

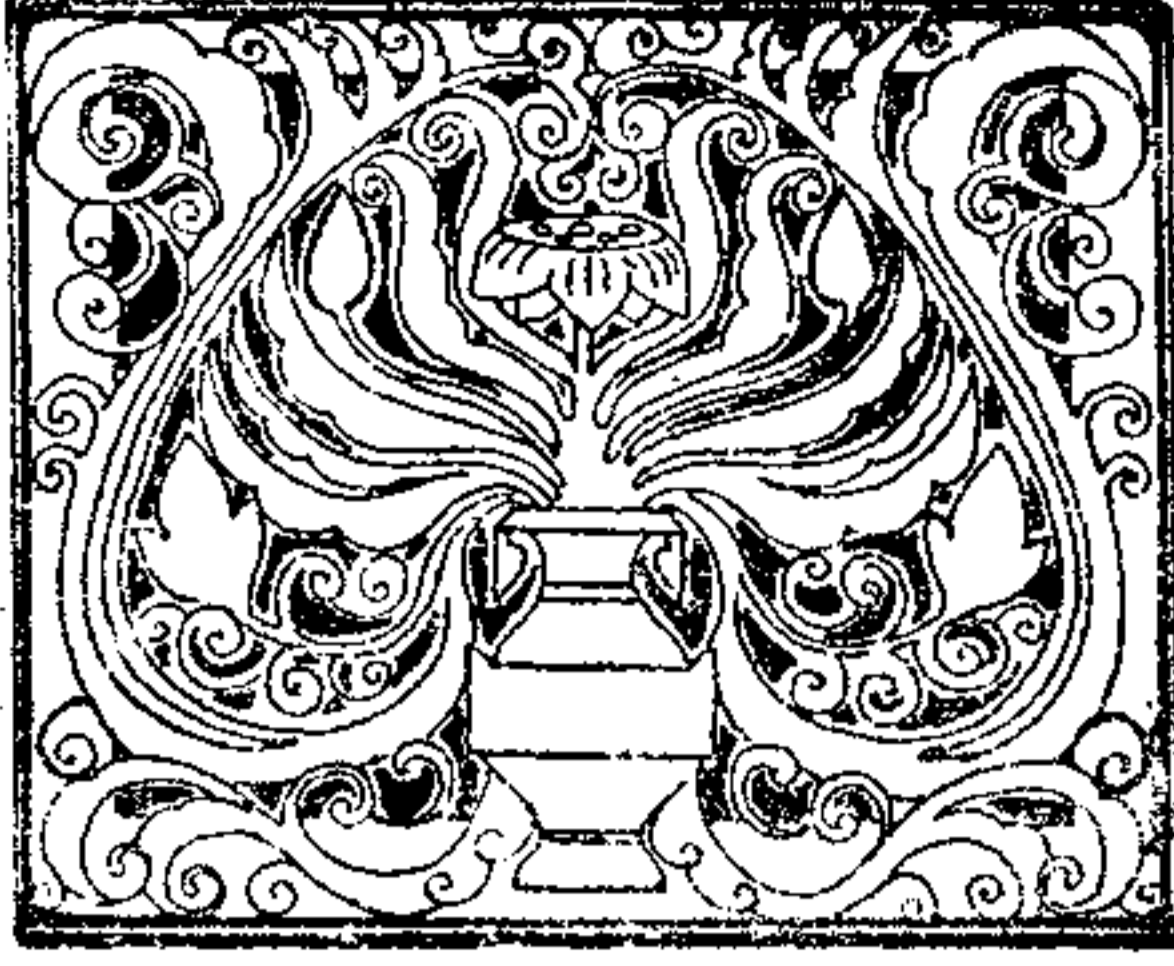
VOL. LXXXI

APRIL 1976

Prabuddha Bharata
OR
AWAKENED INDIA



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

APRIL 1976

Editorial Office

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

Publication Office

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



Annual Subscription

India, Nepal & Bangladesh	Rs. 10.00
Sri Lanka	Rs. 12.00
U. S. A.	\$ 5.00
Other Countries	£ 1.20

Life Subscription

Rs. 180 \$ 120 £ 24

Single Copy

Rs. 1 40 cents 12 P.

Information for subscribers,
contributors and publishers
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Cover :

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

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

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No. 4

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'One day Hriday said to me,¹ "Uncle, please ask the Mother for some powers, some occult powers." I have the nature of a child. While I was practising japa in the Kali temple, I said to Kali, "Mother, Hriday asked me to pray to You for some occult powers." The Divine Mother at once showed me a vision. A middle-aged prostitute, about forty years old, appeared and sat with her back to me. She had large hips and wore a black-bordered sari. Soon she was covered with filth. The Mother showed me that occult powers are as abominable as the filth of that prostitute. Thereupon I went to Hriday and scolded him, saying: "Why did you teach me such a prayer? It is because of you that I had such an experience."'

*

'Once a cross-eyed rich man came here. He said to me: "You are a paramahansa. That is good. You must perform a svastyayana ceremony² for me." What a small-minded person he was! He called me a paramahansa³ and yet wanted me to perform that ceremony. To secure welfare by means of the svastyayana is to exercise occult power.'

*

'I see as if all—trees, plants, man, cow, grass, water—are sheaths of different kinds. . . . My children, for it is actually as if Mother has covered Herself with wrappers of various kinds, assumed various forms and is peeping from within them all. I was in a state in which the universe seemed like that. Noticing that state of mine, people could not understand it, and came to console and soothe me. Ramlal's mother and others began to weep; when I looked at them I saw that the Mother (showing the Kali temple) it was who had come and appeared so, dressed in various forms. I saw that queer guise, and rolled with laughter, saying, "Thou hast nicely dressed up Thyself!" One day

¹ Referring to this same incident, at another time, Sri Ramakrishna said '...Hriday asked me—I was then under his control—to pray...for powers.'

² A religious rite performed to secure worldly welfare or avert a calamity.

³ One belonging to the highest order of *sannyasins* (all-renouncing monks), who would naturally have nothing to do with worldly advantages.

I was sitting and meditating on Mother in the Kali temple; I could by no means bring the Mother's form to my mind. What did I see then? She looked like the prostitute, Ramani, who used to come to bathe in the river, and she peeped from near the jar of worship. I saw it, laughed and said, "Thou hast the desire, O Mother, of becoming Ramani today. That is very good. Accept the worship today in this form." Acting thus, She made it clear that a prostitute also is She; there is nothing else except Her. On another occasion I was driving along Mehhobazar road, when I saw that She, dressed beautifully and with ornaments, braided hair and a small round mark in the middle of Her forehead, stood on the verandah—smoking tobacco from a hookah set in a socket, and enticing people in the form of a prostitute. In astonishment I said, "Art Thou here, O Mother, in this form?" Saying so, I saluted Her.'

*

[Sri Ramakrishna was telling of having bestowed an ecstatic state on Mathur Babu, at the latter's importunate requests:] 'He sent for me. When I went I found that he was, as it were, a different man: his eyes were red and tears were flowing; speaking of God he was shedding floods of tears. And his heart was trembling with quick pulsation. When he saw me he clasped both my feet and said: "Excuse me, father, I admit my defeat; I have been in this condition for the last three days; I cannot apply my mind to worldly affairs in spite of all my efforts; everything is getting spoilt everywhere. Please take back the ecstasy conferred by you; I don't want it." "Why," said I, "did you not pray for ecstasy?" He then said: "Yes, I did so and there is also bliss in it; but of what avail is it? Everything is going to be spoilt on this side. This ecstasy of yours, father, becomes you only. We don't want all these things. Please take them back." I then laughed and said, "I told you so previously." "Yes, father," said he, "but did I understand then so clearly that something like a ghost would possess me⁴ and that I should have to take every step according to its whim all the twenty-four hours and could do nothing even if I had a mind to?" I then passed my hand over his chest.'

⁴ At another time Sri Ramakrishna further said that Mathur 'behaved like a drunkard and could not look after his work. At this all said: "Who will look after his estate if he behaves like that? Certainly the young priest [Sri Ramakrishna] has cast a spell upon him."'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

The next training is also a very difficult one. *Nitya-nitya-Viveka* — discriminating between that which is true and that which is untrue, between the eternal and the transitory. God alone is eternal, everything else is transitory. Everything dies; the angels die, men die, animals die, earths die, sun, moon, and stars, all die; everything undergoes constant change. The mountains of today were the oceans of yesterday and will be oceans tomorrow. Everything is in a state of flux. The whole universe is a mass of change. But there is One who never changes, and that is God; and the nearer we get to Him, the less will be the change for us, the less will nature be able to work on us; and when we reach Him, and stand with Him, we shall conquer nature, we shall be masters of these phenomena of nature, and they will have no effect on us.

You see, if we really have undergone the above discipline, we really do not require anything else in this world. All knowledge is within us. All perfection is there already in the soul. But this perfection has been covered up by nature; layer after layer of nature is covering this purity of the soul. What have we to do? Really we do not develop our souls at all. What can develop the perfect? We simply take the veil off; and the soul manifests itself in its pristine purity, its natural, innate freedom.

Sri Kanchi

THE CONCEPT OF YAJNA (SACRIFICE)

EDITORIAL

I

The word *yajña* is derived from its Sanskrit root *yaj*, meaning, 'to sacrifice', 'to worship with sacrifices', or 'to make an oblation to'. It has also other meanings in somewhat derived or extended senses, such as 'to worship', 'to revere', 'to dedicate', 'to give'. *Yajña* is usually translated into English as 'a sacrifice', 'a sacrificial rite', or 'a liturgy'. In later Vedic literature and post-Vedic scriptures it also came to mean Viṣṇu, the second of the Hindu trinity, who is regarded as the presiding deity of all sacrifices. To understand the concept of *yajña*, however, we have to go back to the Rg-vedic period, when the form of religion with the Aryans was mainly sacrificial.

Believers in nature-deities, the early Aryans sang and glorified the gods through hymns and prayers, which came to be embodied in the Vedic Samhitās. The prayers, of course, were for health, wealth, prosperity, progeny, protection, and so on. *Yajña* to them was, besides these prayers, the offering as oblations in fire, simple gifts as expressions of gratitude for blessings received and prayers answered. Agni (Fire) was their friend, and mediator between men and gods. He is called 'the mouth of the gods', because he received the sacrificial oblations, not only for himself but also for transmission to the gods. He is thus the centre of the Vedic ritual. Oblations to Agni consisted mainly of grains and ghee, soma and sesame. Sometimes animals were killed and offered as oblations. We must remember that in the beginning the Vedic *yajña* was a simple ritual conducted in the fire of the domestic hearth. The householder himself acted as the sacrificial priest,

with his wife—and sometimes sons—assisting him or acting as a deputy for him in his absence. The worshipper's attitude was one not so much of humility or awe, but of confident friendship—though brimming with reverence for the god worshipped.

