' Ramakrishna, before he realized the Divine Mother, would roll on the ground and weep at sunset every day, crying, 'Another day is gone, O Mother, and You have not yet revealed Yourself to me!' Swami Vivekananda said, in his more modern way, 'Until you are ready to change at any moment, you can never know truth.'

Realization is not an achievement, for an achievement takes time. It comes to us when we feel the need for it so much that we are ready to be transformed at any moment, when we can no longer wait even for a moment, when we *must* have it this very moment. At that moment, the conception of time vanishes. Until then, if we try our best, if we concentrate on the present, this concentration will lead to a time when the intensity is so great that we can no longer wait. If we think deeply about our spiritual life and are really aware of what it is, that intensity will come. Because that intensity has not come, we do all these negative practices, just to remove the dust from our minds and hearts, as from a reflector. But the truth is there. We have not to search anywhere for it.

We have not to live in uncertainty. The future is uncertain. Material success is uncertain. But there is no uncertainty about spiritual success. It is there; we have only to long for it. And when real longing comes, any moment is good enough. It comes suddenly, 'like the flash of lightning', as the Upanishads say. It may come at any moment: behind every moment is the timeless, eternal present. That is also the reality within us. We have simply to yearn for it in order to realize it.

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## TRUE RELIGION ALWAYS HELPS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### I

In these words, 'True religion always helps', there is not the slightest exaggeration. They are literally true, being a bare statement of fact. There is no attempt in these words to sell religion to the reluctant and indifferent.

Whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not, true religion alone is our all-time, all-place friend, the friend who never fails here and hereafter. It not only helps us from the womb to the tomb but also beyond.

There is none and nothing so loyal to man in the whole scheme of creation as true religion. If only this fact were known to all men and women and really understood, then there would not be a single non-religious person in the world.

### II

So let us first look into some of the reasons why people do not understand true religion. Some people appear to think that if they became religious they would lose all the fun of life. Of course they have a very funny idea of fun itself, and one might say they have a phoney idea of life too.

That fun alone is real fun which does not make us eventually suffer. If we can go out of this life smiling and rejoicing, without remorse, without regret, blessing the world, while others who stay back weep for us and themselves, then alone have we had real fun in life. But when the laughter and nectar of today turn into the tears and gall of tomorrow, when in passing out of this life we curse or weep while

others are either indifferent or even heave a sigh of relief, then we have had no fun at all. We have only been the fool of the fun.

For those who indulge in that sort of fun, life is only skin deep. And indeed, how deep is that skin?

Thus people who think that by becoming religious they will lose the fun of life, have no clear idea about true religion, true fun, or true life.

Again, some people appear to think religion is a drag on them, preventing their progress. But what *is* progress? Is it only in restless movement and speed? Is it only in piling up things and wanting to pile more? Is it in more and more involvement in matter at the cost of less and less awareness of the spirit? Any idea of progress in life must be associated with the idea of its destination. Those who have no clear idea of the destination of life can have no valid idea about progress therein.

For instance, many superficially think that progress is continuous movement in a straight line. But a little thought will show this to be an absurd idea, for a straight line projected to infinity will itself become a circle. So, eternal 'progress' would bring men back to the start.

When we come to brass tacks of the issue, we cannot escape agreeing that the concept of progress—if we are really true to ourselves, whatever our 'ism' of life—must have reference to the realization and manifestation of man's potential. Without the help of religion there is no way of doing this. Therefore those who think religion is

a drag and prevents progress, have no clear idea either of progress or of true religion.

If anyone says there are people who are progressing without any religion, he may well be asked to re-examine his own statement. Are they really progressing toward the realization of their full potential of body, mind, and soul? Is anyone sure of this?

We are aware that in some countries experiments are going on purely along materialistic and atheistic lines to bring about 'progress'. The first thing to remember about these experiments is that they are *experiments*. The time is not yet ripe to assess their full effectiveness in regard to all-around human progress. The second thing about these experiments is, that though officially religion is eschewed in the governmental endeavours, no power on earth can take away religion—which is a matter of heart and soul—from the common people. In other words, purely materialistic or atheistic endeavours for progress cannot be found anywhere in the world, for at some level of national life, overtly or covertly, religion or the essential inspiration of religion, gets mixed into the stream. Therefore—even if a government may not encourage the pursuit of, or even acknowledge the existence of religion—in the reckoning of the total effect of national endeavours, factually you cannot leave out of consideration the contributory effect of religion also.

Some others feel religion is not practical: they want religion to prove its credentials by successfully implementing their projects. They ask, what good is religion if it does not help business? At a certain stage of development some persons do not know any more intelligent question; this question however we need not sneer at. And to us another question arises: what exactly is business when we take the whole of life at all levels into consideration?

When Christ was twelve, his parents once took him from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. And when they started home, at the end of the first day it was found that the boy was not among their group of pilgrims. So they hurried back to Jerusalem and after much search found their son hearing and asking questions of the scholars, who were all amazed at his depth of understanding. Then Mary asked, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing!' In reply said Christ to his mother: 'How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'<sup>1</sup>

Jesus of course followed his parents home. But his immortal words remain to remind us that 'my Father's business' is the real business of life. Even the lowliest or the busiest form of work can turn out to be 'my Father's business' when the motive of the work links it with the ultimate purpose of life. Otherwise, we can never be sure that we are not about the devil's business!

Therefore this question—What good is religion if it does not help business?—can be asked only by one who has no least concept of true business, what to speak of true religion.

Still, the modern pragmatist utilitarian humanist may well ask: 'What can religion do? Can it take away the poverty of the poor?' In answer to this sort of question Swami Vivekananda says:

'Supposing it cannot, would that prove the untruth of religion? Suppose a baby stands up among you when you are trying to demonstrate an astronomical theorem, and says, "Does it bring gingerbread?" "No, it does not," you answer. "Then", says the baby, "it is useless." Babies judge the whole universe from their own standpoint, that of producing gingerbread, and so do the babies of the world. We must not

<sup>1</sup> *vide* St. Luke, II. 41-52

judge of higher things from a low standpoint. ...Religion...is...the eternal relation between the eternal soul and the eternal God. Is it logical to measure its value by its action upon five minutes of human life? Certainly not.<sup>2</sup>

Here are the words of one of the greatest among men. And as he thunders from the shores of the timeless, relentless truth about the irrationality of judging the eternal values of religion in reference to what he calls 'the five minutes of human life', his words may well make us tremble. For these 'five minutes' are the entire concern of us, ordinary men and women of the world. The gingerbread is important for us. Undoubtedly, we are spiritual babies! Then what is to happen to us? Are we too little for real religion to notice? Or do religion, and its God, still care for us in our littleness?

Let us repeat—in the light of our great Swamiji's teachings—true religion helps us always and everywhere, provided only that we do not try to judge it from our standards of varying ignorance, do not close ourselves to its influence. It helps us grow out of our state of babyhood and reach gradually our full manhood or womanhood. There is no state of life conceivable in which true religion does not help us.

Now, therefore, the question is, 'What is true religion?'

The words 'true religion' are not used here in the sense 'my-religion true; your-religion false'. That is a wrong concept of religion altogether.

As Sri Ramakrishna said from his own experience, 'Every religion is true'.<sup>3</sup> Some people have honest doubts as to how, if Christianity is true, Hinduism can also be

true. They think of the truth of religion in an either-or fashion. They think if *my* religion is true, others' religions must be false. This is a very childish and naive idea about religion, espoused even by many so-called big and grown-up people. Just as the truth of your existence does not negate the truth of my existence, in the same manner the fact of your religion being true does not negate the fact of my religion also being true at the same time.

That is not, however, to say that all the religions are identical or equal; but all the religions are true. For instance, you may take pictures of the Himalayas from the side of India, Tibet, or China. None of the pictures will be identical with the others. But all of them will surely be true pictures of the Himalayas. By 'true religion', therefore, we mean the truth of every religion. The term 'true religion' may have two broad implications:

(a) Objectively speaking, 'true religion' means those spiritual principles through the living of which one attains perfection, illumination, God-vision, or liberation. These spiritual principles are truthfulness, purity, self-control, non-violence, forbearance, detachment, equanimity, straightforwardness, dutifulness, other-regard, compassion, love of God and longing for liberation or spiritual enlightenment.

(b) Subjectively speaking, 'true religion' means not sometime but all-time religion in a person's life. When religion courses through our blood, vibrates in our nerves, when it becomes the very breath of our life, religion has become true for us.

Nevertheless most of us tend to judge religion—whether subjectively or objectively conceived—by some sort of pragmatic test, by its practical efficacy in reference to human aspirations and needs. Pragmatism is a well-known branch of Western philosophy of which William James, the American philosopher, was the protagonist.

<sup>2</sup>*The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. III (1960), pp. 3-4

<sup>3</sup>'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-600004, 1947), p. 38

One way of summarizing his philosophy is this: 'Truth is the "cash value" of an idea.' It has a passion for the immediate, the actual, the real, the results, the profits, and the men in the street. It has been said of William James, the promulgator of this philosophy, that he reacted against all moony obscurities of metaphysics 'like a quarantine officer who had detected an immigrant infection'.<sup>4</sup> In short, this is considered to be very much an American philosophy and though propounded in the nineteenth century it retains its modern flavour and appeal even today.

But in actuality this philosophy is not as American or as modern as it is usually supposed to be. It appears to be a 'reincarnation' of a very old pattern of Indian thought. Only, in India the 'cash value of an idea' had usually to be related to the ultimate end of human life, which was universally accepted as attainment of spiritual illumination.

Perhaps the highest expression of this pattern in Indian thought was given in the Hindu epic *Mahābhārata*, in defining dharma in this way: Whatever brings on the advancement and growth of creatures, whatever prevents injury to creatures, and whatever upholds and maintains all creatures, is dharma or religion. This was pragmatism in a form that surely would have satisfied William James.

Thus, 'true religion' defined in this way, is surely going to help us always and everywhere. In fact if we reason carefully enough, the *Mahābhārata* definition of religion forces us to agree that growth and advancement in the *right* direction, protection from injury and the upholding and maintenance of all, are simply not possible without the help of true religion.

And if we analyse the real issues of our lives, we shall find that the basic requirements are just these: real growth, advancement, protection from injury, and maintenance.

### III

In considering these fundamental issues, we, as believers in spiritual values, should always remember this basic fact that life is not a mere groping in the dark. As referred to above, it has a definite end which is the attainment of perfection or illumination or complete self-fulfilment. Growth and advancement which are two fundamental urges in man, and protection from injury and maintenance which are two basic requirements, have to be correlated to that end. And providing this correlation is obviously a function of religion.

Our life on earth begins with our birth. Unfortunately in these days the birth of human beings seems to have lost its sanctity and wonder. At least those who consider themselves as spiritual aspirants should always remember that the birth of a baby is not only the biological consequence of the union of man and woman. A metaphysical issue is also involved here. It is not a mere birth of a body, but assumption of a body by a soul in order to work out its karma for attaining liberation.

A human being passes through different stages of growth and decay in life such as conception, the embryonic state, birth, childhood, youth, middle age, old age, and death. At each of these stages, true religion helps higher manifestation of the potential of the human spirit.

The conception of a child may take place under various situations. It may happen out of wedlock. And it may happen from various forms of marriage. It may happen in a marriage, approved

<sup>4</sup> vide Will Durant: *The Story of Philosophy* (Garden City Publishing Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1933), pp. 555-8

neither by society nor by religion. It may happen because of a marriage approved by society but not by religion. Again, it may happen from a marriage approved by religion and society and blessed by everybody. The last type may be generally said to be the sacramental marriage in which a chaste young man and a virgin accept the other solemnly in matrimonial relationship through proper religious rites. In every religion there is provision for sacramental marriage.

One Hindu scripture<sup>5</sup> makes a general statement that the progeny of a couple partakes of the character of the form in which they were married. That is to say, if the marriage is in the best or in an approved form, the progeny is good; if the marriage is in a condemned form, the progeny bears a low character.

Offspring, says another Hindu scripture,<sup>6</sup> who will have spiritual eminence, beauty, virtues, wealth, fame, and very long life, are born of approved, sacramental marriages; whereas issue born of other forms of marriages are expected to be cruel, wicked, vicious and irreligious.

No saint is ever likely to be born as the progeny of a couple who are not pure in heart and perfectly loyal to each other. Children born out of wedlock are not expected to be very good citizens even in atheistic countries.

According to Hinduism, in the birth of a child there are these sides of the question: a good soul elects good parents for being born in the world; evil souls elect evil parents. This, in a way, is a metaphysical statement, flowing from the law of karma. Then as to the psychological mechanisms for implementing it, Hinduism holds that the prenatal parental mental disposition largely determines the mental constitution

of the offspring.

This is another way of saying that one may choose the type of children one wants, by regulating one's life and thought according to the precepts of true religion. The conception which is preceded by prayer will not bring forth a child who will be a source of agony to the parents. On the other hand, an unwanted baby who has somehow succeeded in being born, will wreak vengeance not only on its parents but also on society.

In his lecture 'Women of India', given in Pasadena, California, in 1900, Swami Vivekananda made profound statements about the supreme importance of directing the prenatal influences on the child. These are of such great importance for mankind struggling in the mazes of modern ideas, that we do not hesitate to quote here a long passage:

'From motherhood comes tremendous responsibility... why is mother to be worshipped so much? Because our books teach that it is the pre-natal influence that gives the impetus to the child for good or evil. Go to a hundred thousand colleges, read a million books, associate with all the learned men of the world—better off you are when born with the right stamp. You are born for good or evil. The child is a born god or a born demon; that is what the books say. Education and all these things come afterwards—are a mere bagatelle. You are what you are born. Born unhealthful, how many drug stores, swallowed wholesale, will keep you well all through your life? How many people of good, healthy lives were born of weak parents, were born of sickly, blood-poisoned parents? How many? None—none. We come with a tremendous impetus for good or evil: born demons or born gods. Education or other things are a bagatelle.