This simple *yajña* of the early period, however, gradually became complicated. *Yajña* began to be performed less and less as thanksgiving and more and more as means of achieving whatever one wanted, from the ordinary desires of life—wealth, cattle, and children—to the position of Indra, king of the gods. As the ritualistic sacrifice grew complex with the multiplicity of mantras to be chanted, ceremonies to be performed, and deities to be propitiated, the *yajamāna*, the sacrificer-householder, could no longer manage to keep all details in his mind. He had to engage qualified priests and pay them fees (*dakṣinā*) for their services. Gradually thus the priests got a firm hold on the whole liturgy, prescribing everything from the auspicious time for sacrifices and the details of building the sacrificial altar, to the ingredients to be used, deities to be invoked, and the heavens attainable by each sacrifice. This, then, was the age of the 'Brāhmaṇas'—the liturgical texts adopting various Samhitā mantras for their sacrificial purposes—when the priesthood attained its supremacy. Sacrifices had become ends in themselves, and even the gods, secondary. The priests grew proud and arrogant and began to claim parity with the gods. 'We bring down the [gods:]' they said, 'on earth we are the gods.' The rituals and ceremonies became enormous and their burden crushing. It was all enjoyment, here or in heaven, that became the end and aim of the sacrificers; and thus the rituals became dry and mantras empty words. As Dr. Radhakrishnan expressively describes this religion of the Brāhmaṇas:

'A rigid soul-deadening, commercialist creed based on a contractual motive took the place of the simple devout religion of the Vedas [Samhitās]... The religion of the Brāhmaṇas became loaded with symbolic subtleties, and was ultimately lost in a soulless mechanism of idle rites and pedantries of formalism.'¹

II

As ritualism thus grew excessive, priestly tyranny intolerable, and costs of *yajñas* prohibitive, voices of protest arose from the thoughtful among the householders as well as the priesthood. The bold ones among the former began to turn away from externals and concentrate more on the mystical aspects of the sacrifices. And even in the Brāhmaṇas themselves, we find murmurs of the priestly revulsion against their own hierarchy. 'Being infatuated with rites performed with the help of fire,' says a passage in the *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*, 'and choked with smoke, they do not know their own World, the Self.' Meditation on the meaning of the sacrifice sometimes took the place of the actual sacrifice. 'Suppose,' Janaka asks Yājñavalkya, 'you had no milk or rice or barley to perform the fire-sacrifice, *agnihotra*, with what would you sacrifice?' 'With the fruits of trees and whatever herbs there were.' 'If there were none?' 'Then with water.' 'If there were no water?' 'Then indeed there would be nothing here, yet, this would be offered: the truth in faith.'²

Thus *upāsana* or meditative ritual, or worship, becomes the next stage of the religious development of the Aryan mind, and finds expression in the *Āraṇyakas*, or 'Forest Books'. These correspond to the stage, in the Hindu Aryan's

¹ S. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1929), Vol. I, p. 125

² *vide Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, XI. 3. 1

life, of retreat into the forest (*vāna-prastha*)—when he reduced his ritualistic preoccupation to a minimum and devoted much of his time to meditation on the significance of rites, sacrifices, and higher ideals—and they also herald the philosophical and mystical thought of the Upaniṣads. The Āraṇyakas therefore embody the stage of transition from the ritualistic Brāhmaṇas to the profoundly philosophical Upaniṣads. Thus, many of the Upaniṣads came to be found as the closing chapters of the Āraṇyaka texts. To fulfil the needs of the rite-addicted householder, now retired to the forest with neither the energy nor the resources for most of the sacrificial rites, the Āraṇyakas recommend meditation on the symbology of the *yajña*, the deities, the mantras, and their results.

Naturally quite a bit of the ritualistic meditation of the Āraṇyakas gets into the Upaniṣads also, especially into two of the oldest of them all, namely, the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*. The opening chapters of these two discuss ritualistic topics and recommend meditations on their significance. Though the Upaniṣads in general are highly critical of the sacrificial rites of the Brāhmaṇas—with their diversity of priests, procedures, deities, and heavens to be attained—, still several of them preserve the symbology of the *yajña* while divesting it of its priestly ritualism and selfish motivation. The *pañcāgni-vidyā* (the knowledge of the five fires), taught in the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*,³ for instance, speaks no doubt of fire, sacrificial wood, oblation, etc., but this is almost entirely figurative language. About fire, for example, it says that the heavens, clouds, earth, man, and woman can each by turn be looked upon as the 'sacrificial fire', in which a particular kind of 'sacri-

ifice' takes place. Thus, even the act of procreation, the Upaniṣad says, can be looked upon as a sacrifice. Extending the sacrificial symbology further, it teaches that the whole life of a human being can be considered as a sacrifice, and shows how this can be carried out.⁴ Similarly, drawing an exhaustive parallel between the various aspects of a sage's life and the many parts of a *yajña*, the *Mahānārāyaṇa-upaniṣad*, in its concluding section, says in part:

'The institutor of the sacrifice [in the case of a monk who has attained self-realization] is his own Self. His faith [in the truth of the scriptures] is his wife; his body is the sacrificial fuel; his chest is the altar; his hairs are the holy grass; the Veda [he has learnt] is his tuft of hair; his heart is his sacrificial post; his desire is the clarified butter; his anger is the animal to be immolated; his austerity is the fire; his sense-control is the immolator; his gifts are the *dakṣiṇā*; his speech is the sacrificial priest;...; the span of his life is the preparatory rite; what he eats, that is the oblation; what he drinks, that is the drinking of soma-juice; when he delights himself, that is the *upasad* rite;...; the total sacrifice is indeed the *sattra* [sacrificial session]; death is the completion of his sacrifice;...'

Such a *yajña*, the Upaniṣad implies, is only allegorical and can be performed even by a *jīvanmukta* (one liberated in life) who is also a monk. Though this is the ideal, far above the capacity of ordinary men to practise in its entirety, still it is held before humanity as worthy of emulation according to capacity of each person. For only through a dedicated, sacrificial life which dissolves the ego in total abnegation, does a person attain the highest knowledge and fulfilment.

III

The lead given by the Upaniṣads in pre-

³ vide V. iv-ix

⁴ vide III. xvi-xvii

servicing and sublimating the symbology of *yajñas*, while stripping it of its material, selfish ritualistic grossness, was followed up by the later thinkers and teachers. At the core of the sacrificial rite there is the principle of giving up, self-denial, renunciation. An oblation to a god is given invariably with the invocatory mantra, 'To so-and-so (god), *svāhā!*' And the act of offering is immediately followed by the utterance by the sacrificer, '*na mama*' ('[this oblation is] not mine'). One meaning of the sacrificial expression *svāhā*, is *svatva hanana*, 'killing of the sense of ownership', 'destruction of my-ness'.⁵ It is this idea of dedication, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, implicit in *yajña*, that the epics and other religious works took up and propagated. The *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Bhagavad-gītā* is a part, very tellingly brings out this truth in the celebrated story of the mongoose—with half its body golden—that turned up at the sacrificial hall of the Pāṇḍavas at the conclusion of the *Aśvamedha* (horse-sacrifice).⁶ Rolling his body in the sacrificial ashes, the strange-looking mongoose spoke with the voice of thunder, to the amazement of all present. It said repeatedly, 'This sacrifice of yours, O kings, is not equal to one *prastha* (about three pounds) of barley meal.' Then it went on to tell the story of the pious, famine-stricken brāhmaṇa family of four who cheerfully and reverently gave their shares of barley-meal,

⁵ vide S. Radhakrishnan: *The Principal Upaniṣads* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), p. 50

⁶ vide 'Aśvamedhika-parvan', chs. 96-7

This was undoubtedly the costliest and most elaborate of all sacrifices and thus expected to win the greatest merit. Only an Emperor had the means to accomplish it. This *Mahābhārata*-story has been arrestingly retold by Swami Vivekananda in his justly famous talks on *Karma-yoga* [vide *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. I (1962), pp. 60-1.]

obtained as alms, to a starving guest, and as result themselves died of starvation. (Of course, this act of supreme sacrifice raised them at once to the highest world (*brahmaloka*) from which there is no fall. The mongoose, entering their empty house soon after their death, and inhaling the fragrant air and rolling on the scattered grains of the barley meal, had had his head and one side of his body turned golden. Since then he had visited many places of great ritualistic sacrifices, but nowhere could he get his other side similarly transformed. By this charming and instructive story, clearly, the *Mahābhārata* declares that the intense spirit of self-sacrifice far outweighs in merit even the most massive ceremonial sacrifice.

The *Gītā* undoubtedly is the essence of the Upaniṣads. But it also has its own distinctive contributions to make. Laying a special emphasis on the personal aspect of the Absolute, the *Gītā* especially teaches the paths of dedicated action and pure devotion. It accepts the Vedic form of sacrifice, but highlights the *yajña*-spirit and not the external ceremonial. Because the cosmic process is founded on the law of mutuality, to cultivate the spirit of giving is to practise sacrificial living. A selfish hoarder, who indulges his own appetites not caring for the welfare of his fellow beings, says the *Gītā*, 'eats sin'. Conversely, work done for the sake of the Supreme Lord (*yajña*) eschewing all selfish motives, not only brings no bondage, no sin: it liberates a person completely. Employing, here as elsewhere, the simile of the material sacrifice, the *Gītā* describes the actions of a man of illumination as a continuous Knowledge-sacrifice: unbroken concentration on the Supreme Lord is a form of *yajña*. Says the *Gītā* :...

'The works of a man whose attachment is gone, who is free, and whose mind is established in Knowledge, melt away

entirely, being done as for a *yajña*.
 'To him, Brahman is the offering and Brahman is the oblation, and it is Brahman who offers the oblation in the fire of Brahman. Brahman alone is attained by him who thus sees Brahman in action.' 7

IV

Thus we see that the concept of *yajña* has been growing in its significance while leaving behind the outward ritualistic form. Through the succeeding ages also, from Buddha and Manu through Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda, the attempt has all along been to preserve and amplify the significance and spirit of *yajña*. Though the Buddha severely condemned all sacrifices as meaningless or harmful—especially because they involved killing of animals—still on at least one occasion he acknowledged that he was himself a sacrificer, but in spirit rather than outward form. Once a *brāhmaṇa* came to the Buddha, bringing in his hands the remainder of his oblation. The Buddha is reported to have addressed him to the following effect: 'Do not deem, O *brāhmaṇa* that purity comes by mere laying of wood in fire; for it is external. Having therefore left that course, I kindle my fire only within, which burns for ever, and on that I have my mind rightly fixed for ever... Here in this sacrifice the tongue is the sacrificial spoon and the heart is the altar of the fire.' (Of course it is needless to add mention of the Buddha's countless acts of tangible self-sacrifice for others.)

Manu, the great Hindu law-giver, prescribed for the householder the daily performance of the following five *yajñas*: *brahma-yajña* (the teaching and reciting of the Vedas), *pitṛ-yajña* (offering of libations of water etc., to ancestors), *deva-yajña* (offering of sacrifices to the gods), *bhūta-*

yajña (feeding of lower animals), and *nṛ-yajña* (the feeding of hungry fellow-men). Though only the *deva-yajña* among these five is properly a sacrifice in outward form, all the rest are also called *yajñas* because they instil in the practising householder the spirit of self-control, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. Manu also says that anyone who dedicates himself to others' welfare unreservedly, attains freedom: 'He who sacrifices himself, seeing the Self in all creation and all creation in the Self, attains *svārājya* (liberation).'

Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was a great Hindu reformer of the nineteenth century who tried hard to revive the pure Vedic religion. He reintroduced the Vedic *yajña*, in its simplest form among his followers. But further, he exhorted all to cultivate the spirit of *yajña* in their daily life, and included in that spirit even the acquisition and application of the knowledge of the secular sciences. He said that *yajña* 'consists in showing due respect to the wise and the learned, in the proper application of the principles of chemistry and the physical and mechanical sciences to the affairs of life, and in the dissemination of knowledge and culture'.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest prophetic leaders of Modern India, was a teacher *par excellence* of Vedāntic Hinduism. He wanted the revival of the pure spirit of Hinduism as enshrined in the Upaniṣads and its becoming dynamic in the lives of the Hindus. He appreciated the need and place of rituals and ceremonies in the life of the average human being, but emphasized the truth that these were primarily external aids for the transformation of character which is the true function of religion. In one of his most appealing passages, he stressed the cultivation of the spirit of sacrifice of self to God, and point-

ed out how this self-immolation leads one to freedom and peace:

‘Let us be at peace, perfect peace, with ourselves, and give up our whole body and mind and everything as an eternal sacrifice unto the Lord. Instead of the sacrifice of pouring oblations into the fire, perform this one great sacrifice day and night—the sacrifice of your little self. “In search of wealth in this world, Thou art the only wealth I have found; I sacrifice myself unto Thee. In search of someone to be loved, Thou art the only one beloved I have found:

I sacrifice myself unto Thee.” Let us repeat this day and night, and say, “Nothing for me; no matter whether the thing is good, bad, or indifferent; I do not care for it; I sacrifice all unto Thee.” Day and night let us renounce our seeming self until it becomes a habit with us to do so, until it gets into the blood, the nerves, and the brain, and the whole body is every moment obedient to this idea of self-renunciation. Go then into the midst of the battlefield, with the roaring cannon and the din of war, and you will find yourself to be free and at peace.’

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

9 Phālgun, 1322 ¹

Śrīmān K———,

I have duly received yours of 7th inst. and am glad. Accept my blessings and convey the same to the others at the Ashrama. All are well here...

After the———Ashrama has been affiliated to the Mission, how can it continue to run if all of you retire? The tree that you have planted with your own hands has to be cared for by you alone—otherwise it will never survive. But at intervals, for short periods you can take leave. Go on performing the work of Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna], staking even your life for it; he will look after everything and protect you all. Have no worry.

Rev. Swami Brahmananda has not yet returned from Dacca. He will come back soon.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

¹ Phālgun: the last month of the Bengali year, corresponding to February-March. 1322 (Bengali Era) corresponds to A.D. 1916.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
25 Agrahāyaṇ²

My dear _____,

I have received yours of 21st inst.

Meditation on the guru is to be done in the twelve-petalled white lotus. In a sense that white lotus can be said to be a part of the thousand-petalled lotus. Because of that, in some meditation-*mantras* it is said— 'In the thousand-petalled lotus...' etc. In any case, you do as you have been doing.

The Holy Mother's birthday falls on 14 Paus (30 December). If I go to Kasi it will be only after that. My health is all right. Accept my blessings. All here are well.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

² Agrahāyaṇ: eighth month of Bengali year, corresponding to November-December.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Bhuvaneshwar Math
28/11/24

My dear _____,

I am happy to receive your letter. Below the questions themselves, I have written down in my own hand the answers—as far as I know, of course—to all the questions. Know that my blessings are always on you and convey them to all others of both the Ashramas. I have heard that C——'s health has declined very much. Let me know how he is these days. I am not keeping so well after coming here. It seems it will be better if I stay on for some more days. All others of this place are well.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

[*Answers to questions*]

'...I desire to know many things about samādhi; but as here I am unable to meet anyone who has attained that state, that wish is not fulfilled. From no book have I been able to find a greater description than [found in] your personal experience regarding samādhi and the extensive descriptions

³ The noted book by the Swami Saradananda, the English translation being *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*.

found in *Srī Rāmakṛṣṇa-līlā-prasaṅga*.³ I am thus very eager to know the points mentioned below; I hope that you will dispel my ignorance by giving me instructions about these.

1. If in meditation one sees various divine forms, then to which *cakra* (centre) should I know the *kuṇḍalinī*⁴ has risen?

Answer: To the *anāhata-cakra*, I think.

2. Is it a fact that when the *kuṇḍalinī* awakens, the lotuses at the various *cakras* blossom only for the yogis and not for *bhāktas* (devotees)?

A.: It happens for *bhāktas* too.

3. Does the *kuṇḍalinī* rise as light in serpentine form, and as it rises through the *cakras*, one after another, do the corresponding lotuses bloom then?

A.: Yes, it has been written thus in the scriptures.

4. Cannot a person remain seated in the state of *samādhi*—or does he lie down?

A.: Standing, sitting, or lying down—*samādhi* can occur in all postures.

5. When is it possible to obtain the vision of Sri Ramakrishna?

A.: Through intense yearning, devotion and one-pointedness, it can be achieved.

6. After *japa* (repetition of the Lord's name or *mantra*) and meditation, the body feels weak and sleepy. Is it good to sleep then? If one sleeps it seems it does harm to the chest.

A.: If one sleeps at that time, whether it harms the chest or not I cannot say. It seems that it doesn't.

7. It is said in the Rāja-yoga that while performing *prāṇāyāma* (control of *prāṇa* or vital force through breath-control) a kind of vibration or shivering occurs. I think that that kind of vibration occurs within me while performing meditation and *japa*.

A.: For some individuals it happens thus.

8. While trying to perform *japa* and meditation a little intensely, why is it that some fever and such obstacles crop up?

A.: It appears that the cause for all these is one's *prārabdha-karma*.⁵

⁵ *Prārabdha*: that portion of one's past *karma* (action) which has begun to act and whose fruits have to be reaped in the present life.

⁴ Lit., 'Serpent-Power'—described in Tantra philosophy as the spiritual energy 'coiled-up' at base of spinal column, until it is 'awakened' through appropriate disciplines. It can then rise through the six centres (*cakras*), of which the *anāhata* is that located in the region of the heart.

THE MIND OF MAN

DR. RALPH W. G. WYCKOFF

Among all living beings man is most notably characterized by his very large fore-brain and the developed mind that can come into being through its activities. This mind is in itself the supreme product to date of the evolutionary process: the creation out of matter of an immaterial reality by means of which matter becomes aware of itself and able to influence and alter its own behaviour and destiny. The conscious mind has created knowledge of the material universe and of how it functions; it likewise is the channel for expressing that immaterial spirit to which man instinctively turns when seeking to attach meaning to Life. We know that our minds, though immaterial, exist, because we directly experience them and use them in our everyday lives. When we look within ourselves we see that our lives are in fact centred far more in our minds than in the world around us, that when we think and act it is usually in relation to our mind's picture of what is real rather than to the indication of reality directly conveyed to us by our organs of sensation.

In attempting to define what we mean by mind, we obviously need to learn as much as possible about what it contains, how it is built up and operates, and what are the limitations imposed on it by its nature. Beyond doubt our minds develop and function largely through the physiological activities of our forebrains; and this makes it essential to discover all we can about these activities and to connect, as far as we can, specific events in the brain, with associated mental reactions. Often this can be done, but it remains true that the most interesting and important happenings of our mental lives are not accompanied by physiological changes we now know how to monitor

The mind is the storehouse of man's total

experience of life and of the thoughts and ideas he has built up around this experience. At the same time it is the instrument for creating these thoughts. It perceives and interprets the signals the senses bring from the world of matter and it instinctively coordinates them into a seemingly coherent whole to give him the comprehensive representation of external reality to which his life's experience can be referred.

The mental picture thus created is very different from, though not, we believe, in conflict with the universe it represents. In order to understand the nature of our experience it is necessary to realize that we are in fact dealing with three different types of reality: (1) the material universe as it actually is; (2) our brains as they have evolved to make contact with this universe of which they are indeed a part; and (3) our minds which, as far as we can say, developed to yield a coherent interpretation of this contact but are also able to initiate and deal with experience which is not directly linked to it. The first two are material and are to be understood in terms of their material content and the way matter functions. Our minds, on the contrary, are not material though they are in part fashioned and stimulated by material events. Thus the colours we see so vividly do not exist as such outside our minds; their causes in the material universe are transverse electromagnetic waves travelling through space; absorption of these waves by our eyes causes chemical and electrical changes in the eye and brain which lead to the mind's experience of colour. In the same sense the words and music we hear, the thoughts we create and the love we feel exist only within our minds; their material causes, when we do detect them, are completely

different in kind from what our minds experience.

Minds are centred around the consciousness that illumines them and their contents. It is this still mysterious characteristic that makes man aware of himself as an individual and of his surroundings, that enables him to manipulate his mind, to think with purpose, to remember, to act in a previously planned fashion and to integrate all this into what he and others recognize as his distinctive personality. When we talk about our minds we commonly mean the totality of which we are conscious. Nevertheless there are extensive regions of personal experience which lie outside of consciousness but which profoundly influence our future conduct. When in deep sleep or anaesthetized we are completely unconscious, while in dreams our minds are busy constructing fantasies which only occasionally reach consciousness. During much of our waking life we may be but faintly aware of what goes on either within our minds or around us. Manifestly the mind extends in many directions beyond the area immediately accessible to consciousness.

Early stages in the formation of a conscious mind are apparent in our children. In spite of its relatively large brain the newborn child is to all intents mindless. During infancy we can follow the beginnings of its mental development based on interpretations the parents and others give to its sensory contacts with the environment. It learns to see its experiences in terms of the outlook of these parents towards the enveloping world, and even before speech develops it starts to assert itself as an individual. The child is expanding its mind through adventures into the world around it and will instinctively feed what it finds into the limited picture it is forming. This world has within it other individuals and the child will begin at this time the disciplined adaptation required for a successful life by learn-

ing to accommodate its growing wishes to those of these other individuals. The training and mental expansion thus begun in infancy is most effectively continued through a schooling received in association with its fellows. If properly carried out, this education will mould the child's mental picture of the world into one he can share with his contemporaries, using as much of the knowledge accumulated by preceding generations as he can absorb. Of far more importance than the facts learned during this education is a mental training in preparation for the tasks of life which will enable the maturing individual to continue by himself the mental growth begun under his teachers. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of mental discipline at the time when the brain is in a physiological condition favourable to the acquisition of habits of controlled thought and action.

The amount of knowledge that any child can absorb is necessarily very limited and depends on both opportunity and native endowments; but every young person is susceptible to a training that can make his continuing mental growth independent of others. The range of his consciousness inevitably expands with this growth and will deepen as he develops his power of disciplined mental activity. In these days when the primary goal of education is so often taken to be preparation for material success in life, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that education has the higher objective of initiating this expansion of consciousness. Since it *can* actually continue unabated as long as life lasts, it is the only true road to satisfaction for the individual and for mankind in the fulfilment of its destiny.