'Thus say our books: direct the prenatal influence. Why should mother be worshipped? Because she made herself pure. She underwent harsh penances sometimes to keep herself as pure

<sup>5</sup> *Āpastamba Dharma-Sūtra*, II. 5. 12. 4

<sup>6</sup> *Manu-Smṛiti*, III. 39-42



as purity can be. For, mind you, no woman in India thinks of giving up her body to any man; it is her own.... When a man comes in physical contact with his wife, the circumstances she controls through what prayers and through what vows! For that which brings forth the child is the holiest symbol of God himself. It is the greatest prayer between man and wife, the prayer that is going to bring into the world another soul fraught with a tremendous power for good or for evil. Is it a joke? Is it a simple nervous satisfaction? Is it a brute enjoyment of the body? Says the Hindu: no, a thousand times, no!'<sup>7</sup>

Thus we see true religion begins to mould a human life from the very conception. It is not a theory but a spiritual fact. Necessarily, absence of true religion also plays a negative part, which becomes obvious in social maladies like juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency at its roots is not a mere sociological issue but a biological one. Those who do not want to be the future parents of head-breaking ruffians, will have to open themselves up to the creative influence of true religion. Children born of truly pious parents in a spiritual home are born with certain awakened mental powers which others born under different situations will not have.

A child gathers its nourishment not only from the food given through its mouth, but also 'food' given through its five senses. The baby imbibes spiritual or unspiritual vibrations from the environment through its nervous system. It is very sensitive to purity. But it has not yet developed the capacity for resisting unholy influences. Hence parental conduct, spiritual or unspiritual, has much to do with the growth of the child. Senseless parents think the baby does not understand things. Hence they do not hesitate to do and say all sorts of things before it. But

when sooner than later they find the child misbehaving, they are horrified.

At the next stage of boyhood or girlhood, nurturing of the child depends on education. In childhood and youth growth and advancement largely mean healthy growth of body and mind. And healthy growth of body and mind cannot be isolated from each other. Healthy growth of the body may appear to be possible without any help of religion. But for how long? The children who are nurtured without any religious training of mind grow like lusty animals, but without the animal's instinctive restraint. Before they grow fully mature, decay starts within them. As soon as the sex instinct is aroused within them, they spoil themselves and others. Most of these children develop scattered brains and minds, and with scattered brain and mind you cannot imbibe education to the extent necessary for struggling successfully in life. For the gaining of knowledge are needed concentration, discrimination, sustained application and memory. Premarital continence is the secret of developing these powers. Therefore from the Vedic times, in the Hindu system of education, the stage of the student used to be known by a religious term called *brahmacarya*, or religious observance of continence. It is a most valued and cherished concept of Hinduism that the foundation of ideal education and truly spiritual life is nothing but *brahmacarya*. This is how Hindus developed their wonderful power of memory and the subtle powers of their mind.

Ideal education does not mean mere gathering of information. Swami Vivekananda defines education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man'.<sup>8</sup> He further says, true religion is the very core of education. And he defines religion as 'the manifestation of the Divinity already

<sup>7</sup> *The Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 60-61

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 358

in man'.<sup>9</sup> So in the ultimate analysis, true education and true religion are almost interchangeable terms.

True, education without religion may produce intellectual giants. But they may very well turn out to be gigantic monsters though, of course, highly intellectual. Edu-

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<sup>9</sup> loc. cit.

cation with true religion also can create intellectual giants, but they will never turn out to be monsters.

So we see, in the growth and development of the young, on whom depends the destiny of any nation as well as all humanity, how far-reaching is the role of true religion.

(To be concluded)

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(Continued from p. 118)

pre-Buddhist history. Originally established out of necessity, it had taken on a 'ceremonial' character and was kept by most of the wandering mendicants of the time. *Vassa vasa*, which had in many cases become a period of extreme asceticism for the *parivrajakas*, became a time of relaxation and close 'living in the midst of friends and relatives' for the Buddhist Bhikkhus. *Vassa vasa* and the closely related *pavarana* were the main institutions used for the propagation of the Dhamma. Both the *uposatha* ceremony and the *vassa vasa* were responsible for the establishment of local sangha boundaries and the identification of certain monks with certain territories. This led to the development of local sanghas as separate corporate entities.

The two major organizational institutions of the sangha were the *Vinaya* law and the democratic Bhikkhu assembly.

Evolving over a long period of time, it is believed that the *Vinaya*, being in the form of ancient law, may have been borrowed in style from the tribal law of East India. This is merely speculation. However, it is a fact that the basic structure of the democratic *sanghakamma* and its elaborate rules and procedures were modelled on these 'republics' of Eastern India.

The Buddha was less given to originating or inventing structures and institutions than in using and adapting to his own purposes traditions and institutions already in vogue among the people. Just as he gave traditional philosophical concepts new interpretations, so too did he give old customs and structures, institutions and ceremony, new functions and meanings. And therein lies a major facet of his genius.

(Concluded)

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# SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—X

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Practise a little rhythmic breathing before you start your meditation. This breathing exercise should be practised consciously. This, with a firm posture, brings concentration and calmness into our body and mind.

Repeat the Holy Name. Rhythmic repetition brings about great harmony within.

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There are two currents of thoughts in us—the upper or conscious and the lower or subconscious. When the conscious part of the mind is under control, the subconscious part may be active. There is a subconscious state of restlessness in us. A lot of energy is wasted in this way. Through meditation the subconscious stream also must be controlled.

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The soul is born with tendencies gathered in from previous lives. From the standpoint of the soul, we are our own parents.

The soul is dissatisfied. It feels hungry. We must feed it with the right type of food to satisfy its hunger and nourish it. The

soul never feels satisfied until it is turned inward, and it experiences contact with the Divine. Sometimes these inner experiences come as a shock, because they are unfamiliar to the beginner's mind. Also, the body may not be prepared to withstand the strain of concentration.

Spiritual experience brings about tremendous inner concentration. The whole mind is drawn, as it were, by a powerful magnet and held spell-bound.

\*

The more we go inward, the wider becomes our consciousness. Expansion of consciousness goes hand in hand with inner growth.

\*

The impersonal aspect of God is the ocean. The personal aspect is like a huge wave. The individual souls are like bubbles. The bubbles are in contact with the ocean through the wave. But some bubbles, as it were, want to establish direct contact with the ocean—the Absolute Itself.

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## PEACE AND POWER THROUGH MEDITATION

DR. DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

'All meditation is . . . based on the conviction that we have only to acknowledge and assent to the Reality from which we have never in essence been separated, to awake from the long illusions of the ego. In doing so we shall cease to think about Truth and realize Truth itself.'

—Hugo L'Anson Fausset

'Right effort will be his steps, right thoughts his breath, and right meditation will give him the peace that follows in his footprints.'

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'The sun is bright by day, the moon shines by night, the warrior is bright in his armour, thinkers are bright in their meditation, but among all the brightest, with splendour day and night, is the Buddha, the awakened the Holy, Blessed.'

—Gautama the Buddha

## MAN'S CONQUEST OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

For many generations now, Western man has sought for happiness through his work, by ceaseless activity and the conquest of nature.

He has burst every geographic frontier, swarming across the globe in search of living space, and raw materials for his factories. He has mounted into the air and learned to travel faster than the speed of sound. His mathematics and his microscopes have searched out the minutest particles of matter, and his radio telescopes scanned the heavens beyond the galaxies wheeling in majestic silence. He has travelled to the moon, and sent his probes past the planets. He has plumbed the darkest depths of the deep places of the sea.

Man has been busy with his world, and that busyness has brought him considerable satisfaction. His understanding and conquest of nature has been a genuine achievement, requiring the mobilization of energy and ideas and the solving of many complex and inter-related riddles. It has given him comfort, health, safety and mobility undreamed of even one hundred years ago. It is something in which he rightly takes a good deal of pride.

## THE NEW FRONTIER

Yet, despite these conquests of the outer world, contemporary man is far from happy. He has created material abundance, but has neither the wisdom nor the goodness to share it equitably. He has discovered also that the accumulation of things cannot make him happy, and that his frenetic busyness may not be motivated as much by his need for the goods of life as it is by his need to hide from his own inner, spiritual emptiness. We are all too often, as T. S. Eliot said, 'hollow men, headpiece filled with straw, alas', seemingly determin-

ed blindly to make sure that our world will end with a bang, and not just a whimper.

Now, I do not say that man's material advance is evil, *per se*, or that it likely soon to come to a halt. I suspect that scientific and technological man will go on improving his understanding and mastery of the outer world. He will mine the sea bed, will colonize the moon and the planets, and establish whole, new communities in space. But basically, he has now exhausted his outer, physical frontiers, and if he would really pioneer, must turn inward to the long-neglected realm of the human spirit. He must do this, first of all, because it is the only way left open for the achievement of personal happiness. He must do it, also, because it has now become clear that a healthy, happy society cannot be built of aggressive power-hungry egos such as those nurtured by our acquisitive, competitive, exploitative, material-oriented economic and social system.

## TO LOOK WITHIN

It is factors such as these which have compelled our generation in the West, somewhat reluctantly, to begin to look within ourselves for answers, to take up the greatest of all human ventures, the search for our own souls. This is at once the closest and the most distant frontier, the easiest and the hardest to break through. More and more of our contemporaries are making the effort. Thus, a revolutionary change in human consciousness is arising around us. The key to this revolutionary change is to be found in the simple, old-fashioned word—*meditation*.

Whoever you are, whatever you may do for a living, whatever your age, sex, race or condition of life—I want to suggest to you that meditation can give you the two things you most need and want: peace of mind and power of life.

By *peace of mind*, I mean the feeling that you are a real person, a unique person, with understanding and acceptance of yourself, and a realized person, connected up to both the sources of your creative potentials on the one hand, and the fulfilment of them on the other—the two together supplying the sense of life's meaningfulness which is our deepest and dearest happiness.

By *power of life*, I mean the power to fit harmoniously into the whole of life, into this vast, evolving Being-Becoming, whose life you share along with countless other fellow creatures; to fit in such a way as to enrich and enhance the other lives, your own life, and the larger Whole which encompasses and summarizes them.

#### WHAT IS MEDITATION?

What is meditation? It is making time regularly each day to let your mind and spirit become completely quiet until they become aware of the larger encompassing Reality in which we all participate, to feel that Reality throbbing within you, and your life as a unique expression of its endless creativity, throbbing within it; to feel your own heartbeat as an echo and witness of a Universal Heartbeat whose ongoing life you share and to whose quality you contribute for good or ill.

It is not a theory, but supremely an *experience* in which you, quite literally, feel your little life become one with the whole, living, throbbing universe around you, partaking of its purpose, upheld by its health, suffused with its holy joy of being. It is being humbled to be held, even for an instant, thus intimately in the embrace of the Most High. It is feeling shame to have been so often petty, small, hateful, vengeful, divisive, in the face of the great Unity. It is feeling the power of goodness, of generosity, thoughtfulness, kindness, helpfulness to solve all human problems. It is a

soaring, suffusing happiness thus really to *know* the truth of God within oneself, to experience the transcendent as immanent within one's own, personal life-consciousness, and to be transformed thereby more into the image of the divine.

#### MANY KINDS OF MEDITATION

This is the kind of experience to which meditation can lead, but actually there are many kinds of meditation, and hundreds of methods for feeling one's way inward. Let me explore with you here some of the simpler ones which you may wish to try out yourself. We begin with some general observations.

First, let it be understood that there is no way to learn to meditate by reading about it, talking about it, or even by listening to a sermon like this about it. The only way to learn to meditate is by meditating, by the experience itself.

Secondly, understand well that it may take a good deal of time. You don't learn to meditate in a day, a week, a month, or even a year. In most people it takes a lifetime—at least! Still, you may well feel your capability growing bit by bit and day by day as you persist. You will become more and more skilful as you grow into it. Like any other arduous discipline, it must be practised until it becomes effortless. It is like a great violinist's learning to forget his fingers, his bow arm, and finally even the composer's notes, having mastered them completely, and then to give himself utterly and wholly to the music of the master as a whole, to be drawn into it and possessed by it—to the point that when he is finally in the presence of the audience, the music seems to be playing him, not he the music. Such discipline requires patience and persistence, especially at the beginning, but great are the rewards for those who endure in it.

Thirdly, regularity is more important than length of time in meditation. Find a time that is most convenient for you when you can take from fifteen minutes to half an hour to be by yourself. Probably the best time is the first thing in the morning, when you and the day are fresh and new-born—though this may not be easy for parents of young children. It is easier to get into meditation when the day is young and its turbulence still afar. However, the end of the day is also a good time for meditation, or noonday. Choose whatever suits your particular personality and situation best.

Try to make one place, some small room, or corner of a room, which can be your own shrine, your place of meditation. If possible, let it be a place you do not use for any other purposes.

Perhaps you will want to have some symbol there to help you focus your mind—a lighted candle, symbol of universal light; a cross—symbol of man's relation to God and to his fellows; a star of David—symbol of the union of man and God; or some inspiring flower, some revered human face. But keep it simple. The symbol is a vehicle only, not an end in itself. At best, it can only point the way to an experience that is beyond.

I said, if possible, to find one place for meditation. This is only to make it easier for you to meditate, by creating in you an expectation and atmosphere when you are there. But there are many places one can meditate. Above all, perhaps, in the synagogue, temple or church chapels of the city, many of which are open daily. Here denomination, or even faith, is supremely unimportant. I find I can meditate as deeply and satisfyingly at St. Patrick's Cathedral or the Temple Emmanuel, as I can in our own little Chapel of Peace here at the Community Church, or before the Lares and

Penates of my own familiar, precious study. If and when you acquire some proficiency in the discipline of meditation, you will find that you can meditate, quite literally anywhere—sitting on a bench in the park, walking along a city street, or even on a bus or noisy subway train.

Fourthly, there is the frequent question, How long should one meditate? The answer, once again, must be individual. You try to meditate as long as you must to achieve the desired result—to have a deep experience of your unity with Being Itself. But generally speaking, certainly to begin with, the time devoted to meditation should be not less than fifteen and not more than thirty minutes. It is probably wise not to try to meditate for more than this unless you are under the direct guidance of an experienced guru or spiritual teacher. Meditation is serious business. It is not something to fool around or play games with, as you will soon discover. Its effects are powerful, both for evil as well as good; but if well cultivated and developed, they can be enormously beneficial.

You will need at least fifteen minutes, especially at the beginning, to bring your mind into a quiet focus and achieve some degree of concentration. If you progress in mastering the discipline, you will find that you will need not more time, but less, to achieve a refreshing meditational state. But, on the other hand, as you master the discipline, you will find also that your desire is for more time and a deeper experience. As with everything else in life, you will have to adjust your time to fit your overall schedule.

So much then for the general considerations: you learn to meditate by meditating; you must have patience, for it is an arduous discipline which takes years of practice; regularity of time and place is very helpful, and simple, self-chosen symbols may be

useful as pointers ; at the beginning your period for meditation should be from fifteen minutes to half an hour.

#### WHAT TO DO IN MEDITATION?

'But what do I do in meditation?' I am frequently asked. 'Do I try to think holy things? Do I simply let my mind wander in a kind of free association? Is meditation just a form of positive self-hypnosis?'

The answer to all three of these questions is, 'No.' Meditation is not so much thinking as it is feeling. It is a deliberate effort to reach a deeper level of relationship than that of rational thought. It is not irrational, but more than rational—and it is more than thought *about* something: it is *experience* of something.

The mind at rest does often engage in a kind of wandering, free association, but in meditation this must be resisted, for we shall either want to focus our minds in one particular area and concentrate upon that until we are absorbed into it, or, following an 'opposite' technique, to empty our minds completely so that they can be filled from the reservoirs of the Beyond and Eternal. In either case, we must resist the tendency to free-association wandering. That is not meditation at all.

#### FOCUSING UPON THE WHOLE OF TRUTH

'Is meditation just a form of self-hypnosis—like Dr. Coué's formula of endlessly repeating the sentence, "Every day in every way I'm getting better and better!" until one is convinced it is true, however mortally ill he may actually be?' The answer, I believe, is again, 'No', though there are similarities between meditation and self-hypnosis. The difference comes in the focus of the concentration. In self-hypnosis it is upon oneself. In meditation it is upon the whole of truth, the totality of Reality.

The question reminds me of a dialogue

which took place in one of my classes at the University of Chicago Divinity School many years ago. The professor was A. Eustace Haydon, Professor of Comparative Religion—a non-theistic humanist, committed to a scientifically validated world-view, but truly a poet in his understanding of man and his relation to his universe. One of the students who was something of a smart aleck, raised his hand and when recognized, asked what he hoped would be the impossible question: 'Professor Haydon, what is prayer?' Haydon's brow furrowed, then there came a sparkle in his blue eyes. He folded his hands, looking around the room, and said, 'Gentlemen, let us pray.' Then in the most beautiful language he took us back to the beginning of all things and let us participate, so to speak, in the unfolding of the vast evolutionary process. The creations of worlds, of galaxies, of suns and stars and planets, and ourselves at the end of the process, somehow conscious of it all, aware, and beginning to have the power to guide it—at least in some respects—upon its way. He took us from the tiny little system of the atom to the unimaginable magnificence of the galaxies of galaxies, yet helped us to know that it was all one living system, and that we were its children. Finally he brought us back to earth and set us gently down, said 'Amen', and summarized, 'That, gentlemen, was prayer.'

'No, Dr. Haydon,' protested my friend, 'that was hypnotism.'

'Hypnotism,' said Haydon, 'perhaps. But what is hypnotism but the focusing of all the powers of the human being upon a single object. That also is prayer.'

That also is one form of meditation, and the difference between self-hypnosis, and meditation or prayer, would be the character and object of the focus—in the one case upon the self, and in the other upon the Self in the limitless universe to which it

belongs. The process is similar, but the difference in content is almost as between night and day.

ATTENTION—CONCENTRATION—  
ABSORPTION

It is probably best for beginners in meditation to follow the method of focusing the mind through the use of an inspiring word, phrase or scriptural passage. This helps to eliminate sleepiness and free-association wandering, and draws the mind more and more into the depth of concentration desired. The goal here is to capture the mind's full attention, and to bring it, as with a lens, into a concentrated, sharp, burning focus until we quite literally take fire, absorbed into the truth on which we have been focusing.

Such words, phrases or passages are known as *mantras*—or symbols, to help bring our minds to complete concentration. (For those who have found a guru, the *mantra* will of course be chosen by him.)

Examples are words like 'God', 'Soul', 'Spirit'; phrases like 'God is love—love is God', 'God is spirit, spirit is God', 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.' 'The Lord is my light.'

I find it helpful, especially when my mind is cluttered with concerns, anxieties and a thousand extraneous ideas, to use a single word repeated on the heart-beat until everything has cleared leaving just that word and the suffusing reality it invokes.

Again, there are many longer sacred texts which generations of 'seekers have found great aids to concentration. Among these are the Twenty-third Psalm, the Lord's Prayer, and the Prayer of St. Francis which begins, 'Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.' You may memorize these, and then say them slowly, concentrating on each word, plumbing each phrase for its full meaning, until they possess you and will

not let you go—then you may be well on the way to successful meditation.

AN EXAMPLE

Now, let me try, using one of these passages as a *mantra*, to suggest what this experience may be like. Many of you may want to try it out with me

First, unless you are comfortable sitting 'lotus-fashion' on the ground, choose a good straight chair and make yourself completely relaxed and comfortable, back vertical, feet flat on floor, body easily balanced, hands in lap, open, palms upward, head tilted slightly back, eyes closed.

Listen first of all to the silence, all-encompassing, enveloping; feel it deepen and deepen, growing more and more quiet within, like a pond growing so still that it becomes as a mirror reflecting the deep sky. Feel the loneliness of it, but then feel the togetherness of it. All the barriers between you and the universe are going down. You lie open on all sides to the Great Mystery. Don't be afraid of it. You belong to it. You are its child, fruit of its mighty processes. You belong to it and it belongs to you. You summarize it! Take it trustingly into yourself. Let yourself be taken trustingly into its magnificent incomprehensibility. Perhaps now you begin to feel what the shepherd David felt when he wrote the Twenty-third Psalm. You can say the words slowly and silently in your heart:

'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.'

The Lord, the Reality, guides me always, provides for my physical needs, and constantly refreshes my spiritual life.

'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake,



Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.'

Note how here the Psalm turns into a prayer. Till now it has been—the Lord, He. But now it becomes—Lord, Thou! The relationship has gradually become deep, real, personal.

'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.'

For I need both the chastening rod and the encouraging staff to walk in this Way.

'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

'Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

[that is, in the consciousness of the supreme Reality, the Lord].

Do you see why I call this Psalm an effective *mantra*, despite its pastoral imagery, foreign to our urban existence—because its pattern is descriptive of the progression of meditation into prayer. It begins with a simple descriptive statement; it becomes a deep life-and-death encounter with a living reality. This is what life is, and what meditation catches into a brief and beautiful depth experience.

You can do the same thing with the Lord's Prayer or St. Francis' or others as your *mantra*, for each is in its own way cast in the primordial pattern of our encounter with the Ultimate Reality by which we are surrounded.

#### DOES THIS REQUIRE A LEAP OF FAITH?

Does this kind of experience require a leap of faith? Some say, Yes. Father Karl Rahner of the Society of Jesus said last November at a symposium on St. Thomas Aquinas at the University of Chicago:

'If . . . there is to be an answer to the unanswerable question which man is,

then it can only consist in transforming the question, not in answering it, in overcoming and breaking through the dimension in which this question is posed, the question about that which should answer all questions and precisely for this reason must itself be an unanswerable question. . .

'With regard to the incomprehensibility which resists an answer, one must forgo such an answer, and not feel this renunciation as a belittling and painful renunciation. . . Hence he must let himself fall into this incomprehensibility as into his true fulfilment and happiness, let himself be taken up by this unanswered question. This unintelligible risk, which sweeps away all questions, is usually called worshipful love of God. It alone allows the darkness to be light.'

This is all right for those for whom it is possible; but for many—and I include myself among them—the mystery and incomprehensibility alone are not enough. My reason must be satisfied. And it is satisfied. The Universal Reality unfolding across the ages, before our eyes, and within each one of us at this very moment, may be mysterious and wonderful beyond all of our words to express, but it is not entirely incomprehensible, and it can be trusted. There is nothing more to be trusted. We can let ourselves fall trustingly into its care without requiring reason to abdicate.

Science, in its descriptions of the magnificent evolutionary process extending back to the beginning of everything, which has produced us, which sustains and encourages and corrects us in every moment, and from generation to generation, has provided the rational, believable foundation. And meditation is the process by which we are slowly absorbed into the reality of it, and come to feel its urgencies and requirements upon every aspect of our lives.

#### ANOTHER METHOD

But I have so far described only one of the simplest methods of meditation. the use

of a *mantra* to focus the mind, and thus to move from attention to concentration and ultimately to absorption into the great truth that is focused upon. Of course there are many other meditational methods. One of the most commonly tried—though far more difficult—is apparently the opposite of the former method. It is consciously to try to empty the mind entirely—gently but firmly to try to stop the flow of ideas, to put aside each thought as it emerges, and let the mind become completely open, empty, receptive and at rest; yet not asleep but on the contrary, totally alert. This is so that the mind may be more easily grasped and filled by that greater Whole, to whose Life we belong, but which, except to our higher consciousness, is beyond our comprehension. Incomprehensible in its fullness, yes! inapprehensible, no! Open and always present to the mind which is receptive and tuned to Its harmonies.

This method can be a second stage in your explorations of the inner world—a more difficult, but in the end perhaps a richer and more magnificent, experience.

#### AUTHENTICITY

Another question asked sooner or later by almost everyone who experiments with meditation, is this: 'How can I know if my experience of Reality is authentic, that it is not just an illusion?' Or as one young person put it to me, '. . . that I am not just "psyching" myself?'

There are a number of possible tests. The simple, traditional, and probably best answer is—that if the experience is authentic, you will know it, and will know it so surely that you will not at all question its authenticity.

But this answer does not usually satisfy our Western needs for objective referents for evaluation of experience. So let us add to this that the Reality experienced in

meditation should not contradict what we know about the universe through the sciences. It may and will reach beyond scientific knowledge, but will not contradict it, if you are practising meditation rightly. It may use symbolic and mythological language and forms for its expression, but even they, whenever translatable into scientific formulations, should result in valid ones.

A third, and most important, test is that of outer results. How does your practice of meditation affect your daily life, your inner peace, your personal relationships, your sense of social responsibility? Are you a happier, wiser person because of it? Are you more thoughtful of your parents, your spouse, your children, your associates? Do you find yourself putting *me first* less and less, and *others first* more and more? Are you easier to get along with, because of your meditation? Are you a healer and harmonizer wherever you go?

Do you feel more heavily upon you—yet without regret but rather with joy—the burdens of the world? Can you, because of your meditation, face the torment of this time without trembling, saying as did the poet, 'Now God be thanked for having matched us with this hour!'—understanding that while you cannot remedy all the world's evils all by yourself, you can begin, and perhaps even show others the way? Have you the courage sometimes to set your little life and personal convictions against the whole social tide, if that be necessary to conscience and the survival of truth?

Yes, my friends, in meditation, as in life itself, the ultimate test is in the results, both inner and outer. As the apostle James asked long ago, 'Of what use is faith, if we do not put it into practice?'

One person whose whole life has been changed by an experience we may well call meditative, was Edgar D. Mitchell, one of the first men to walk on the moon. In an

article in the *Saturday Review* he described his experience in spiritual terms :

'It began with the breathtaking experience of seeing planet earth floating in the immensity of space—the incredible beauty of a . . . blue-and-white jewel floating in the vast, black sky. I underwent a religious-like peak experience in which the presence of divinity became almost palpable, and I knew that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes. This knowledge, which came directly, intuitively, was not a matter of discursive reasoning or logical abstraction. . . from information perceptible by the sensory organs. The realization was subjective, but it was knowledge every bit as real and compelling as the objective data the navigational programme or the communications system was based on. Clearly, the universe has meaning and direction—an unseen dimension behind the visible creation that gives it an intelligent design and gives life purpose.

'Then my thoughts turned to daily life on the planet. With that my sense of wonderment gradually turned into something close to anguish. I realized that at that very moment people were fighting wars ; committing murder and other crimes ; lying, cheating, and struggling for power and status ; abusing the environment by polluting the water and air, wasting natural resources, and ravaging the land ; acting out of lust and greed ; and hurting others through intolerance, bigotry, prejudice, and all the other failings that add up to man's inhumanity to man.

'It was also painfully apparent that the millions. . . suffering in. . . poverty, ill health, misery, fear, and near-slavery did so in large measure because of economic exploitation, political domination, religious and ethnic persecution and a hundred other demons that spring from the human ego. Science, for all its technological feats, did not yet—more likely could not, in its present form—deal with these problems stemming from man's self-centredness.

'The magnitude of the overall problem seemed staggering. How had the world come to such a critical situation—and why? Even more important, what could be done to correct it? How could the highest development of our objective reason, epitomized by factual science, be wedded to the highest development of our subjective intuition, epitomized by ethical religion?