Closely allied to consciousness but distinct from it is the awareness, shown by animals as well as men, of details of their environments. This awareness and the ability to

respond selectively to it have an obvious survival value which may well have been one of the factors favouring the evolution of more complex nervous systems. Awareness in ourselves and other animals has a dual aspect. One can be described as a simple, passive awareness of what is going on in the surroundings, and this is possessed by even relatively primitive creatures. The other is the mental ability to concentrate this awareness, to focus it on a particular object or in a chosen direction. This, too, is something many animals in addition to man can do. In the higher animals such attention is most often a response to stimuli reaching their brains from the organs of sensation; it raises, without answering, the question of whether or not they, too, are in some measure conscious. As men we similarly are influenced by the sensations our brains receive but we can also concentrate on impressions that arise into consciousness from within the mind itself.

The close dependence of the mind on the brain has been known for centuries, and there have been numerous hypotheses concerning the relation between the two. For long the most notable of these was Descartes' proposal that the pineal gland, a small body then of unknown function, served as a link between them. We now know that this is not the case. More recent suggestions have attributed various mental activities, and a consciousness of them, to definite regions of the brain. It was ascertained many years ago from anatomical studies and the examination of persons with damaged and diseased brains that specifiable areas of the forebrain are connected with certain sensory and other activities. Thus we can identify those areas linked by nerves with the eyes, the ears and other sense organs and directly involved in the sight, hearing, speech and so on with which the mind deals. It has been found that in a general way stimuli originating in the left

side of the human body are fed into the right lobe of the forebrain (and its cortex), and vice versa; in the normal brain, however, there is much cross-over between the two lobes, one helping the other.

It has been considered that our mental faculties as well as muscular control are differently associated with the two sides of the brain, and this has recently been confirmed by the peculiarities of perception of certain patients in whom the lobes have had to be separated by cutting through the nerve bundle connecting them. Such a person after the surgical operation has been conscious only of what his right hand was doing and right eye was seeing though he, unconsciously, co-ordinated what his minor (left) hand did with what the left eye was seeing. He read with the right eye and experiments have shown that his speech was also controlled from the corresponding (left) lobe. The reactions of the few people who have undergone this operation suggest that in a child consciousness and ability to communicate with others through organized speech arise together in association with one lobe of the forebrain while the other lobe develops a more or less unconscious life of its own around the stimuli reaching it from the side of the body that feeds it. Presumably in a normal person this secondary life enters into and is incorporated with the life of the dominant conscious lobe through the nerve bundle that connects the two.

These results confirm that there is indeed a sharp distinction between awareness and consciousness. In the operated patients active awareness without consciousness was manifested through the right lobe while consciousness and speech were centred in the left lobe. The reactions controlled by the minor lobe were near enough to those seen in higher animals to raise the possibility that consciousness may not gradually have developed during the course

of evolution but instead appeared in man contemporaneously with the power of organized speech.

The brains of the higher animals and ultimately of man have evolved not only to receive and interpret sensory signals from the outer world but as the instrument for guiding a response to these signals. In the lower animals the signals impinge on autonomous nerve centers and evoke instinctive, predetermined actions. In the higher animals and man these signals can interact with the nerves of their large fore-brains to determine a variety of reactions. The choices, whether conscious or unconscious, that thus become possible are of two different sorts. Stated in simplest terms one depends on whether or not it is safe to act, the other on whether action is liable to lead to pleasurable or to painful consequences. Consciously we employ two unlike logical processes when reaching these two types of decision.

We depend on the accuracy of our picture of external reality when making decisions concerning the safety to act. The mental faculty that has developed to make these decisions is what is usually meant by the intellect; it has become our instrument for establishing truth. The simplest decisions of this type are based on a bivalent logic: something is going to happen or it is not, and the answer is either yes or no. Many of the events of everyday life as well as many of the laws which science has discovered have the absolute character this implies. Thus all human experience justifies the assertion that night and day invariably follow one another and that time flows in one direction only. Nevertheless, as modern science has ex-

panded its scope, it has become more and more apparent that limitations must be placed on the accuracy or the frequency with which such unqualified statements and predictions can be made. For instance, it has been found that the Newtonian laws of motion invariably apply with all measurable accuracy under ordinary earthly conditions, but not when velocities approach that of light. During daily life when all the factors influencing a system cannot be taken into account, the predictions that can be made may not always be fulfilled. Such predictions and the propositions underlying them are consequently only statistically valid. Their probabilities can be calculated but with a logic more complicated than that required when absolute truth is in question. In everyday life we need these statistics when trying, for instance, to predict the weather or the number of automobile accidents that will occur over a given period. Most of the predictions that can be made in atomic and nuclear physics are statistical, and the theories and laws that can be there constructed have a statistical basis. Some of the uncertainties that necessitate a recourse to statistics can be resolved through further knowledge, but one of the most significant realizations impressed on us by the advances of science during this century is that there are insurmountable limits to what we can learn. We thin the mystery that surrounds us and express this thinning with statistical predictions, but beyond is an unknown whose frontiers we can retract but which the human mind as now constituted sees no way to penetrate.

(To be concluded)

TRUE RELIGION ALWAYS HELPS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

IV

In the next stage of life the educated young person enters the work-a-day world. How should such an one conduct himself or herself, to live a really meaningful, fruitful, successful and happy life?

Since as we have seen, true religion is so helpful along the way so far, we well may turn now to the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, where time-tested instruction on this next point is available. The teacher is advising the student who, on the termination of his educational career, is going to assume the responsibilities of the householder's life. Such is the instruction:

Speak the truth. Do not neglect the study of the scriptures. Show gratitude to the teacher. Enter the householder's life through sacramental marriage and see that the line of progeny is not cut off. (That is to say, with marriage one should become parents of children, as a religious duty.) Do not swerve from truth. Do not swerve from dharma or true religion. Do not neglect the study and teaching of the Vedas.

Do not neglect your duties to gods and ancestors. Treat your teacher, parents, and guests respectfully. Whatever deeds are faultless, these are to be performed—not others. Whatever good works have been performed by us, those should be emulated by you, not others.

Those wise men who are superior to us, you should comfort them by extending respectful courtesies. Whatever is to be given, should be given respectfully, and not irreverently—and according to one's

plenty, with modesty, with fear, with sympathy.

Now, if there arises in your mind any doubt regarding any act, or any doubt concerning conduct, you should conduct yourself in such matters as the respected wise people would conduct themselves—such wise men who are competent to judge, who are spontaneously devoted to good deeds without being urged by others, who are not too severe, but are lovers of true religion.

This is the teaching. This is the secret wisdom of the scriptures. This is the command of God.¹⁰

In these teachings to the entrant into worldly life, you will notice that emphasis has been laid on the following: the solemn duty of raising a family, one's welfare and prosperity, and the development of one's social consciousness. These in fact cover the normal urges and duties of a human being for enjoyment and advancement in this world, which for fulfilment must be pursued according to the precepts of true religion.

If enjoyment and advancement are pursued in a way which violates these precepts, one is neither going to enjoy for long nor advance far. Such a person will bring on himself the consequences of his own evil actions which will constantly assail his happiness and thwart his progress—nay, end in his ruin.

We have seen that true religion is the very backbone of true education. The

¹⁰ *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, I. xi

young men and women who have received such ideal education enter the married life with developed body and restrained mind, with a sense of wonder and a faith which are the secrets of even physical enjoyment. Success follows them wherever they go.

But those who due to lack of religious training did not observe purity of character, enter the married life without wonder and with a sense of guilt and suspicion. They will have slender chances of making happy homes: before these have even been built, they will be on the way to breaking up. And out of such broken homes come the broods of children who cause endless trouble to the teachers at school, and to the police everywhere. Further, the parents' own personalities begin to shrink, atrophy and harden. Therefore, without the help of true religion none can lay the foundation of a happy and contented married life.

Now for meeting all the requirements of life in the world, naturally we need to earn money. And in this too, true religion is our truest friend. Even in this distracted world, even today, honesty is the best policy. He who earns his bread through honest labour may not amass huge wealth, but he will not be dogged by anxiety and fear of exposure. He will have an inner strength which cannot be purchased with money. Those who earn cheap money unrighteously, not only constantly risk exposure, but before they realize it, the money itself may vanish and all further avenues of earning close to them. A man with a sense of honour and dignity knows that it is the man who makes money—not money that makes the man. And this sense of dignity comes to him from true religion. One without such background, thinking that it is money which makes the man, will do anything for money. All such must eventually suffer.

V

Youth is a very exciting time. Many people want to stay young and agile if possible all their life. And there are plenty of charlatans who tell you through loud advertisements that they can make you stay always young, either through 'yoga' or through estrogen or progesterone treatments. It requires considerable amounts of bleak stupidity to go in for eternal youth. They become the most pitiable of creatures who, when youth is gone, still want to give you the impression that they are the blossoms of early morning. Sensible people have nothing but sympathy for these vain men and women who have somehow missed the whole dignity and purpose of life.

It is not in the scheme of nature that anyone should always remain young. If one's life is not cut short, everybody's physical sheath, which St. Francis used to call 'brother ass', will decline, flesh will become loose, nerves will sag. There is nothing in it for worry or shame. It is the law of nature, that it takes a morning, a forenoon, a noon, an afternoon, an evening, and a night to make a full day. And every part of the day has its own efficacy, purpose, and beauty. The evening need not necessarily be less beautiful than morning or the sunny midday.

But for those who have not received any religious training in their early youth, and consider that this body alone is the be-all and end-all of life, for them the declining age becomes a dreary thing. They feel themselves cast out by the world and live in the past. They do not know how to live a forward-looking life because this wretched body offers to them no promise for the future.

The case, however, is totally different with those who have been nurtured in true religion. They do not purposely neglect the body, but they know there is

an ever-renewing meaning in each stage of life, as there is in the changing seasons of the year.

Undoubtedly, youth has a special beauty of its own. Its beauty is the beauty of creative power, both biological and otherwise. Whereas the beauty of advancing and old age is the beauty of serenity attained through experience: it is the beauty of growth in mind and spirit, which is far superior to beauty of mere flesh. Those who have been nurtured in true religion from childhood, with advancing age manifest a power and a glow which is hardly ever seen in youth. Where others feel frustration, boredom and disgust with life, they experience a special sweetness in old age, in spite of their failing body, because through practice of spiritual discipline they have come to experience in the depths of their being an awareness of the ineffable. Spiritual joy far outweighs the loss of even all outer joy.

The real man is not the body. He is not the mind. He is the Ātman. Only true religion brings one this awareness vividly in experience. With this plenary experience of life man becomes a liberated soul. Such a soul experiences unalloyed bliss and happiness. He radiates and transmits peace, light, and sweetness.

Even if one may not get liberated in this life, whatever merits he earns in his life through practice of true religion stand him in good stead in the next life. He starts the new life with an advantage in body, mind, brain and soul, and in circumstances. There is this Hindu teaching:

'While tenanting an impermanent body, he who does not acquire moral and spiritual excellence by austere discipline of mind and body, out of his foolishness, shall have to regret his fate when he passes out of the body ...

'The inclination to vice is not a freak of chance; it is the effect of man's previous acts. If in this world men enjoy

intellectual eminence, physical charm, muscular strength, shining heroism, enjoyable wealth, and happy progeny, they are certainly derived from their previous good deeds.'