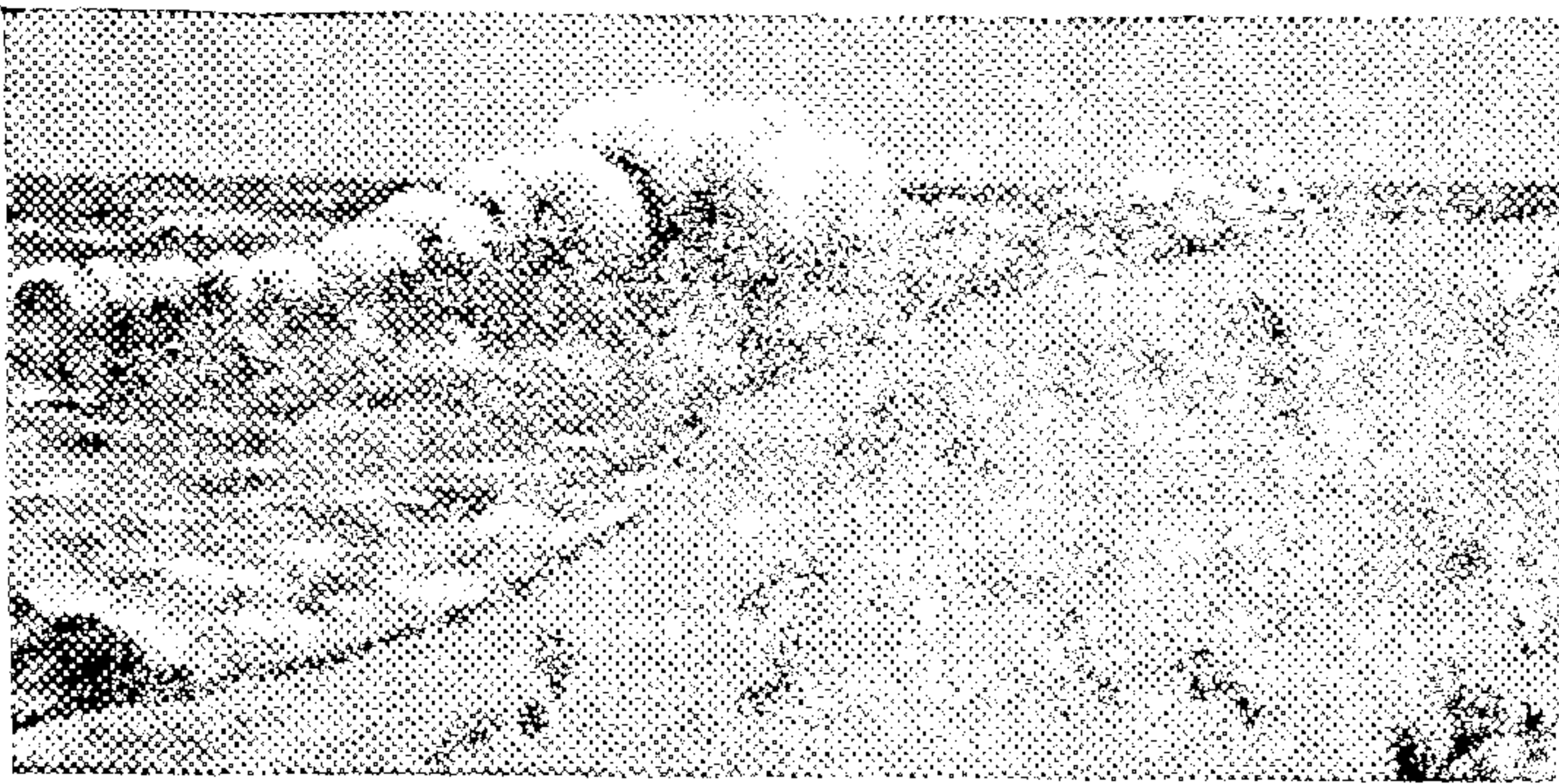
'As I survey the challenge facing humanity today, I see only one answer : a *transformation of consciousness*. Man must rise from his present ego-centred consciousness to find universal harmony, starting within himself and proceeding outward through his relations with other people and the environment, to his relation with the cosmos. Otherwise man will continue to move deeper into chaos and crisis, toward a destruction of his own making.

' . . . To anyone with an open mind, it should now be clear that people have faculties associated with—but not limited to—their known sensory systems. The contemporary scientific model of man as simply a complex organization of organic molecules is insufficient for explaining consciousness. Human beings are more than mere lumps of flesh. They have a dimension that transcends the entity of the person and takes them into the category of the transperson.

'That concept, of course, takes us right back into religion and philosophy. It presents a sound reason for religious beliefs—a rational basis for explaining why people throughout history have persisted in claiming that the physical world has a spiritual foundation. But it takes a change of consciousness if we are to "see" that foundation.

'To help bring about that change, we need to study the nature of consciousness in all its manifestations. The value-free rational-objective-experimental mode of Western science, based on materialism, is not sufficient by itself for coping with the ever-increasing planetary crises besetting civilization. The intui-

(Continued on p. 149)



# HUMAN TRENDS

## THE CARTHUSIANS AND THE TRAPPISTS—TWO CONTEMPLATIVE ORDERS, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The fundamental difference between Hindu monasticism and that of the Roman Catholic Church is that the latter follows a fixed Rule which lays down minutely many if not all details of the daily monastic routine. Monasticism itself is a creation of the East. It was brought over to Europe from Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. In the course of this geographical transition, some important elements of monastic life were changed, particularly in that the eremitical life was abandoned in favour of the cenobitic monasticism.<sup>1</sup> In a cold climate, eremitical life is very rigorous. For this among other reasons, the community life became an integrated part of monasticism; living together is to help the monks to develop their spirit of brotherly love, their tolerance, and patience. It was this community life which had to be clearly defined by a monastic Rule. The one which had the strongest

influence on Catholic monasticism, is the Rule of St. Benedict who lived in the sixth century. Many orders have followed it to the present day.

In the course of history, it has happened time and again that the monastic discipline of certain orders degenerated and a group of monks drew away from their order to live again strictly according to their original Rule. Today, there are at least two such orders which can be said to lead still a strict contemplative life as their Rule prescribes it. These two orders are the *Carthusians* and the *Trappists*. Both follow the Rule of St. Benedict. The Carthusian Order was founded in the eleventh century, at a time when the ascetic mood of the Middle Ages was sternest. A group of enthusiastic young men went into a desolate, lonely area of the French Alps and led a semi-eremitical life. Slowly certain customs developed, the order spread and became large—in its palmy days 58 monasteries in Germany alone! The second, the Trappist Order, is a reformed order of the Cistercians. It, too, originated in France, but is much younger; the order was constituted only in 1892.

Today, the Carthusian Order is quite small, numbering only about 660 members who are distributed among their 24 mona-

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<sup>1</sup> 'Eremitical'—characteristic of the hermit. An hermit is a hermit or recluse; that is, a person who has withdrawn to a solitary place for a life of religious seclusion. 'Cenobitic'—pertaining to a cenobite. A cenobite is a member of a religious order living in a convent or community. (*vide The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, College Ed.*)—*Ed.*

steries, of which 19 are for monks and the rest for sisters. With one exception (that is, the U.S.A.), all monasteries are in Western Europe. The Trappist Order is much larger today; its 83 monasteries for monks and 48 for sisters are spread over all continents and have a total strength of about 5,500 members.

Each order has only one monastery left in West Germany, the country with which the writer is most familiar. The Carthusian monastery 'Marienau' lies in Southern Germany, in the wood-covered foot hills of the Bavarian Alps. It is several kilometres away from human habitation: the next railway station is 15 kms. away. It was erected only about fifteen years ago, when the monastery near the city of Düsseldorf was abandoned: a highway had been built along one side, and a modern airport near by. Thus the humble monks had been made prisoners of the modern environment but escaped to this still peaceful place.

The Carthusian Order has never been reformed; it never needed to be, as it maintained its original strictness throughout the centuries. As a result, the monks still lead a life which seems almost like that of medieval monks. The new monastery has been constructed in the traditional way, reflecting the style and life of medieval monasteries. When you hear the monks singing the time-hallowed Gregorian songs, or reciting the Psalms in Latin in their small austere church, you feel transported into another age. Traditionally, a (Catholic) monastery contains two groups of monks, namely, priest-monks who have undergone through, theological training, and brother-monks who are generally artisans. Marienau has about 15 of each group. The peculiarity of each Carthusian monastery is the large number of small houses it contains. Each priest-monk lives in a separate house of his own, while the brothers are accommodated in individual cells. The priest-

monks spend their days in the eternal rhythm of communal prayer in church, private prayer in their houses, spiritual reading, and manual work in the small work-room of their houses. This manual work is meant for relaxation and contributes little else to the common good. Going to bed before 8 p.m., the Carthusians break their sleep at 11 p.m. to spend two hours of prayer-recitations in the church; afterwards they continue their sleep until the early morning when again they congregate for Holy Mass. In the evening, they will all come together a third time to sing the Vesper. All monks eat alone in their houses or cells (a vegetarian diet), and are bound by a vow of silence. Only during certain hours of Sunday, when the monks eat together and take a walk together, may they speak. Fasting is very much a part of their lives; they eat only one full meal a day, and a snack in the evening.

The brother-monks do all the work in the monastery. A traditional monastery is like a small town: it contains all facilities for living and aims to be as self-sufficient as possible. The brothers work in their workshops, in the gardens, in the kitchen. What they cannot provide themselves, a monk goes from time to time to buy in the next town. Except a driver, they do not employ outsiders, but do everything alone. The Carthusians live so strictly secluded that they do not even welcome visitors. The occasional guests who do come to spend some days there, are either young men contemplating entering the order, or close relatives of the inmates, who may receive them once a year. When I arrived in the middle of February, I was still the first guest of the year.

Father Nikolaus, the Father Magister who is in charge of novices and guests, came to my room to meet me every day. He was a senior monk with bright eyes, he spoke with great warmth and love. He had enter-

ed the order when he was a boy of 19. 'If I were born again', he said, 'I would again choose this life.' But he did not hide the tremendous difficulties which arise from the Carthusian life. The constant solitude is hardest to bear. The almost military discipline which the minutely fixed daily routine imposes on the monks, is a source of difficulty for many; likewise the immobility of the priest-monks who remain in their houses and the adjacent little gardens with the exception of the Sunday walks. But, as Father Nikolaus pointed out, many have found their peace here, and a look at many a beaming, happy face convinced me easily.

The Trappist monastery of Germany, 'Mariawald', is situated in the Eifel mountains close to the Dutch and Belgian borders. The basic difference from the Carthusians is that the Trappists do not stress eremitical but communal life: the monks live together in large dormitories, they eat, work, and worship together. Nobody except the old and the sick enjoys the privacy of his own room. But, like the Carthusians, they live silently. Mariawald is also a traditional, large monastery with workshops, fields, meadows, forests, cattle, etc. The Trappists rise from sleep at 2 or 3 a.m. (depending on the season) and then congregate in church for the Vigils; afterwards they stay up for private prayer and spiritual reading. Altogether they assemble in church seven times to recite the Hours which consist mainly of the Psalms from the Old Testament. They go to bed by 8 p.m. All Trappist monks, priests and brothers alike, must participate in manual work in the mornings and afternoons; on average four hours daily. Often you can see a monk operating a tractor, others gathering potatoes, or working in the garden, or taking the cows back to their stables. The monks live to a large extent from their agricultural produce, and, in addition, from making and selling sweet liqueur in their

own small distillery. This may shock Indian readers; but, as a matter of fact, it is a usual source of income for many Christian monasteries; monastic liqueurs and beers have been well-known in Europe for many centuries. The Carthusians, too, are known for their famous liqueur which is produced according to a secret recipe in their French mother-house, La Grande Chartreuse; the profit from the sale is distributed among all Carthusian monasteries.

The Trappists are somewhat more flexible and unorthodox than the Carthusians. They employ several men to manage their fields. Though none of the monks generally leaves the precincts except to buy provisions, they keep a window open to the world. The Trappists may, for example, read newspapers, which the Carthusians cannot. Also, the Trappists may write articles and books; the Carthusians never publish. The Trappists welcome guests who wish to spend some quiet days in the holy atmosphere of the monastery; the guests are even allowed to participate, to some extent, in the daily routine of the monk. Hospitality is a traditional monastic virtue. The Carthusian novices are trained in theology and philosophy by their own senior monks; they do not leave the monastery for their study. The Trappist novices, after spending two years in the monastery, are sent to some University to study. They return only during the vacation, until, after about five years, they complete their studies and are ordained as priests.

The life in a Trappist monastery nevertheless is not easy. Communal life—being together all day and all night—is often as hard to bear, even for an occidental, as solitude. A community can protect and support the individual, but it may also stifle his progress. But the Trappist life has attracted many people, particularly in North America where the order has enjoyed a sharp increase through the influence of the

poet and writer Thomas Merton, himself a Trappist monk. At Mariawald, too, you can see plenty of young faces. The order does not complain about lack of novices as most other orders do.

Unfortunately, the Trappists at Mariawald, too, have not been able to prevent the inroads of the modern secular society altogether. A small inn has, under the influence of modern tourism, evolved into a large restaurant situated just at the monastery walls. A huge parking place was the natural sequel. The tourists are not allowed to set foot in the monastery, but they can go into the church; and they mar the peaceful atmosphere with their loud, disrespectful chatter, laughter, and singing. When they enter the church even while the monks are reciting the Hours, still they will walk about and disturb the prayers in a rude manner. I asked Father Bernardin, the prior, why he does not close down the restaurant. He answered that he would be most willing to do so; but there are indications that if he did, the government would build a restaurant a few hundred steps off. Mariawald is in the midst of a recreational area; people of the big cities around (Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen) go there by car in search of fresh air and natural scenery. The old monastery has long been a focal point in this area and therefore some touristic facilities seem to be indispensable. A government-built restaurant may include a bar, a dance-hall, and other amusement activities which would be totally undesirable to the monks. As they can exercise some control over their own establishment, they have decided to keep it going. It is disturbing to see how these monks who want nothing from the world, thus become victims of public curiosity, which is unrestrained by today's society.

## II

That the Carthusians are deep-rooted traditionalists has helped them to maintain

monastic discipline and seclusion, but it has also made their way of life incompatible with modern needs. St. Benedict's Rule was written and the Carthusian Order was founded for men quite different from those who are inclined to lead a contemplative life today. Benedict accepted young boys, orphans, and people of very low education; naturally they had to be told exactly what to do. The young men ready to enter a contemplative monastery today, are in all ways more responsible and independent-minded; they cannot but consider the regimentation provided as a heavy burden.

The Carthusian monks spend about eight, the Trappists about four to five hours daily reciting prescribed prayers either in church or in their own rooms. Oral prayer is generally considered a low form of prayer, which should lead to mental prayer and meditation. The tight daily routine leaves very little time and energy for cultivating these higher forms of prayer. As a consequence, the prayer-recitations, too, are felt by many as a burden and hindrance. Many monks seek more direct spiritual and individualized methods of asceticism; this is especially true among the Trappists.

A two-fold difficulty arises: Firstly, it is widely felt that some of the traditional forms must be positively overcome step by step. The old generation of monks has its monastic ideal still in the cultivation of piety, and the rather mechanical ascetic methods suit them well; whereas the monks who have joined the two orders in the last ten years clearly tend towards methods which seem helpful towards mystical experience, realization. This difference of mentality seems most strongly felt in the Trappist monastery. Slowly the young tend to become the dominating influence. It is also noteworthy that practically all young monks are keenly interested in Eastern forms of spirituality. Some Trappists sit down every morning to meditate according to the Zen

method. Recently, some were sent to a meditation-course conducted by a Japanese master. For them especially, the rigours of the routine do not allow them enough time to practise more intensely.

The second difficulty, related to the first one, is: how to be flexible and individual and yet maintain the necessary monastic discipline? Flexibility may easily weaken the discipline and impede the community from functioning properly; community-life always needs a set of rules. A balance between individual and communal needs must be found.

The Trappist monasteries have been very progressive in seeking new forms of monastic life. The authorities have sanctioned a large number of new small foundations, so-called 'simplified foundations' which accommodate just a handful of monks,

These hermitages do away with much of the traditional routine, maintaining only a few essential elements like silence, seclusion, manual work, and the Vigils in the small hours of the morning. Material existence seems to be no problem; most hermitages maintain themselves by agriculture or by making and selling handicrafts. The life-style is individualized, but at the same time community-life with just a few brothers is also more demanding than in larger groups. Surely, these small communities cannot be said to have always mastered the two difficulties mentioned above; there have been failures and disappointments; clearly the new foundations are still in the experimental stage. But they are hopeful beginnings of a religious life which fuses true spirituality into practicable communal forms.

—DR. MARTIN KAMPCHEN

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*(Continued from p. 144)*

tive-subjective-experiential mode characteristic of religion and Eastern traditions, has much to contribute to the study of mind and consciousness. Noetics, which seeks to use the best of both approaches and to discover an acceptable value system, can play an important role in leading the way to solutions and in helping others to make the same discovery that I made in outer space.'

Thus what I am saying is that the practice of meditation, if done well and truly, can bring you peace of mind, and will result in power of life. It will deepen, strengthen, ennoble your lives, and enlarge your horizons. It will give you joy such as you never imagined would be possible. Don't you think, then, that it might be worth your trying?

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# 'CONCERNING RELIGION': SOME EXCERPTS

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

TRANSLATED BY DR. S. SUBHASH CHANDRA

When we however consider [well]...<sup>1</sup> then the missionary activity—inasmuch as it is not restricted to such people as are still in the state of infancy, like Hottentots, Kaffirs, inhabitants of South Sea Islands and so on, where it has had real success—would appear to us not merely as the apogee of human importunity, arrogance and impertinence, but as absurd. For in India the Brahmins respond to the orations of the missionaries with a condescendingly appreciative smile or with a shrug of the shoulders; and above all

among this nation [i.e., India], aside from some very easy cases, the missionary attempts at conversion have thoroughly failed. An authentic account in Volume XXI of the *Asiatic Journal* of 1826 reports that after many years of missionary activity in the entire India (of which, according to *Times*, April 1852, alone, the British Possessions have 150 million inhabitants) not more than three hundred living converts are to be found, [and] that the Christian converts distinguish themselves through the most extreme immorality. They were just three hundred venal souls bought from so many millions. That since then in India Christianity fares better, [this] I see nowhere. The missionaries now try to smuggle in Christianity by conveying it to children—in violation of the [school] convention—in the schools exclusively devoted to the secular English instruction. The Hindus, however, are most jealously vigilant against all this...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Translator's Note [T.N.]*: Around 1845 Schopenhauer (1788-1860) began working on a series of essays, which finally came to embody the two volumes of *Parerga und Paralipomena* (A. W. Hayn, Berlin, 1851). The essay 'Concerning Religion' (*Ueber Religion*) constitutes Chapter XV of the Second Volume of this work. In Wolfgang von Löhneysen's edition of Schopenhauer's complete writings, *Samtliche Werke* (Cotta-Insel, Stuttgart/Frankfurt a.M., 1965), this essay appears in Vol. V, pp. 382-466. It is a lengthy essay. Indeed, it is rather a treatise encompassing 84 printed pages. Since the space restrictions of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, preclude its translation in entirety, I have chosen the rendering of such passages as would primarily interest students of the Indian heritage. All passages omitted have been indicated by three dots and I have provided the pagination of the translated passages in Löhneysen's edition of *Samtliche Werke*. Stretching across sections 174-82 of *Paralipomena*, the treatise consists of two well-demarcated parts: (a) section 174 containing an imaginary dialogue between two fictitious philosophers, Demopheles and Philaethes (Vol. V, pp. 382-425); (b) sections 175-82 representing numerous profound remarks related to Belief and Knowledge (Vol. V, pp. 425-6), Revelation (pp. 426-7), Concerning Christianity (pp. 427-45), On Theism (pp. 445-6), Old and New Testament (pp. 447-57), Sects (pp. 457-8), Rationalism (pp. 458-66).

Whoever wants to judge religion, ought always to visualize it [in terms of the]

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<sup>2</sup> *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. V, pp. 386-7. *T.N.*: Indology being still a rudimentary science when Schopenhauer lived, the scientific diacritical spellings for Sanskrit words were then non-existent. It would be an obvious anachronism to force them upon the great German. Hence, in the present translation, Sanskrit words appear as they are commonly spelt in India. Further, Schopenhauer had a flair for writing very long sentences, which possess their own charm in the original German. However, such unusually lengthy sentences are ill-suited to the less complicated English idiom. I have, therefore, been often forced to divide some unwieldy sentences or modify Schopenhauer's punctuation and put some dependent clauses within parentheses.

character of the great masses, for whom it is meant—that is remember their entire moral and intellectual lowliness... As explanation hereof he may consider on the one hand the profound Indian wisdom, which is contained in the Upanishads; and then he may look at the crazy idol worship in contemporary India as it presents itself during pilgrimages, processions and festivals and in the delirious and grotesque activity of the Sannyasis of our time.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, not to be denied that in all this craziness and riotousness something profound remains concealed, which is in consonance with the aforementioned deep wisdom or provides a reflection thereof. It has, however, needed this [grotesque] form for the uncultured great masses. We have in this contrast both poles of humanity before us: the wisdom of the [chosen] individuals and the bestiality of the masses, which both however find their concordance in the morality.<sup>4</sup>...

Especially let us not forget India, this holy soul, this cradle of the human race, at least of the race to which we [Europeans] belong, where at first Mohammedans and thereafter Christians have in the most horrible manner attacked the sacred primeval faith of humanity and where the ever-lamentable, wanton and

<sup>3</sup> *T. N.*: Schopenhauer himself uses here the word *Saniassi* (the spelling that he derived from contemporary Indologists). He was obviously thinking of roadside 'sadhus' and not of genuine monks or those belonging to recognized orders.

<sup>4</sup> *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. V, pp. 399-400. *T. N.*: Schopenhauer came to love the Upanishads with all the fervour of his head and heart, thanks to Anquetil Duperron's Latin translation of 50 Upanishads: *Oupnekhat* (Strassburg, 1801). Based upon Dara Shukoh's Persian rendering, it is the oldest known translation of Upanishads in a European language. Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Die Literaturen Indiens* (Kröner, Stuttgart, 1961), p. 453 pinpoints the chronological priority of Duperron's work.

cruel destruction and desecration of the most ancient temples and idols witnesses to us even now the monotheistic rage of the Mohammedans. From Mohammed the Ghaznevid of accursed memory till the fractricidal Aurangzeb, [this destruction] was pursued, which thereafter the Portuguese Christians have been faithfully trying to emulate both through the demolition of temples and through the mandates of the Inquisition in Goa.<sup>5</sup>...

Verily this is the worst aspect of religions that the believers of one [religion] hold that they are free to ill-treat all others and hence they deal with them [followers of other religions] with the most extreme wickedness and cruelty: thus the Mohammedans against Christians and Hindus; the Christians against Hindus, Mohammedans, American tribes, Negroes, Jews, heretics, etc. However, perhaps I go too far off when I imply *all* religions. For in the interests of truth I must add that this fanatic cruelty flowing from the basic standpoint [of their faith] is known to us only as (a feature) of the adherents of the monotheistic religions, that is only of the Semitic religion and its two branches, namely, Christianity and Islam. We hear nothing of all this as far as Hindus and Buddhists are concerned. Though we know that around the 5th century of our era Buddhism was driven away from the nearer Indian peninsula<sup>6</sup> by the Brahmins—as far as my knowledge goes—, we have no precise evidence of acts of violence, wars or cruelties through which it may have occurred... Indeed, intolerance is only

<sup>5</sup> *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. V, pp. 420-1

<sup>6</sup> *T. N.*: Even today for Germans and Frenchmen, 'India is inclusive of all countries stretching from Iran to Indonesia. Indeed, the Frenchmen continue to use the term 'Les Indes' (the Indias) in plural. Hence, the 'nearer Indian peninsula' denotes what we understand by 'India, i.e., Bharat'.

essential to monotheism: a unique God is according to his nature a jealous God... As against this, the polytheistic Gods are in conformity with their nature tolerant.<sup>7</sup>...

The essentially correct Augustinian concept of the very big number of sinners and the extremely small number of those deserving the eternal felicity is to be found in Brahmanism and Buddhism too: however, due to metempsychosis, it gives no offence. For the first [Brahmanism] accords final emancipation and the second [Buddhism] Nirvana [both equivalent to our eternal felicity] only to very few, who thereby are not privileged hereto, but have come into this world with merits accumulated during earlier lives and now proceed further on the same path [toward Nirvana]. However, hereby all others are not thrown into the eternally burning abyss of hell, but are placed in regions appropriate to their deeds. Hence, if somebody were to ask the teachers of these religions, where and to what state have come all those who had not attained salvation, then he would get the answer, 'See around yourself, here they are what they have become: this is their realm of struggle, this is Samsara, that is, the world of yearning, of birth, of suffering, of old age, of disease and death!' ... But verily, if a distinguished Asian were to ask me, what Europe is, then I would have to answer him: it is that part of the world that is entirely possessed by the unheard-of and incredible illusion that birth is the absolute beginning of man and that he emerges out of nothing.<sup>8</sup>...

...Jehovah is a transformation of Ormuzd and Satan of his (that is, Ormuzd's) inseparable Ahriman: but Ormuzd himself is a transformation of Indra... Christianity has the peculiar disadvantage that it is not like other religions

a pure doctrine; it is essentially and mainly a history, a chain of events, a complex of facts, of deeds and sufferings of individual beings; and just this history represents the dogma, the belief in which redeems. Other religions, namely, Buddhism, do have a historical account of the life of their founder: however, this is not a part of the dogma itself, but runs beside it. One can for instance very well compare *Lalitavistara* to the Evangel, for it contains the life of Sakyamuni, the Buddha of the present age: but it remains a matter entirely separate and distinct from the dogma, that is, from Buddhism... At this point should be mentioned yet another daily perceptible basic mistake of Christianity, which cannot be explained away and which has heinous results: it [Christianity] has in an unnatural manner torn apart the human being from the animal world, to which he of course belongs. It [Christianity] would let human beings alone count, and considers animals just as *things*. Whereas Brahmanism and Buddhism, faithful to truth, recognize the perceptible relationship of man in general with the whole of nature, and above all with the animals; and always describe him—through metempsychosis and otherwise—in close relationship with the animal world... It is clear that all this stems from the Jewish viewpoint, which regards the animal as a product meant for human consumption.<sup>9</sup>...

The Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in their warnings still use the poor argument that cruelty to animals leads to cruelty towards human beings—as if merely the man were the immediate goal of moral duty [and] animal barely a mediate [goal] and in itself just a thing!... Among Hindus and Buddhists, however, reigns the 'Mahavakya' [the great word]: '*tat tvam asi*'—

<sup>7</sup> *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. V, pp. 422-3

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 434-6

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 436-8

that thou art, which is considered to apply to [lit., all the time pronounced for] every animal in order to keep reminding us of the identity of the inner Being in it and in us. This then becomes the guiding principle for our [ethical] activity.... They [the Europeans] send missionaries to Brahmins and Buddhists in order to convey to them the 'true faith': but when they learn how in Europe animals are dealt with, they (Brahmins and Buddhists) acquire the deepest aversion towards Europeans and their religious doctrines.<sup>10</sup>...

Judaism is basically characterized by realism and optimism, which are closely related [to one another] and are the conditions of true theism. For it [theism] presents the material world as absolutely real and [explains] life as a pleasant gift given to us. As against this, Brahmanism and Buddhism are fundamentally characterized by idealism and pessimism, for they accord to the world only a dreamlike existence and consider life to be a consequence of our mistake [Schuld]. In the teachings of the Zend Avesta [from which Judaism is known to have grown], the pessimistic element is represented by Ahriman. But in Judaism he [Ahriman] has a subordinate place as Satan, who however, like Ahriman, is the creator of serpents, scorpions and insects, etc.<sup>11</sup>...