Therefore it is an established fact that true religion not only helps you from the womb to the tomb, but even beyond death itself.

VI

It is obvious that in order to be able to proceed to the great destination of life, through all its stages, we need to be protected from injury. In other words, we require security of life and helpful interpersonal relationship in society. How do we get it? It can be got only on the basis of the precepts of true religion, such as mutuality, reverence for life, compassion, kindness, and other-regard.

The *Mahābhārata* teaches:

'One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of righteousness. One, by acting in a different way by yielding to desire, becomes guilty of unrighteousness.'

'Knowing how painful it is to himself, a person should never do that to others which he dislikes when done to him by others.'¹¹

The *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches:

'Him I hold to be the supreme yogi who looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as he looks on them in himself.'¹²

The *Dhammapada* teaches:

'All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death. Likening others to oneself, one should neither slay nor cause to slay.'¹³

According to Confucius:

'Consideration for the feelings of others, not doing to them what you would not

¹¹ *Mahābhārata*, 'Anuśāsana-parvan', 113.8;

'Śānti-parvan', 259.20

¹² *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI, 32

¹³ *Dhammapada*, Verse 129

have them do to you, is the basis of society.'¹⁴

Likewise we read in the *New Testament*:

'And as you wish that men would do unto you, do so unto them.'¹⁵

This is the one voice of true religion everywhere, on the basis of which enduring protection from injury is possible. And this principle holds good in family, society, national and international relationships.

Many of our conflicts in family, society, nation, and the world at large, can be traced to violation of this golden principle of human conduct, which is one of the fundamental principles of true religion.

VII

Life is not a bed of roses, as we all know. Calamities, adversities, death, disease, and suffering visit everybody. Those who have no inner strength, no inner endurance born of practice of spiritual disciplines cannot easily stand such impacts. Sometimes people are driven out of their minds by such situations.

Bhīṣma says in the *Mahābhārata*:

'When one's wealth is lost, or one's wife or son or father is dead, one certainly says to oneself, alas, it is a great sorrow! But then one should with the help of meditation try to kill that grief.'¹⁶

Yet is the practice of meditation such an easy affair, that when someone dies at home, you just rise to superconsciousness and forget all about it? It requires life-long practice for its own sake—and for the sake of the Lord to whom it leads us—to be found helpful at times of calamity. It is thus true religion alone which can teach us to stay, as the *Gītā* says, unperturbed in misery yet without longing for happiness.

It is true religion alone which teaches us even to look on sufferings as symbols of

God's compassion,¹⁷ and on disease as the sort of austerity He sends for our spiritual growth. When the painful death of a dearest one makes us almost insane, nothing but the wisdom and sympathy of true religion can give us any real solace. There is a very touching incident in the life of the Buddha, illustrating this truth:

Krishna Gautami had an only son, and he died. In her grief she carried the dead child to all her neighbours, asking them for medicine, and the people said, 'She has lost her senses, the boy is dead.' At length Krishna Gautami met a man who replied to her request, 'I cannot give you medicine for your child, but I know a physician who can.'

And the girl said, 'Pray tell me, sir, who is it?' And the man replied, 'Go to Shakyamuni, the Buddha.'

Krishna Gautami repaired to the Buddha and cried, 'Lord and Master, give me the medicine that will cure my boy.'

The Buddha answered, 'I want a handful of mustard-seed.' And when the girl in her joy promised to procure it, the Buddha added, 'The mustard-seed must be taken from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent, or friend.'

Poor Krishna Gautami now went from house to house, and the people pitied her and said, 'Here is mustard seed; take it!' But when she asked, 'Did a son or daughter, a father or mother, die in your family?', They answered her: 'Alas, the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our deepest grief.' And there was no house but some beloved one had died in it.

Krishna Gautami became weary and hopeless, and sat down at the wayside, watching the lights of the city, as they flickered up and were extinguished again. At last the darkness of the night reigned everywhere. And she consider-

¹⁴ Confucius: *Analect*, IV. 15. 2

¹⁵ St. Matthew, 7. 12

¹⁶ *Mahābhārata*, 'Bhīṣma-parvan', 174.7

¹⁷ *vide*: Sri Sarada Devi, *The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1949) p. 334

ed the fate of men, that their lives flicker up and are extinguished. And she thought to herself: 'How selfish am I in my grief! Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads him who has surrendered all selfishness to immortality.'

Putting away the selfishness of her affection for her child, Krisha Gautami had the dead body buried in the forest. Returning to the Buddha, she took refuge in him and found comfort in the dharma, which is a balm that will soothe all the pains of our troubled hearts.¹⁸

VIII

Even when through wanton lifelong violation of the principles of true religion—as a result of our own sinful work, the ripening of the fruit of our own karma—we have reached the rock bottom of degradation, dropped by the world beside the roadway of life like a dying animal, even then it is true religion alone—though we had always shunned it—that comes to our rescue and redemption. The sinner is never helped by his sin. He is always and only helped by true religion. It is the only friend of the friendless and the forsaken.

In this connection there is the story of Upagupta and Vasavadatta:

There was a courtesan in Mathura named Vasavadatta. She happened to see Upagupta, one of the Buddha's disciples, a tall and beautiful youth, and fell desperately in love with him. She sent an invitation to the young man, but he replied, 'The time has not yet arrived when Upagupta will visit Vasavadatta.' The courtesan was astonished at the reply, and she sent again for him, saying, 'Vasavadatta desires love, not gold, from Upagupta.' But Upagupta made the same enigmatic reply and did not come. A few months later Vasavadatta had a love-intrigue with the chief of the arti-

sans, and at that time a wealthy merchant came to Mathura, who fell in love with her. Seeing his wealth, and fearing the jealousy of her other lover, she contrived the death of the chief of the artisans, and concealed his body under a dunghill.

When the chief of the artisans had disappeared, his relatives and friends searched for him and found his body. Vasavadatta was hence seized, tried by a judge, and condemned to have her ears and nose, hands and feet cut off, and to be flung into a graveyard.

Vasavadatta, though a passionate girl, had been kind to her servants, and one of her maids followed her and out of love for her former mistress ministered unto her in her agonies, and chased away the crows.

Now the time had arrived when Upagupta decided to visit Vasavadatta. When he came, the poor woman ordered her maid to collect and hide under a cloth her severed limbs; and he greeted her kindly, but she said with petulance: 'Once this body was fragrant like the lotus, and I offered you my love. In those days I was covered with pearls and fine muslin. Now I am mangled by the executioner and covered with filth and blood.'

'Sister,' said the young man, 'it is not for my pleasure that I approach you. It is to restore to you a nobler beauty than the charms which you have lost.

'I have seen with mine eyes the Tathagata walking upon earth and teaching men his wonderful doctrine. But you would not have listened to the words of righteousness while surrounded with temptations, while under the spell of passion and yearning for worldly pleasures. You would not have listened to the teachings of the Tathagata, for your heart was wayward, and you set your trust on the sham of your transient charms.

'The charms of a lovely form are treacherous, and quickly lead into temptations, which have proved too strong for you. But there is a beauty which will not fade, and if you but listen to the doctrine of our Lord, the Buddha,

¹⁸ Adapted from: Lin Yutang (ed.): *The Wisdom of China and India* (Random House, New York, 1942), pp. 367-8

you will find that peace which you never would have found in the restless world of sinful pleasures.'

Vasavadatta became calm and a spiritual happiness soothed the tortures of her bodily pain; for where there is much suffering there is also great bliss.¹⁹

IX

We have covered the entire ground of life, with its various vicissitudes, and even beyond life; and we have seen that true religion helps us always and everywhere.

But true religion never becomes a real stream of power coursing through one's life unless it springs from one's hunger for God. Until and unless the thirst for liberation, from the bondage of ignorance and limitations of life, becomes the passion of our soul, religion does not become true in *our* life.

When the motive force behind righteousness is the help one may get out of it, in getting smoothly through life, then our 'reli-

¹⁹ Adapted from Paul Carus: *The Gospel of the Buddha* (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago, 1902), p. 179

gion' can be anything between pretension and shopkeeping. Then it is at best only a refined sort of materialism, which certainly is not true religion. And such righteousness cannot bear the challenge of adversity: this breaks it down in no time.

But righteousness that springs from love of God and from the yearning for continuing in His love, is indestructible. This is the fountain-source of true religion, expressing itself in life as truthfulness, purity, self-control, non-violence, forbearance, compassion, equanimity, detachment, other-regard, straight-forwardness, and longing for liberation or enlightenment.

Whoever a person may be, whatever his situation in life, his aspiration, needs, or difficulties—in every situation, everywhere, true religion always stands by him and upholds him. Not only that, if he passes away before attaining enlightenment, true religion carries over to him in the next life the merits earned by him in this life.

Yes, religion is not the friend of one life alone: it is our eternal friend, life after life.

(Concluded)

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XI

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Important factors before beginning spiritual practice are: controlled life, diet, exercise, and rhythmic breathing.

Practise moderation in your activities as well as in your thinking. Do not get excited. Eat only that which you can assimilate. All spiritual aspirants should do physical exercise—not of the violent type but enough to keep the body in good trim. Exercise removes lethargy, improves circulation, and keeps the brain healthy. Take

proper care of your stomach as well as your brain. They should not be overstrained.

We must control our moods and have physical and mental rhythm.

Sit down quietly. Choose your own posture, easy and comfortable. If you find it difficult to sit in one single posture, have an alternative posture. But keep the back and neck straight. The body must be at perfect rest, steady and relaxed.

Fill your mind with good thoughts. Send out good thoughts to the world. Then salute the great Prophets of world religions. Pray for yourself and also for others.

All these steps are to be followed not mechanically but consciously, intelligently, creating the right mood for meditation.

Practise rhythmic breathing. Breathe in purity, breathe out impurity. Imagine all your impurities are leaving you. Watch your breath. This is in itself a bit of concentration. The mind will thereby begin to come back to itself.

Now seek your centre of consciousness. Every one must have a fixed centre of consciousness. This is very important. It is the meeting place of God, the soul, and the mind. Forget the body and rise to the thought-plane. Fix your centre of consciousness. Imagine your soul to be a point of light. From the point come to the circle or the infinite space, that is, the Divine.

*

Imagine the spinal cord as a staircase. The different planes of consciousness are the different floors. The nerve currents are flowing up and down. First choose carefully your centre of consciousness. For very emotional people it is better to choose the brain as their centre. Intellectuals should choose the heart as their centre of consciousness. But never choose any centre lower than the heart. It is always better to choose higher centres.

When you are in a higher centre, you may feel the pull of lower centres. You should learn the technique of controlling the downward pull. The point of control, the centre of gravity is within. Only we should use it properly.

All these planes are to be taken more in a psychical than a physical sense.

*

How to meditate on God? How to con-

ceive of Him? In the East various symbols are used for this purpose.

You may look upon the Divine as a vast, infinite space and yourself as a point. Merge the point in the infinite space.

Or you may look upon the Divine as an ocean of light and yourself as a bubble of light.

Or you may imagine a stream of consciousness flowing within towards the ocean of divine Consciousness and Bliss.

Or you may imagine yourself to be a bird flying in silence in infinite space.

All these are imaginations but they are not vain imaginations. They are imaginations about the Real.