The New Testament, however, must somehow be of Indian origin, as testified by its thoroughly Indian ethics [*indische Ethik*] with morality culminating in asceticism, its pessimism and its (theory of) Avatar. But because of all these [traits] it stands

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 440-3. T. N.: Nietzsche, *Werke* (Carl Hanser, Munich, 1954), Vol. I, p. 322, recalls with a deep understanding Schopenhauer's sympathy for animal life. Schopenhauer was indeed a great protector of animals and a zealous member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 447

in a decisive inner contradiction with the Old Testament; hence, only the story of the sinful Fall [of man]—to which it [the New Testament] could well be attached—comes to provide the connecting link. For when the aforementioned Indian doctrine reached the soil of the Holy Land, then arose the task of unifying the knowledge of the corruption and sorrow of the world, its yearning for redemption, and salvation by virtue of an Avatar—the ethics of self-denial and atonement—with the Hebrew monotheism and its 'all was very good' [optimism]. And it [the task] succeeded as well as it could, as well as two so heterogeneous, indeed antagonistic doctrines would let themselves be unified... All that is true in Christianity is to be found in Brahmanism and Buddhism too... For the spirit of the Indian wisdom is to be felt in the New Testament like the fragrance of flowers from distant tropical lands drifting over mountains and streams ... But now just as a thorough knowledge of a species requires that of its genus, which itself however can be recognized anew only in its subspecies; so is the knowledge—indeed as solid and as exact as possible—of Brahmanism and Buddhism essential for a thorough understanding of Christianity. For just as Sanskrit provides us the thoroughly right understanding of the Greek and Latin languages, so Brahmanism and Buddhism provide that (the understanding) of Christianity. Indeed, I cherish the hope that some day will arise the Biblical scholars conversant with the Indian religions, who will be able to prove their (Indian religions') kinship with Christianity in terms of quite specific features.<sup>12</sup>...

If one were to have recourse to conjectures in order to explain the said identity with the Indian doctrines, then one could suppose that the Evangelical account of the

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 449-51

flight into Egypt rests upon some historical basis and that Jesus, instructed by the Egyptian priests—whose religion was of Indian origin—, derived from them the Indian ethics and the concept of Avatars, and thereafter devoted himself to adjusting them [the Indian doctrines] to the Jewish dogmas and to graft them upon the old stem. Finally he [Jesus] was led by the feeling of his own moral and intellectual superiority to consider himself as an Avatar and accordingly call himself the 'Son of Man' in order to indicate that he was more than just a human being.<sup>13</sup>...

The focus and the heart of Christianity is the doctrine of the sinful Fall, of original sin, of the wretchedness of our natural state and the corruption of the primeval human being coupled with the intercession and reconciliation through the Redeemer to whom one is assimilated through faith in him.<sup>14</sup> But through all this it [Christianity] reveals itself as pessimism [and] is therefore directly opposed to the optimism of Judaism and also of its natural offspring, namely, Islam; however, it [Christianity] is related to Brahmanism and Buddhism... The basic difference between religions depends upon whether they denote optimism or pessimism, [and] not at all whether they are monotheism, polytheism, Trimurti, trinity, pantheism or

atheism [e.g., Buddhism]. Hence, the Old Testament and the New Testament are diametrically opposite.<sup>15</sup>... The Old Testament is [basically] optimism; the New Testament [is] pessimism. The former stems as is proved from the Ormuzd doctrine; the latter is in its inner spirit akin to Brahmanism and Buddhism, [and] is therefore probably historically too to be somehow derived from them.<sup>16</sup>...

Continuously undermined by the [results of the] sciences, on the whole Christianity is therefore gradually moving towards its end. However, some hope may be derived for it from the observation that only such religions decline as have no original scriptures. The religion of the Greeks and the Romans—these world dominating nations—has disappeared. As against it, the religion of the despised small Jewish people has maintained itself; just so that of the Zend community among the Parsis. However, that [the religion] of the Gauls, Scandinavians and Germanic tribes has collapsed. But the Brahmanic and the Buddhist [religions] exist and [continue to] flourish: they are the oldest of all and have detailed original scriptures.<sup>17</sup>...

<sup>15</sup> Here as well as in some of the above discussion about the Old 'versus' the New Testaments, Schopenhauer obviously differs sharply from either the usual Christian or Jewish interpretations of these holy books.—*Ed.*

<sup>16</sup> *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. V, pp. 458-9

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 465. *T.N.*: 'the oldest of all...' refers here to the Brahmanic-Vedic heritage, which may be reasonably said to precede even Judaism. I believe Schopenhauer here mentions Buddhism merely as an allied but distinct development within the Indian spirituality.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 453

<sup>14</sup> *T.N.*: Schopenhauer is here trying to convey that, thanks to the 'intercession' of the Redeemer (Jesus Christ), one is reconciled with God; however any such intercession presupposes that one is 'assimilated' to the Redeemer through faith in him.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), and 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Madras Math, 1947). References: *Great Master*: No. 1, pp. 522-3; No. 2, pp. 533-4. *Gospel*: No. 3, p. 721.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 81-2.

'Religion always, in India,' observed Sri Aurobindo once, 'precedes national awakenings.' The Indian national awakening witnessed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries goes to validate this profound observation. Religion in its purest and all-embracing universal form is embodied in the Upanishads, the unique records of the spiritual discoveries of the Indian sages. Sri Ramakrishna, who re-lived the Upanishadic religion, has initiated the religious renaissance from which the national awakening has followed. 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Upanishads', the Editorial this month, is an attempt to study the correspondence between the truths of the Upanishads and their realizations in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. A vast though little-discussed subject it is; therefore we hope our readers will welcome our thoughts in outline on this theme, this month when Sri Ramakrishna's birthday will be celebrated by millions of his devotees and admirers in and outside of India.

Born a daughter of Ireland, Nivedita in her prime became a 'Daughter of India'.

This racial rebirth was the result of a spiritual transformation brought about by Swami Vivekananda. It was not merely a superficial change, such as that betokened by her Hindu name or robe or style of life: it was a revolutionary change of personality, in which she successfully 'Hinduized' her thoughts, feelings, and as it were, the very racial unconscious! Thus on the one hand she became an authentic spokesman of India to the West, and on the other, a reinterpreter of the Indian religious and cultural heritage with the help of her Western training, to Hindus themselves. Her writings—and personality no less—are a kind of two-way mirror with the help of which sympathetic Hindus and Westerners can understand one another and come closer by a bond of fraternity. She is one of the immortals of the modern Indian Renaissance and the influence she shed prevails even today. 'A Real Lioness' is an inspiring profile of this great woman—a nun and a heroine in one—, contributed this month by Swami Sastrananda, of the Ramakrishna Order.

The seers of the Upanishads are the 'scientists' of the inner light of consciousness. It is this 'light' that illumines all of man's perceptions, thoughts, emotions, mental states, and also his very ego. 'Inner Light', by Swami Shraddhananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Sacramento, Calif., U.S.A., is a lucid exposition of a profound discovery of the Upanishads about the essential spiritual dimension of man.

Of the many Himalayan *tirthas* (holy places), the cave of Amarnath in Kashmir is very well known. A pilgrimage to this

*tīrtha* is a cherished desire of a large number of devotees in and outside India. It is even more so for the followers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, as Swamiji himself made this pilgrimage on foot in 1897, and, as his biographies tell, obtained from Śiva the rare boon of death at his own will. Rather a difficult and hazardous venture, owing to high altitudes, uncertain weather and hilly terrain, the Amarnath pilgrimage closely parallels the arduous inner pilgrimage to the 'cave' of one's own heart wherein dwells the shining Lord of the immortals (Amarnath) whose vision alone confers true deathlessness. In any case the external pilgrimage unfailingly confers its own benefits on sincere devotees and spurs them on along the inner one. 'Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Amarnath', by Mrs. Jean Pohli, an American devotee, very closely associated with our Delhi centre, beautifully and feelingly brings out this deep truth, while helpfully giving the salient information about the actual pilgrimage, which she herself accomplished last August. We are very thankful to Mrs. Pohli also for providing the photographs for illustrating the article.

In this issue comes the second and concluding part of 'The Societal Foundations of the Early Buddhist Sangha', by Mrs. Nancy Ann Nayar. The first part of this erudite and interesting paper was published in our January issue. The author has a bachelor's degree in Hindi from California University in Berkeley, and a Master's degree in Library Science from McGill University, Montreal, Canada. She is at present in the graduate programme of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill.

The sage Vālmīkī's *Rāmāyaṇa*, regarded traditionally as the earliest poetical work in Sanskrit, holds many ideals before humanity, of which the mutual love and fidelity of Śrī Rāma and Sītā—the ideal couple—

is one of the highest. 'Sītā Wins Her Exile' is a concise summary of the dialogue between Rāma and Sītā just before their departure for the forest-exile, in which Rāma tries vigorously to dissuade his wife from accompanying him, but Sītā stands her ground. The dialogue among other things rebuts the commonly held view that Sītā was a submissive and docile wife, by revealing her mettlesome spirit of independence, unshakeable resolve, and skill in argument.

The Ātman, says Śaṅkara in the Preface to his commentary on the *Īśā-upaniṣad*, 'is not something that is attained, created, or produced through the process of purification or transformation...' It is the ever-present reality and existence, intelligence and bliss within us. Time is in It but not the Ātman in time. By realizing this ever-present infinite Reality within us, we conquer time with its formidable mind-born distortions of the timeless Reality into 'past, present, and future'. 'The Future and the Now', by Swami Pavitrananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and head of the Vedanta Society of New York, is an enlightening and practice-oriented presentation on the nature of time and the way to overcome its effects. This was originally given by the Swami as a 'New-Year' Sunday talk, on 2 January 1966 at the Vedanta Society of New York.

Man essentially is spiritual—even this perceptible cosmos has its roots in the spiritual. True religion, which concerns the spiritual core of man, therefore, is a subject of perennial interest and relevance. Oft-times our understanding of religion gets blurred, owing perhaps to the influences of materialistic glamour and sophistry. Thus our understanding often needs correctives. 'True Religion Always Helps', by Swami Budhananda, through its clear and deep-

going analysis, provides one such corrective. The second part of this Essay on Applied Religion will be published in our next issue.

Meditation is a theme that nowadays is very much attracting and stirring the attention and interest of Westerners, especially the youthful generation. It certainly is a healthy trend, that the busy, distracted Westerner is seeking a centre of calmness and rest within himself, by trying to practise meditation—a traditional Eastern mode of contemplation. Nonetheless, there lies ahead the great danger of venturing into this practice with inadequate guidance or preparation—the inevitable result of which attempt will be either frustration and further distraction, or disillusioned revulsion against all inwardness. 'Peace and Power Through Meditation', by Dr. Donald Szanthe Harrington, is an enlightening discussion of the subject of meditation, keeping especially the contemporary Westerner in view. This article is a condensed and slightly edited version of Dr. Harrington's sermon delivered in celebration of the Buddha's birthday last May at the Community Church of New York, where he is the Senior Minister.

Monastic tradition is even today very strong in the West, as it is in India. Though we read and hear a lot about active revulsion against ecclesiastic celibacy and other disciplines, in the Roman Catholic church especially, still the youth in considerable

numbers continue to be attracted to the monastic ideal. As long as a deep-rooted hankering for spiritual life persists in the human breast, so long will monasticism be joyfully adopted by many fervent seekers of God. In 'The Carthusians and Trappists—Two Contemplative Orders, Yesterday and Today', Dr. Martin Kämpchen, Ph.D., gives a first-hand account of present-day status of these two great monastic Orders. While opening a window on their historical backgrounds his account offers us an insight into the interaction occurring between tradition and modern trends within these monastic Orders. Dr. Kämpchen is at present teaching German at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. He received his doctorate in German literature from Vienna University.

He is a new contributor to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, and we extend him a warm welcome to our columns.

Arthur Schopenhauer's deep regard for the Upaniṣads, Vedāntic Hinduism, and Sanskrit literature, found marked expression in some of his writings. "Concerning Religion": Some Excerpts', translated by Dr. S. Subhash Chandra, M.A. (Osmania), Dr. Phil. (Köln), Dr. Phil. (Paris), reflects this regard and feeling of Schopenhauer's, as well as his insights into the evolutionary history of the great world religions. The translator, we are sure, is very well known to our readers through his earlier erudite contributions to this Journal, on Henri Bergson as well as Schopenhauer.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

INVITATION TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by Arnold-Heinemann, India Pvt. Ltd., AB-9, First Floor, Safdarjang Enclave, New Delhi 110016, 1974, pp. 435, Price Rs. 50/-.

This work is a very cordial invitation extended to non-Indian philosophers as well as non-

philosopher Indians for sympathetic perusal of Indian philosophy. The lucid exposition of the complexities of Indian religio-philosophical tradition assures the reader of a satisfaction that perhaps no other book written till date in English on Indian philosophy has been able to provide.



Though Dr. Mahadevan does not want to call his work a history of Indian philosophy, for all practical purposes it is a history of the philosophical thinking of this land. It outlines the traditional philosophical systems of India in a manner that could be interesting to a layman and to an expert within or without the tradition. Though an Advaitin by faith, the learned author presents different schools of thought faithfully and authentically, but without making tedious reflections upon them. Neither does he make tiring attempts to compare Indian concepts with their western counterparts nor overburden the contents with notes and footnotes.

This work is a challenge to those under-instructed philosophical students who consider Indian philosophy merely to be a body of religious thinking and not philosophical thought at all. As is evident, according to the author, the end of both philosophy and religion is *moksha* (liberation). To quote him, '...it is the quest for *moksha*, then, that has kept Indian philosophy and religion together, and if philosophy has not become barren and religion blind in India, it must be due to their reciprocal influence.'

The author devotes as many as sixteen chapters to covering the panorama of Indian thought. In the opening chapter he points out the uniformity in the methodology, metaphysics, and practical teachings amongst all the Indian philosophical systems. The different systems here adopt the method of intuition for the achievement of their end—*moksha*—, as distinct from the rational method predominant in the West. Metaphysically, according to the author, every system of Indian philosophy distinguishes between spirit and matter. And the practical teachings of all the systems are also largely in common, with the exception of the Carvakas, of course. Apart from the chapters dealing with different orthodox and heterodox systems, the two chapters on theistic and non-dualistic Vedanta, and the one on Saiva and Sakta philosophies will be of greatest interest to the contemporary Hindu mind.

The somewhat frustrating part of the book however, is the appendix, where the author undertakes to point out contemporary trends in Indian philosophy. This section is inadequate. One would expect from a writer of Dr. Mahadevan's eminence a much more satisfactory and complete account of contemporary Indian thought. But here he does not go beyond referring casually to certain deliberations in the Indian Philosophical Congresses. He could have better omitted this portion altogether, instead of

giving so sketchy a picture of such an important phase of the Indian mind.

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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 net, (ppbk. £1.80)

A critical study of the Bible and a growing dissatisfaction with the dogmas of Christianity as put forth by the orthodox church have been on the increase for a considerable time in the West. But what is attempted in this book is a critical evaluation of these in the light of modern advances in psychology and psychoanalysis, parapsychology and psychical research as well as contemporary evolutionary trends. While earlier criticisms of religion by James H. Leuba and other psychologists were entirely destructive, the present writer demolishes false creeds to pave the way for the true message of Jesus which he brings out with an appreciable measure of success. It is gratifying to note that psychoanalysis has not driven the present writer, as it has done many, to a total disavowal of religion, but to a deeper understanding of it.

The author holds that there are symptoms of neurosis in the modern church, and that this is evidenced by the fact that there is a wide-spread rebellion amongst the thinking people against the Church's attitude towards three major concerns—*sex, authority, and doctrine*. Of the two Sections into which the book is divided, the first deals mainly with these and the positive teachings of Jesus and the spiritual laws proclaimed by him.

As to sex or man-woman relationship, the author holds that the church has been extremely rigorist and ascetic in its attitude, regarding the normal man-woman relationship as something evil and sinful in itself and praising celibacy beyond all measure. According to the author: 'This was S. Paul's own predilection, and his views cannot be traced back to Jesus himself... There is every reason to believe that Jesus shared the healthy Hebrew naturalism characteristic of his own people, and it is impossible to equate Jesus' mind on sex with the views of S. Paul.' (p. 19).

May we ask, however, how the author will explain why Jesus himself chose to remain a celibate and abjure the 'normal' man-woman re-

relationship and considered even a lustful glance at a woman as committing an inner adultery?

We grant that celibacy enforced on all and sundry can lead to neurotic disorders, and that therefore the generality of mankind should be allowed the normal way through the legitimate medium of marriage; but an exception has to be made in the case of persons who are highly advanced spiritually. Have not the saints and sages *all the world over* (and not only St. Paul and the early church fathers) pointed out that complete emancipation from lust is the *conditio sine qua non* of spiritual illumination? It is natural that the author who is a practising psychotherapist must have formed his views as a result of his contact with his numerous patients whose neurotic disorders could be traced to sexual *repression*. But it is not by brutal *repression* that the saints rise to immunity from sexual desires but by the sublimating influence of divine love and spiritual experiences.

In the following chapter the author points out that the latter half of the present century is marked by a revolt against *authority* in all fields—politics, industry, economics, ethics, education, and religion. Religion cannot be secure on the foundations of mere authoritarianism.

The doctrines of the church that are called for criticism are those of incarnation, original sin, atonement, etc. Apropos of the doctrine of Incarnation, namely, that God became man in the person of Jesus in order to save the world, the author writes:

*'Philosophically, the doctrine is patently unreasonable and nonsensical. If God is Being, He cannot at the same time be a being, as Paul Tillich says. If God is Wisdom, then it is an embarrassment for Christian believers to suppose that the risk God took in creating the world led to the world going off the rails so badly that God had to take emergency measures by sending His own Son to repair the situation, to save his own work from destruction.'* (p. 50).

About sin and redemption by the blood of Christ, the author writes:

*'Paul's concentration on the work of Christ in dying for us on the cross has had the effect of turning Christianity into a morbid Crosstianity. Paul's concentration on sin and its cleansing has led to obsessive traits in many Christian believers. It has encouraged moral masochism, false piety*

*and false humility, and not least, a pathetic "Christian resignation" that is synonymous with defeatism.'* (pp. 54-5).

After these criticisms the author brings us to the heart of the message of Jesus. Christ's genuine message, his authentic announcement of the 'good news' or the 'gospel', according to the author, is the declaration that God's Kingdom is not something to come in future but has come already and is operative and can be realized in the outer and practical affairs of man if he but changes his inner attitude. A change in the inner attitude can bring about alteration in outer circumstances. Therefore Christ said, 'Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.' And he also said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is *within you*.'

The second section of the book is concerned largely with what the author has styled 'Twentieth Century Revelations'. The topics dealt with are Psychoanalysis, Parapsychology and Psychical Research, 'Survival and Death', 'Guilt, Sin and Atonement', 'Immortality', 'Traditional Mysticism', 'Pragmatic Mysticism', and 'Evolution and Destiny'. As against traditional mysticism, the author commends 'Pragmatic Mysticism' whose essential feature, according to him, is contact with the mind of God. In traditional mysticism, including Indian mysticism, the confusing element according to the author, is its description of the ultimate destiny of the individual self which is its annihilation or loss in the Universal Spirit, the Atman or Brahman in Indian thought. I cannot discuss the question *in extenso* here, but I would just point out that the confusion here is that of the author's own mind. What is really lost in the ultimate realization is not the *being* of the self but the sense of its separated, self-closed or exclusive existence, yielding place to its awareness of its oneness with the Universal Spirit—Christ's 'I and my Father are one'.

On the whole, an admirable book—thought-provoking, candid to the core, and open-minded towards all new trends of thought and criticism! The author deserves our warmest congratulations.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—SINGAPORE

REPORT FOR 1974

During the 46 years since its founding, this Centre has been growing steadily. For the first years it was concerned only with cultural and educational activities—aside from the inner religious development—but during World War II, relief work was done on a small scale locally. Soon after the War, a Boys' Home was opened, which acquired its permanent building by 1959. Two primary schools have been added, and a Library and Reading Room. The latter are housed in the Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Building, completed in 1969, which also provides facilities for other cultural activities as well as housing for personnel and senior students of the Boys' Home. In the central Compound, the Temple of Sri Ramakrishna was built in 1952. Details of the Centre's activities are as follows:

(1) *Religious and Cultural*: Interviews were given by Swami Siddhatmananda to earnest seekers and devotees. Weekly scriptural classes were conducted by Swami Damodarananda as well as regular Sanskrit class at the Boys' Home premises, and a number of lectures or invitations from surrounding areas. A two-day Spiritual Retreat was conducted at the Temple in December. Several visiting Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order delivered lectures at the Temple, as well as at near-by meetings. In the Book salesroom, where publications of the Order are displayed, books worth over \$ 9,500 were sold; and the Centre participated in a six-day book exhibition organized by the International Book Fair.

Celebrations of birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, included special programmes of Puja, discourses, devotional songs, etc.; and Sivaratri, Ram Navami, Krishna Jayanti, Navaratri, Durga Puja, Christmas Eve, Mohammed's birthday, Vesak Day and other sacred occasions were observed with due solemnity. Ram Nam Kirtan was held on every Ekadasi.

(2) *Educational*: The Library and Reading Room continued their useful services, with 5,349

books available, and 30 journals plus six daily newspapers. Included is a children's section, on the premises of the Boys' Home. In the present year, 1,996 persons made use of the Library and Reading Room.

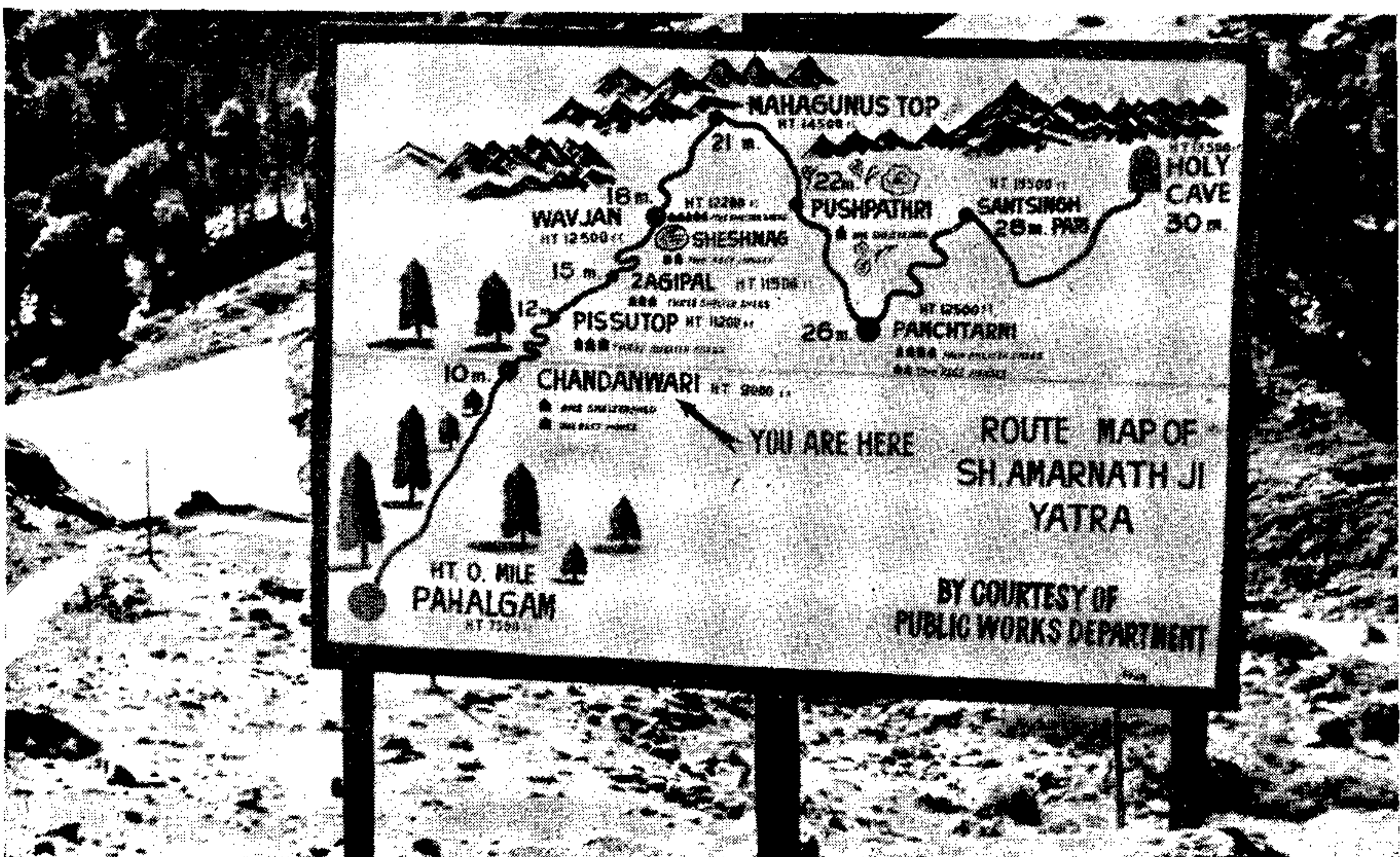
The primary schools are: (a) Sarada Devi Tamil School, close to the Ashrama, cared for 139 pupils; (b) Kalaimagal School, a few miles distant, with 56 pupils, the instruction being in both Tamil and English. Both schools receive grants from the Ministry of Education, Singapore. Athletics and other extra-curricular activities were encouraged, along with the basic class-room studies. Moreover, Night Classes for adults were held on the same premises, at each place there being one English and two Tamil classes. Total enrolment at the former site was 58, at the latter, 50. These Night Classes were supported in part by grants from the Singapore Adult Education Board, and most of the pupils took examinations conducted by City authorities.

The Boys' Home, with its own beautiful natural setting, houses fifty boys, aged 7 to 17 years, all studying in local Primary or Secondary Schools. Besides the ideal atmosphere for study and growth, and the Children's Library on the premises, the boys follow a regular programme of morning evening prayers (at the Temple), singing of devotional songs, attendance at the special religious and cultural functions of the Centre, etc. Monastic members of the Order supervise and instruct them. On the ample Home playground, sports are strenuously practised. An Old Boys' Association, including graduates from the Home and the Schools, helps promote cooperation among these institutions and the Ramakrishna Mission.

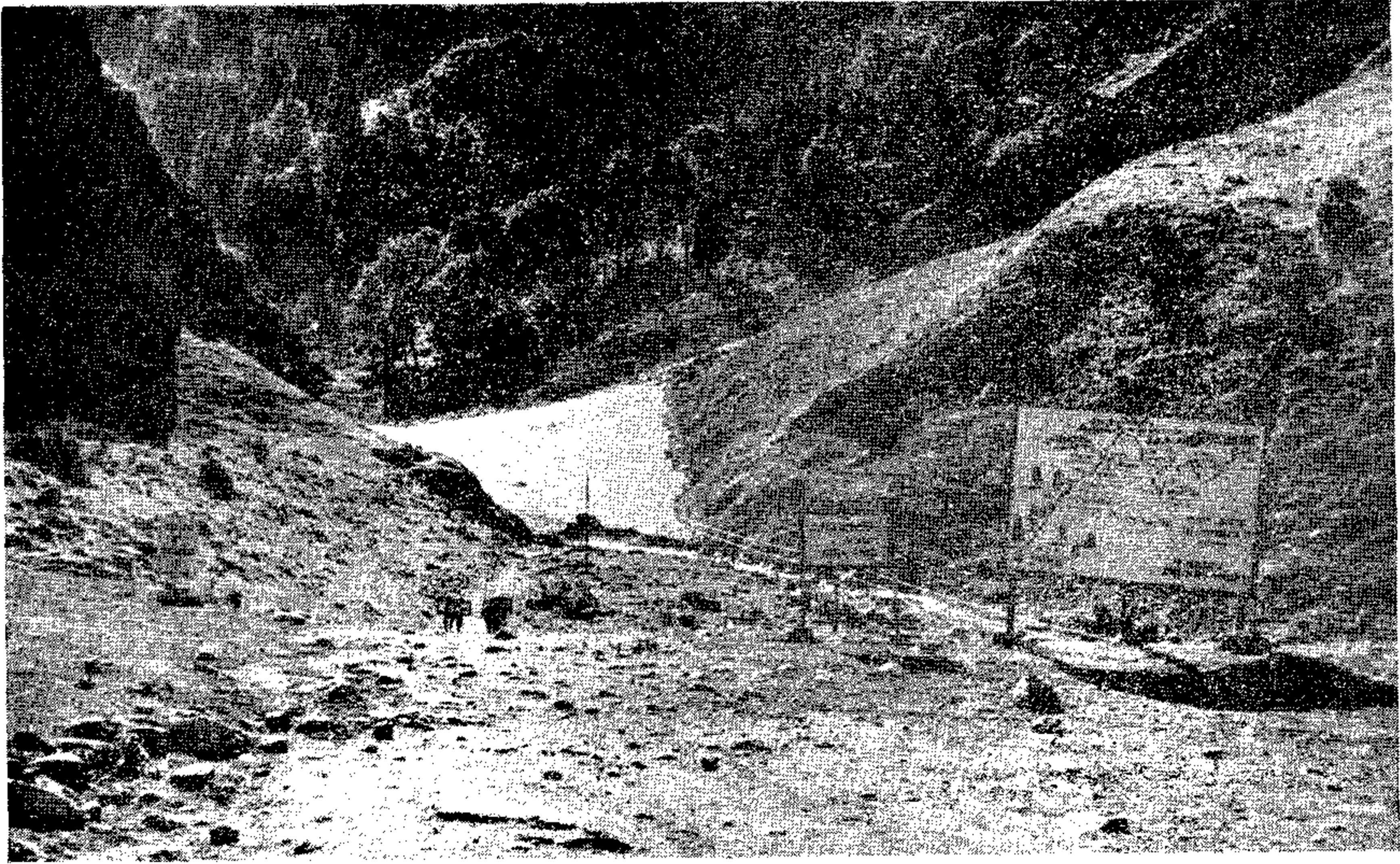
*Immediate Needs*: For an outstanding debt of \$ 40,000 incurred for the Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Building; For an estimated \$ 250,000 required to complete a memorial Outdoor Dispensary; and to support the regular \$ 6,500 monthly expenses of the Boys' Home. Of this latter, a government grant covers only about \$ 750 per month. Contributions may kindly be sent to President, Ramakrishna Mission, 9, Norris Road, Singapore 8.