Always take the help of such higher symbols. Among these, sound symbols are perhaps easier to use. Repetition of some holy sound symbol and dwelling on its meaning, called *japa*, is a great help to meditation. When *japa* is done rhythmically it can develop into a steady stream of thought-current without any break. This culminates in absorption in the Divine.

*

The most important point in all these meditations is to look upon yourself as a soul, a Spirit. You are different from the body: you are a spiritual entity. We are all sparks of the Divine. We must rise above body-consciousness. Meditation must help us in achieving this. That alone is true meditation.

Until we attain it, what we do is all only playing at meditation.

Rise above childish ways of leading a spiritual life. Take up this life in all seriousness. Practise spiritual disciplines systematically. Rise to higher planes of consciousness through tremendous effort. Worship the Divine by rising to the plane of the Divine. Reach the point of contact between your soul and the Divine and enjoy the pure bliss of divine communion.

TRUTH TO ONESELF

I

This above all — the Poet says —, to thine own self be true; and — mark the drift of his continuing words — it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man. — But we are false to many a man, and many a man is false to us: untruth to self is cause of it — where self means universal self, the God in man, which is not born and does not die.

Now truth is so divine a thing, should God backslide from truth, we're told to stick to truth, and let God go; but God is truth, and truth is God, and to grasp truth is to have a hold on the reality called God. It is to be properly man.

I gave up all, the True Man said, but give up truth I could not, else my giving up might any moment have been voided of its truth, and ceased to be. Before all prayer and practice, back of all creeds and dogmas, truth-treading is religion in this present age. Whose life is true, he comes to the light.

Things have come to such a pass, you want to say, that religion is a luxury, and character's the needed thing today. To that I'll not object, but ask you this: what is this 'character' you talk about? Is't not at core a fundamental truthfulness? Is't not an integrity, a sincerity, a simplicity, that scorns not lie and craft alone, but any touch of tactic, and never takes advantage? And when there's cause for fear, is it not truth to truth gives strength and courage then?

And do you see that in this core's a core — the truth possessed? Each man has it in quality his own. It is the substance of the man. It is the intuition, faith, and vision of him in his whole being, and fashions his life's aim. It's mixed up with illusions; and as these get destroyed, the truth he's full of's trued to that which is the Full,

II

Truth-grasping is a several-fisted thing, and these fists
 will fight each other till we find the principle of peace.
 True to higher self, or to the high and low compounded
 that we are? The fight is that. If true
 to supernature, can I be true to nature too?
 A blend of both am I. Won't nature take revenge
 if I aspire too high? Is truth to self
 a viable ideal? O my self, show me
 the way to my self — the self that is the truth.
 How know true from false in these more inward things?

Friend, I reply to my self, say not true from false,
 but true from less true; think not of high and low,
 but of single self not seen as 'tis. We have to start
 from faith in One that has no other. Not that
 the faith will go when the knowledge will come:
 the faith *is* the knowledge, not known as such.
 We possess what we seek: the wise have declared it.
 In essence we *are* the integral knowledge:
 the work's in removing the cov'ring.

Sure, I must do the best I know: but what is that?
 What's read or heard, I know, and yet I do not know.
 If knew, I'd do; but that I do not do.
 And what I smoothly do is not the best I know.
 When I don't find it in myself to do that which
 I know I ought to do, I have to look
 at what's beyond the gap to leap it. To struggle
 on the hither side, by screwing up my will,
 or arguing within my mind, will not
 get me across. Attention on the further side,
 gap and leaper of the gap forgot, will land me there
 if I but wait, and wait, in faith. I'm lifted
 from the lower by attention higher placed.
 My effort will not cause advance; yet effort
 absent, no advance.

III

But how can we be steady in our steadiness
 to truth? On destiny does it depend? Or on
 a pill? — Not in our stars, or sciences either,
 but in ourselves the power lies hid. It's more
 a drawing than a driving power. It is

the beauty of the self's own truth that draws us,
though know it we may not.

As aims and objects of desire that beauty's
camouflaged and rarefied; and our desire's
dispersed among those aims and objects.
Not will power we lack, though't seem we do,
but the dispassionate discernment
to utilize the power we've right now got.
By dispassion and discernment, if steadily
kept up, our aims converge in one. By this means too
the self is brighter seen, and thereby draws more strongly.

It's my own crooks and crannies my course of life
must straighten out. That's why my course must be my own,
and not another's. These present tasks and trials
are fossil echoes of my former acts and thoughts.
When bravely faced, and yet in all humility,
first their hard corners, then they themselves, dissolve.
The solvent is my readiness to face them.
The way will open up as we are true to truth,
or self, and steadfastly live in it. We have it
from a truth-full Source: the truth shall make us free.

— S. P.

SOME CONCEPTS OF SILENCE AND SOUND IN SANSKRIT

PROF. K. SUBRAHMANIAN

The Vedas and Upaniṣads uniformly proclaim the supremacy of silence over sound. God is described as Silence as He cannot be described in words. The finite words cannot *adequately* describe God who is Infinite. God can be comprehended only by a silent mind, a mind that is still.

One of the words for a sage in Sanskrit is *maunī* or *muni*—one who observes *mauna* or silence. This Vedic and Upaniṣadic concept of a saint holds good for saints in India even today. Most people believe that the saints can transform people through their potent silence. This

may partly be due to the mythological story of Lord Śiva who is said to have taken on the form of a boy to instruct elderly sages on the truth of Brahman. He, as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, is said to have instructed them through silence—*mauna-vyākhyā - prakāṣita - parabrahma - tattvam*. There is no temple for Dakṣiṇāmūrti anywhere in India. But his idol is found almost always under a tree—usually a banyan tree. In Sanskrit literature he is generally referred to as *maunī guru* or *jñāna-panḍita*, the silent preceptor or preceptor of wisdom.

The idea of silence runs through all

Sanskrit literature and the silent sage has been and is still being respected in India: silence and stillness are not equated with dumbness and immobility. This is a basic aspect of the philosophy of Hinduism, especially of the school of Advaita or non-dualism.

The non-dualistic school of Vedānta pre-eminently believes that nothing in this world can be understood well till one can understand himself totally. Any attempt to understand other things without understanding oneself will result only in partial success. Self-realization must be the ultimate aim and endeavour of every human being.

Advaita Vedānta maintains that the human intellect can never comprehend the nature of Brahman. Brahman can be 'known' only through intuition, never by logical enquiry or analysis. The Real at the heart of the world is reflected in the infinite depths of the soul. 'As the same non-dual fire, after it has entered the world, becomes different according to whatever it burns, so also the same non-dual Ātman, dwelling in all beings, becomes different according to whatever it enters. And It exists also without.'¹ It is through quieting the strivings of the will and the empirical intellect that conditions are said to be attained for the revelation of the Supreme in the individual soul. 'Therefore having become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected, one sees the Self in the self.'²

Thus *mauna* is advised for leading the soul forward to contemplation. A chattering mind is considered a stumbling block to realization. It is only silent meditation that will enable one to fully realize the Self within. Verbal prayer is recommended

in the initial stages but only as a means to silent meditation.

'Worship, reciting of God's Holy Name,
And meditation, mainly are performed
By body, voice and mind, and they
excel
Each other in the order here set
down.'³

'Constant repeating of the Holy Name
Is more than praise, at length the voice
will sink

To silent repetition in the Heart,
And in this way is meditation learnt.'⁴

'His form is not an object of vision; no
one beholds Him with the eye. One
can know Him when He is revealed by
the intellect free from doubt and by
constant meditation. Those who know
this become immortal.

'When the five instruments of know-
ledge stand still, together with the mind,
and when the intellect does not move,
that is called the Supreme State.

'This, the firm control of the senses, is
what is called yoga. One must then
be vigilant; for yoga can be both bene-
ficial and injurious.'⁵

'Utterly quiet,
Made clean of passion,
The mind of the yogi
Knows that Brahman,
His bliss is the highest.'⁶

The concept of silence has influenced almost all aspects of Indian life. The role of silence in classical music, for instance, has been lucidly explained thus:

'Part of the Hindu sacred music can be found in its inducement to silence, within which transcendental ecstasy may be experienced. The significance of silence is seldom understood by western audiences. For example, deceleration of rhythm and decreasing loudness of sounds at the end of a performance may not merely fade into silence but be projected into a profounder silence by continued plucking motions for visual appearance after actual plucking has ceased. Western

³ Ramana Maharshi: *Upadesa-saram*, 4

⁴ *ibid.*, 6

⁵ *Kātha-upaniṣad*, II, iii, 9-11

⁶ *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI, 27 (translation by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood)

¹ *Kātha-upaniṣad*, II, ii, 9.

² *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, IV, iv, 23.

anxiety cannot restrain itself from breaking (rudely) into applause; but the longer the pause before applause, the greater the quiescent effect, the achievement of the artist, and the appreciation by the audience.’⁷

The concept of silence has so influenced people in India that even today the orthodox observe silence one day a week. Gandhi used to observe silence on Mondays. Some of the modern saints like Sri Ramana Maharshi and Yogis like Sri Aurobindo were noted for their *mauna*. The essential difference between a true and a false saint is that a true *muni* communicates *śānti* or peace through his *mauna*, whereas a false one does not. The latter’s *mauna* must be considered superficial. Even very illiterate people in India believe in the efficacy of silence. They believe that their doubts will be cleared and answers given to their mental questions in the presence of a silent sage. For this reason a sage is held in high esteem, as he is of service to many. He may not ‘do’ anything outwardly; but his very presence is effective and forceful. This is attributed to the power of his silent meditation by which he communes with his Self.

Sound: Sound is called *śabda* in Sanskrit. Brahman is said to manifest Itself through *śabda* also, and that aspect of Brahman is called *Śabda-brahman*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares Himself to be *Śabda-brahman*⁸ Also, in the *Gītā*, He says, ‘Of words I am the one syllable Om; of sacrifices I am the sacrifice of *japa* (silent repetition).’⁹ God is both silence and sound. However, silence is always given a more basic importance than sound, in the Hindu scriptures. Sound must be used as a means to silence, for self-realization.

⁷ A. J. Bahm, ‘Comparative Aesthetics’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Criticism*, Fall, 1965, p. 110

⁸ *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, VI. xvi. 51

⁹ *Gītā*, X. 25

The Vedas are known as *srutis*, texts that are heard. They were handed down orally for many centuries before being written out. Even today, though they have long been in written form, no one associates them merely with reading. Brahmins, well versed in the Vedas, recite them without referring to any book at the time of recitation. In them therefore, one finds the usual formulaic patterns associated with literature for oral transmission.

Further, the Hindus never believed that the Vedas were composed by mere men. It is held that either they were taught by Brahmā, the Creator, to sages, or they revealed themselves to great sages who were ‘seers’ (*ṛṣis*). The Vedas are considered eternal (*sanātana*). Despite many changes in the history of India, the Vedas have remained essentially unchanged throughout the centuries. The prayers of Hindus today are the same selections of Vedic verses that were used at least three thousand years ago. All Sanskrit literature written after the Vedic period appeals to the Vedas as authority. Different systems of Hindu philosophy have vied with one another to prove that one was superior to the other in its strict adherence to the Vedas. Yet of course, each system tried to interpret the Vedas in its own way.