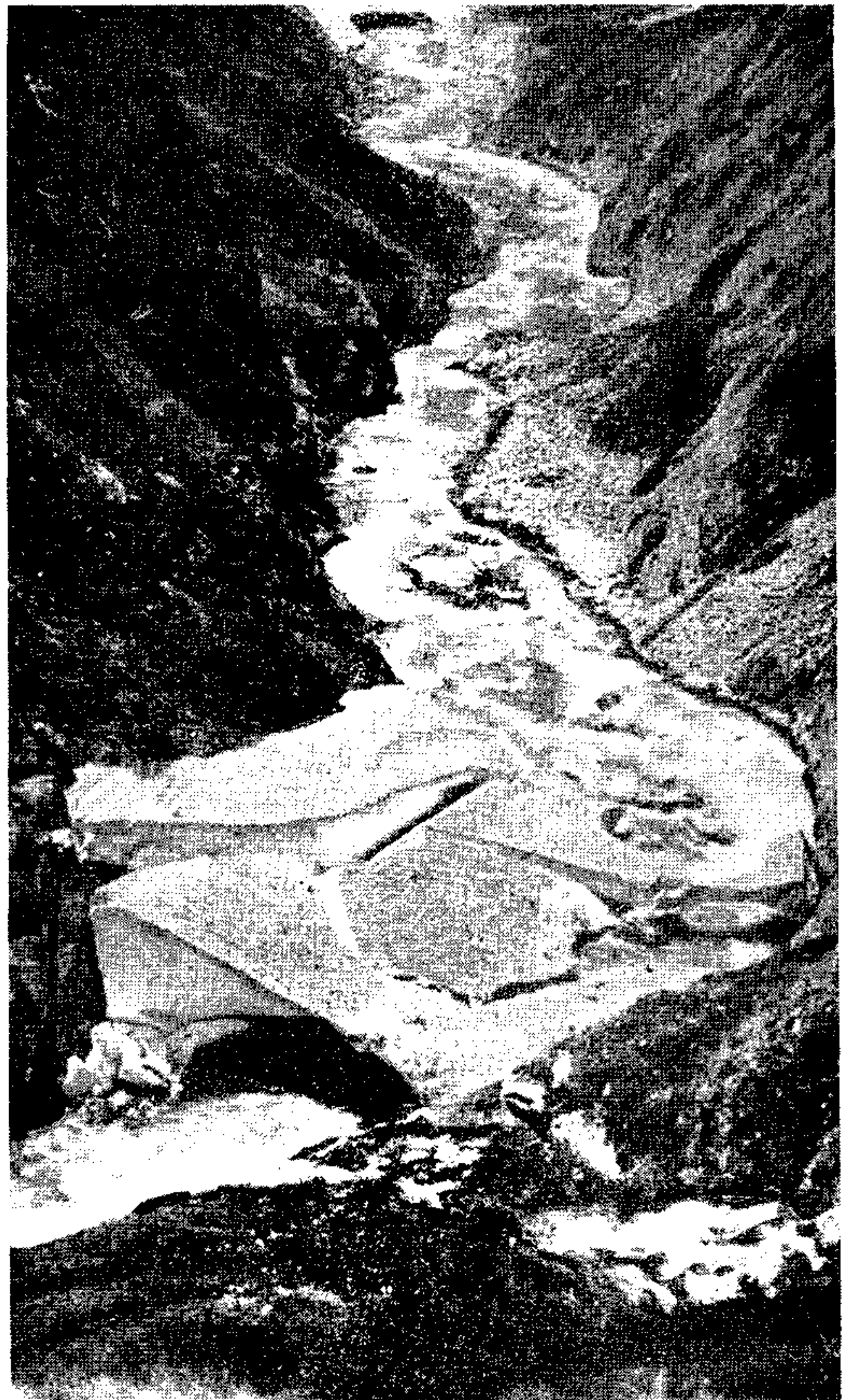
*Pure, shining white pillar of Lord Shiva*



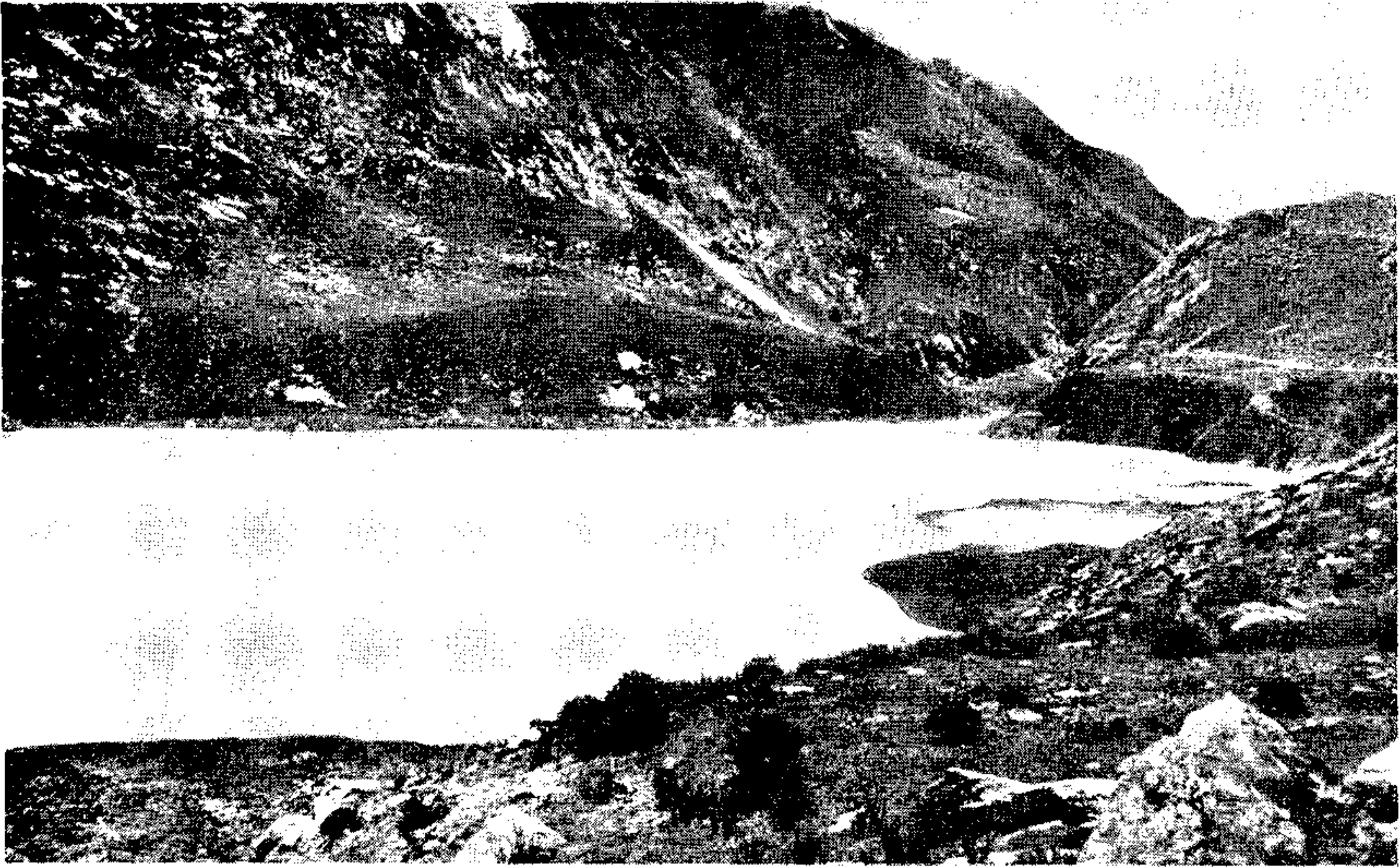
*Area Map of Amarnath Yatra*



*Natural ice bridge (Chandanwari)*



*Winding rivulets along the way. Cracked ice bridge viewed from Pishu-ghati*



*Glacier-fed Sheshnag Lake*



*Reflection of Mountain Peak in Sheshnag Lake*



*Silent strength of Mahagunas*



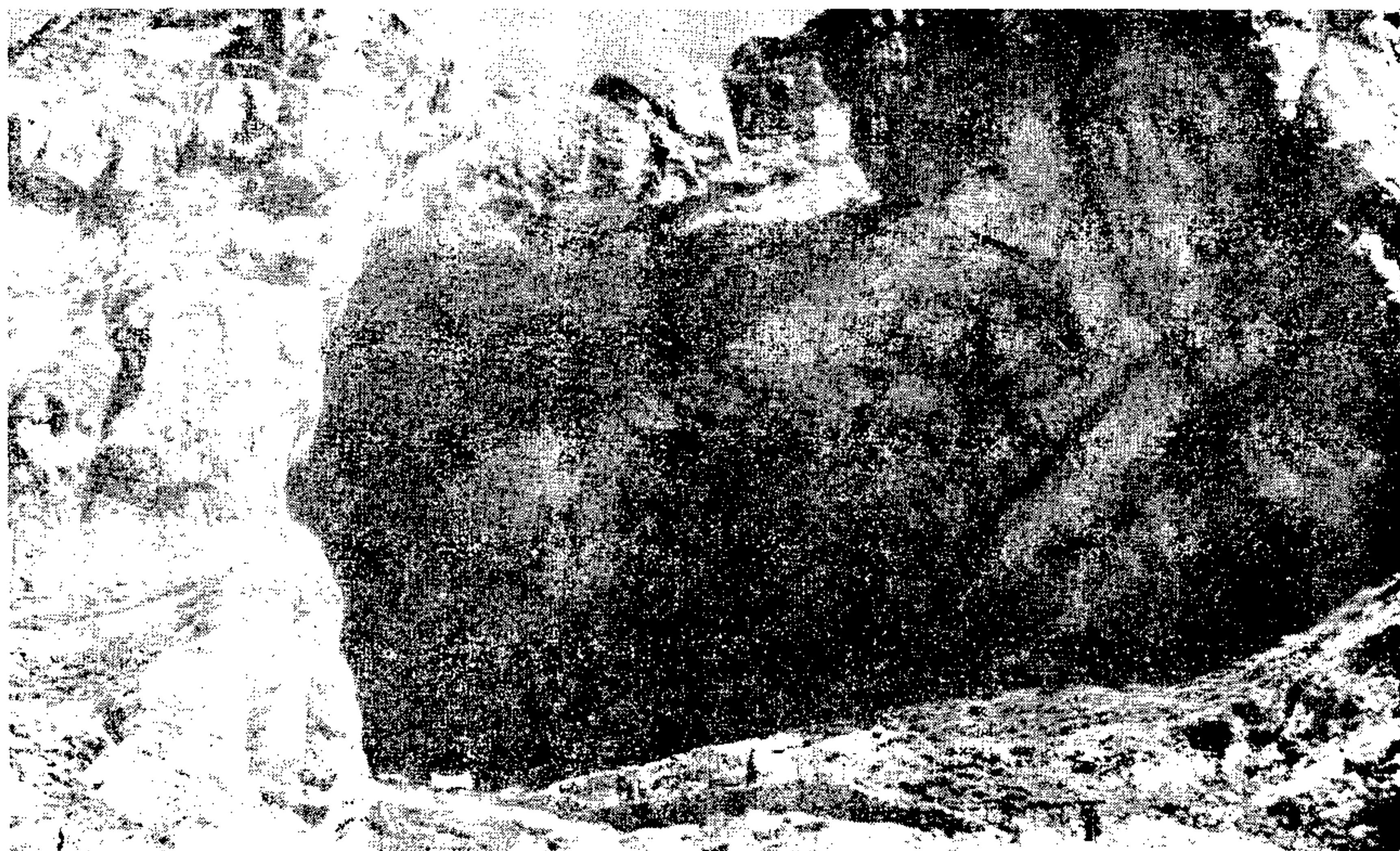
*Steep climb to Mahegunas*



*Rest-house at Panchatarani*



*Man-made steps leading to  
mouth of the cave*







*Railing surrounding ice Shive-lingam*



*View of snowy gorge end last ice glecier taken from cave's entrence after Darshan*