The Vedas are to be learnt from a guru, a teacher. ‘In order that a seeker after Brahman may understand that Eternal’, says the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, ‘let him, fuel in hand, approach a guru who is well versed in the Vedas and always devoted to Brahman.’¹⁰ The function of a good teacher is not only to teach through word but also by his life. A guru is an *ācārya*—one who knows the essence of the scriptures and practises it himself. Again the purpose of the study of the Vedas is not

¹⁰ *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, I. ii. 12

only to enlighten the intellect, but to purify and enrich the soul:

'Pleasant indeed are the study and teaching of the Vedas!
He who engages in these things attains to concentration of mind,
And is no longer a slave to his passions;
Devout, self-controlled, cultivated in spirit,
He rises to fame and is a blessing to mankind.'¹¹

What the student learns first from the teacher is *śravaṇa* (hearing). The emphasis here is on oral communication, listening, and memorization. After *śravaṇa*, there should be *manana* (reflection), followed by *nididhyāsana* (meditation) for getting direct experience (*anubhava*). *Manana* is mere mental accomplishment if it is not followed by *nididhyāsana*. After the Vedas have been learned and assimilated, the student is expected to transmit them to others orally. Even today the injunction that one should hear and/or recite the Vedas holds good in India. No one learning the Vedas in the traditional manner is asked to *read* the Vedas.

Together with the *śrutis*, there are *smṛtis* embodying, among other things, the laws for individual and social conduct formulated by saints and sages. *Smṛti* means memory. It has however come to be used especially in reference to writings devised to fix in mind the spiritual precepts taught and implied in the Vedas. The *smṛtis* have always possessed only a secondary importance as compared with the Vedas. If a saint's vision contradicted that of the Vedas, that saint's vision was set aside, as it was personal whereas the eternal Word of the Vedas was and is impersonal. *Smṛti* is of time, whereas *śruti* is *sanātana*

(eternal). Whoever knows anything knows it through the eternal Word.¹²

It is considered by all Hindus that it is good to the soul to listen to recitation of the Vedas. There is a great revival of interest in the Vedas nowadays, and people flock to any place where they are being recited. Most of those who listen, having little knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit, do not have much idea of the meaning of what is being recited. Still it has a tremendous psychological effect on them.

Vedic recitations begin with the syllable *Om*. In the Upaniṣads *Om* is represented as the symbol of the Supreme, and one is enjoined to meditate on this. Concentration on *Om* is known to develop one-pointedness of mind.

There is a story that when the creator God, Brahmā, meditated on his Creator, he heard in the shrine of his heart the eternal word *Om*, the seed of all knowledge and thought. Gradually all the other significant sounds manifested themselves, and through these Brahmā came to know the wisdom of the Vedas. The Upaniṣads repeatedly suggest the mystic symbol *Om* as the most important aid to meditation.

'The essence of all these beings is the earth; the essence of the earth is water; the essence of water is plants; the essence of plants is a person. The essence of a person is speech; the essence of speech is the *ṛk* (hymn). The essence of the *ṛk* is the *sāman* (chant). The essence of the *sāman* is the *udgītha* (*Om*).

'That is the quintessence of the essences, the Supreme, the highest, the eighth, namely the *udgītha*.'¹³

As Dr. Radhakrishnan, with his vast scholarship of the Upaniṣads and other Hindu scriptures, points out:

'In Indian thought this symbol *Aum*

¹¹ *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, Mādhyandini-śākhā', XI, v. 7; 'Svādhyāya Prasāṃsā', 1

¹² Śāntaraksita : Tattvasaṅgraha (with the commentary *Pañjikā* by Kamalaśila, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 30-1, Baroda, 1926), verse 828

¹³ *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, I. 1. 2, 3

[*Om*] stands for many things. Every kind of trinity is represented by *Aum*. Being, non-being and becoming; birth, life and death; past, present and future; Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The conception of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva emphasizes the different aspects of the one Supreme which contains the three conditions. God by a free act of His will creates, or more philosophically posits, an eternal universe. This positing God is Brahmā. He views it, contemplates it, sustains it, enjoys it as being distinct from himself. This God is Viṣṇu. He receives it back into his own unity as an indissoluble element of his being, then he is Śiva.¹⁴

Hindus believe in the sure efficacy of the syllable *Om*. By its constant repetition with faith the mind becomes still and the immeasurable manifests in this silent mind. Even as good music can induce many moods, so proper repetition, with meditation, of the syllable *Om* can lead one to an advanced spiritual state.

'Taking as the bow the great weapon of the Upaniṣads, one should place in it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing it with a mind engaged in the contemplation of that (Brahman), O beloved, know that imperishable Brahman as the target.

'The syllable *Om* is the bow: one's self, indeed, is the arrow. Brahman is spoken of as the target of that. It is to be hit without making a mistake. Thus one becomes united with it as the arrow (becomes one with the target).

'He in whom the sky, the earth and the interspace are woven, as also the mind along with all the vital breaths, know him alone as the one self. Dismiss other utterances. This is the bridge to immortality.

'Where the arteries of the body are brought together like the spokes in the centre of a wheel, within it (this self moves about) becoming manifold. Meditate on *Om* as the self. May you be

successful in crossing over to the farther shore of darkness.'¹⁵

When one repeats any word for a long time, it seems to cease to have any meaning. But in the case of a potent word like *Om*, it will eventually stir into motion some subtle force in the body which will help one toward realizing oneself. Such a word becomes more and more effective with greater concentration. This is a form of psychic perception.

The idea of psychic perception is part of the philosophy of the Yoga system. Yoga literally means 'joining'; and here it is the joining of the soul of man with the supreme soul. As this is accomplished by control and concentration of mind, Patañjali, father of the Yoga system, defines it thus: 'Yoga consists in the restraining of the spontaneous activities of the mind-stuff.'¹⁶ It is a search for the eternal aspect of man's life. Yoga affirms that there is another world than the one we normally apprehend through our senses. Yoga helps man to acquire a better and higher level of consciousness through the control of the different elements of human nature, mental and physical. The aspirant of Yoga practises among other things breath-control, and concentrates on some syllable or holy form, if such appeals to him. The mind can become stilled through such practice, and then the aspirant can reach what is called samādhi—a prolonged state of profound meditation in which Truth is revealed. He who has gained internal calm has an intuitive insight into the truth of things. They are called Yogis who have thus dissociated themselves from Nature. The Yogis, from the first, practise concentration on the mystic syllable *Om*.

'The word which expresses God is *Om*. The repetition of this, and meditating on its meaning, is the way. From that

¹⁴ S. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1971), Vol. I, p. 185 (f.n.)

¹⁵ *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, II. ii. 3-6

¹⁶ Patañjali: *Yoga-sūtras*, I. 2

is gained (the knowledge of) introspection, and the destruction of obstacles.'¹⁷

From Vedic times until the present day, *Om* has been accepted both as being one with Brahman and as the medium (or *Logos*), connecting man and the Supreme Reality. The meaning of *Om* gradually developed, in the hands of the philosophers of what is called *sphoṭa-vāda* or philosophy of the word. It is interesting to note that there is a close parallel in the Vedas to the beginning passage of St. John's Gospel.¹⁸ It is thus helpful for a Yogi to concentrate on the mystic syllable *Om*. The Upaniṣads also describe another method for concentration with the aid of sound:

'By closing the ears with the thumbs they hear the sound of the space within the heart. There is the sevenfold comparison of it—like rivers, a bell, a brass vessel, a wheel, the croaking of frogs, rain, or as when one speaks in a still, windless place. Passing beyond this variously characterized (sound) they disappear (become merged) in the supreme, the non-sound, the unmanifest Brahman. There they are unqualified and indistinguishable, like the various juices that have reached the condition of honey.'¹⁹

¹⁷ *ibid.*, I. 27-9

¹⁸ 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God.' Similarly, in the Vedas we read, *Prajāpatir vai idam agre āsīt*—in the beginning was God; *Tasya vāg dvitīyā āsīt*—with whom was the word; *Vāg vai paramam Brahma*—the word was very God.' However there are differences between the Hindu and the Christian approach to *Logos* or divine Word. According to the Hindu mind, the universe is the form behind which stands the inexpressible *sphoṭa* or *vāk* (*Logos*), whereas the Christian *Logos* is not considered as the material cause of the universe. Again the Christian *Logos* was incarnate only once, in the person of Jesus, whereas the *Logos* of the Hindus was, is and will be incarnate in all beings, each of whom may ultimately realize God through the power of that same *Logos*.

¹⁹ *Maitrāyaṇī-upaniṣad*, VI. 22

Another major branch of Hinduism, the Tantra, has especially concerned itself with *mantras* or mystical formulae. *Mantra* literally means something that saves him who meditates on it. It is not a mere word or words, but is a concentrated thought of great power, revealed to a *ṛṣi* (seer) in an hour of profound illumination. Some of these sounds are thus used as supports for concentration. These *mantras* reveal their message only during meditation. Their meaning does not necessarily belong to a national language, to the language that serves to communicate ordinary experiences. *Mantras* are learned from the master's mouth and they have to be received orally in order to have the right effect. Uttering the *mantra* must be preceded by purification of thought.

Each deity has a *bija-mantra*, which is, literally, its 'seed'—its very being. The efficacy of the *mantras* is said to be due to the fact that they *are* the deities which they represent. The *mantra* is power—power in the form of sound—; it is manifested *śabda-brahman*, Brahman in the form of sound.

The psychology of perception according to the Tantra scriptures is that when an object is perceived by the mind, the latter 'takes the form of' the object perceived. This is called a mental *vṛtti* (modification). It is the function of Yoga to suppress these *vṛttis*. The mind—as *vṛtti*, for the moment—is thus a representation of the outer object. The mind has two aspects: one in which it acts as the perceiver, the other in which it is the perceived, in the form of mental modifications. The mind, in this way, is both the cognizer and cognized. But finally, the mind which continues to think devotedly of the Divinity which it worships (*iṣṭa-devatā*) can become one with that *devatā*. This is a fundamental principle of Tantric discipline.

Any object perceived is called in Sans-

krit *artha*. Again, that aspect of the mind which acts as perceiver is called by the Tantra *sabda* or *nāma* (name), and that aspect in which it is its own object is called *artha* or *rūpa* (form). When any *mantra* is fully practised, the *artha* appears to the mind.

It is also believed by Tantrics that the cosmic energy in man can be roused by meditating on the various centres of the body, said to be each in the form of a lotus. There are six of these, called *cakras*, arranged along the spinal column as different centres of consciousness. The petals of their 'lotuses' total fifty, as do the letters in the Sanskrit alphabet, and the number for any specific lotus is said to be determined by the disposition of the subtle nerves (*nāḍīs*) around it. These petals bear subtle sound-powers.

The *mantra*, which the Tantra believes to be eternal, acquires great strength when it becomes 'awakened' in meditation, and begins to move in the *suṣumnā-nāḍī* which is said to be the most subtle of all nerves. Through proper meditation all the *cakras* can be brought to function. The *Tantra* recognizes four distinct forms and stages of sound, namely, *parā*, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikharī*. None of the first three stages is audible to ordinary sense: it is only *vaikharī* or manifested sound, that is audible. The *vaikharī* is uttered through the mouth, the *madhyamā* remains in the heart, the *paśyantī* in the navel, and the *parā* in the lower abdomen.²⁰

Modern linguistics recognizes only the *vaikharī* sound. However, by *śabda-brahman*, the Tantra does not mean *vaikharī* sound, but the *parā* sound that is said to be the dynamic source of the universe. *Kuṇḍalinī* (the coiled-up spiri-

tual energy in every living being) is described variously as a snake, a goddess, and coiled-up luminous energy. When the sleeping goddess is awakened through the grace of the guru, all the *cakras* are quickly traversed. Identified with *Om*, *kuṇḍalinī* possesses all the attributes of all gods and goddesses. It rises through the six centres until it reaches the highest level—the *sahasrāra* in the cerebrum—and in this occurs a mystic union with the supreme Lord, who resides there. Then it is that one attains transcendental consciousness.

It is even said by some that the true meaning of some of the *mantras* lies in their absence of meaning, and that by meditating on their meaninglessness one can come to understand the unreality of the world. If repetition of *mantras* annuls the 'reality' of the world, this is a first and major step towards reaching a deeper reality. The transcending of conventional semantic notions is a precondition to further experience.

However, whatever be the principle behind it, it is still believed in India that repetition of a holy name or of *Om* will cleanse the mind of the aspirants. The name itself represents God to most people; and its repetition makes the spiritual power and attributes of the chosen Deity gradually to permeate the worshipper's mind. Gandhi used to repeat the name of his favourite deity, Rāma. *Japa*, or the devoted repetition of a name of God, is considered efficacious and advocated in Sanskrit devotional literature, and is today widely practised by both the educated and the illiterate throughout India. Compositions like *Lalitāsahasranāma*, *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (thousand names of Lalitā, Viṣṇu) are basically just a string of a thousand (*sahasra*) names of the Goddess Lalitā and God Viṣṇu, respectively. These are meticulously recited by the faithful. That the Goddess is 'one who loves to hear Her

²⁰ *Prapañcasāra-tantra*, II. 43

name recited' (*nāma-pārāyaṇa-prītā*),²¹ is one of the attributes mentioned in the course of the first-named composition. The thousand names are mostly derived from the attributes of the God or Goddess in question.

The gods and goddesses are also said to be pleased by music (*saṅgīta-rasika*), and when pleased, can readily bestow grace on the worshippers. There are many references in Sanskrit literature to the possibility of self-realization through music. Nārada, one of the sages mentioned in the Hindu scriptures, is described as singing all the time the praise of God. Though a *muni* (sage), he is noted not for his *mauna*, silence, but for his devotional music. Again, Lord Kṛṣṇa is said to have swayed the entire universe by the music of His flute. It is interesting to note that scientific experiments regarding the effect of music on plants and trees have shown that these thrive and yield better if they are exposed to music.

However, it should not be assumed that the entire Sanskrit literature has been of the same view regarding sound. As for silence, there was never any dispute regarding its being an aspect of Brahman. With regard to sound however, there have been differing views. This is brought out especially in the schools of Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya in their discussions of the validity of the Vedas.

In the Mīmāṃsā school, testimony or verbal authority is said to be of two types: personal, and impersonal. The latter is the testimony of the Veda, which has intrinsic validity. The validity of the former, however, is dependent on the trustworthiness of the person in question. It may be marked by error, and may be contradicted afterwards. But the Veda is not the work of any single person. According to

Mīmāṃsā, it is timeless and authorless. To uphold the timelessness and authorlessness of the Veda, the Mīmāṃsā puts forward the theory that words and meanings as well as their relation are all natural and eternal.

Thus the Mīmāṃsā asserts, for example, that sound is eternal: it is a quality of the *ākāśa* (ether) and eternal like it; the beating of a drum reveals it to our ears, but does not call it into being; when any letter is pronounced we recognize it with an absolute certainty which would be impossible if its existence were momentary.

A word (*śabda*) is made up of two or more letters (*varṇas*), and according to the Mīmāṃsā is an aggregate of the letters and not a whole, though the letters must occur in a particular order. A *varṇa* is regarded as an articulated sound, which is in its essence eternal, omnipresent and integral. When a *varṇa* is pronounced in ten different ways, they are not ten different *varṇas* but only ten different manifestations of the same *varṇa*. Therefore a word, which is an aggregate of two or more eternal *varṇas*, is said to be itself eternal. A word does not signify the particular things which come into existence and pass away, but the eternal universals underlying these particulars. Hence the meanings or the objects denoted by words, being universals, are eternal and unchanging. The relation is said to be natural and eternal.

The Mīmāṃsakas thus feel there is a natural relationship between the word and its meaning. They propounded this theory because as the Vedas, according to them, were revealed and not the result of human endeavour, the words of the Vedas also must have existed from eternity; hence the relationship between sound and sense must have been natural and not conventional.

This view has however been rejected by other schools of thought. For example, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas advocate the conventional

²¹ *Lalitā-sahasranāma*, V. 732

origin of the relationship between words and their meanings: they maintain that the relationship between the word and its meaning cannot be natural, as evidenced by the fact that the word fire does not burn the mouth nor does the word honey sweeten the mouth.²²

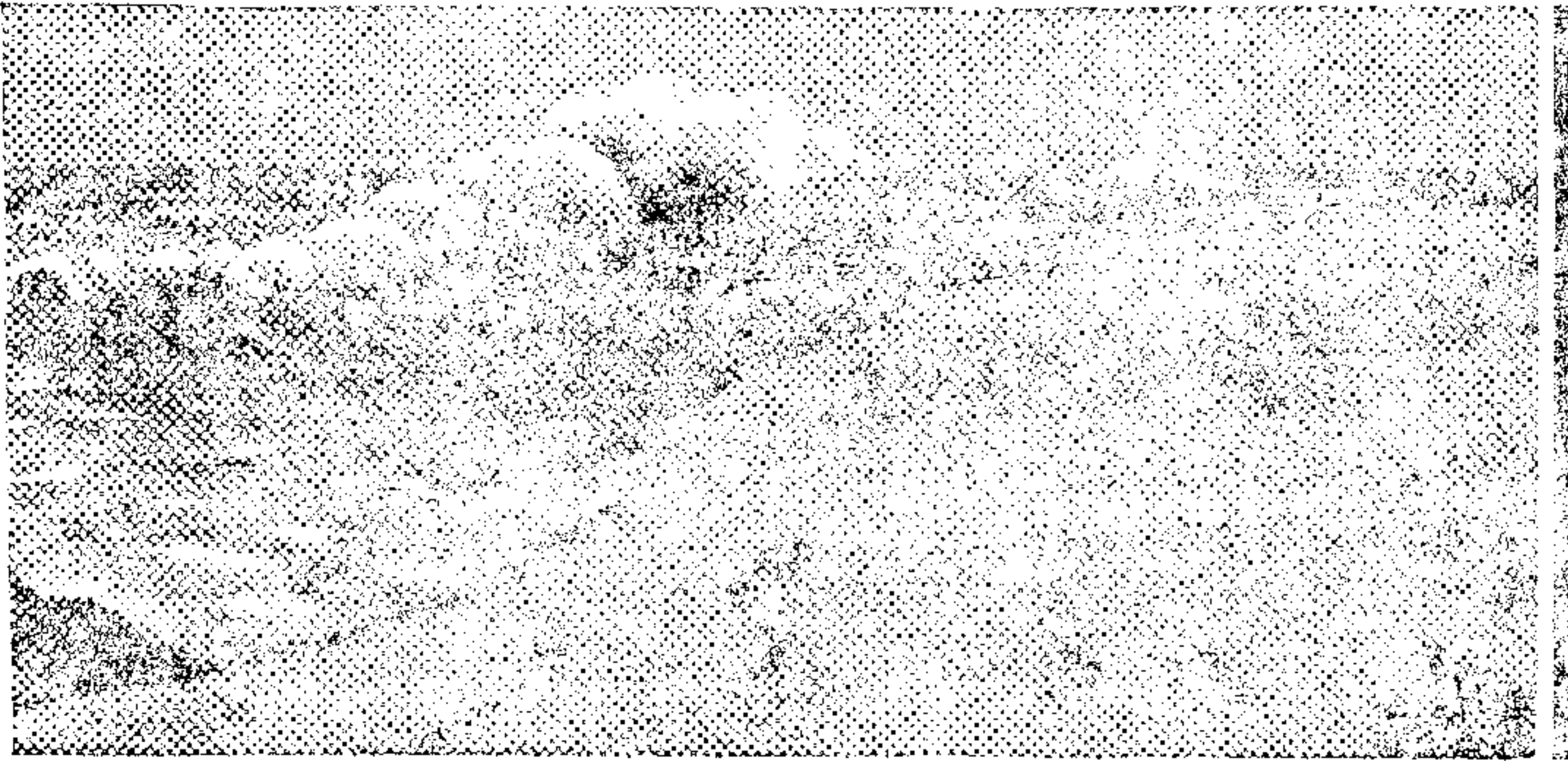
The Nyāya also believes in the authority of the Veda, but it regards the Veda as the work of God, and so challenges its authorlessness. Further, the Nyāya rejects the doctrine of the eternity of sound. For this view it gives three reasons: that sound has a beginning, that it is perceived by an organ of sense, and that, like everything else, it has attributes. It holds that every word is significant and that we understand its meaning when we hear its last letter. On hearing as a last letter *w*, we recollect the previous ones *c* and *o*, and understand the whole word *cow*. We 'understand' the object signified, by means of the conventional association between the word and its object.²³ The same sound may of course be uttered in different ways and with different accents. If we recognize a sound, as we do, when pronounced by different people at different

times, it is because of the identity of the specific character (*jāti*) of the sound which always accompanies it whenever it is uttered. The idea of *jāti* here is the same as the modern idea of a phoneme.

I have thus discussed some of the important views on silence and sound in Sanskrit literature. My object has been to show that in Sanskrit, silence and sound are not different, opposite and irreconcilable entities. They are both aspects of Brahman—one complementing the other. Silence is not mere passivity; it is not a rejection of cosmic activity. Silence does not reject the world, but sustains it. Inexhaustible, disinterested activity is possible only when man finds within himself silence. Unfortunately this silence is often confused with mental inactivity or laziness. The silence referred to in Sanskrit literature is the silence of the spirit, which is the condition of a greater knowledge and power. The inner silence is a first step towards true universality. When there is no sense of 'me' or 'mine', whatever is uttered in that 'silent' state will be charged with power and that becomes a *mantra*. In such an individual there is no separate ego to initiate anything: it is the Transcendent that moves out, as it were, through his individuality into the action of the universe. The 'sound' that emanates from true silence, is as potent as silence itself. Essentially this seems to be the view of silence and sound in Sanskrit.

²² *Mīmāṃsādarśanam*: The *Mīmāṃsā-sūtras* of Jaimini (with the commentary by Śabara and the coms. *Prabhā, Tantravārttikā, and Tūptikā*:- Anandashrama Sanskrit Series 97, Poona 1929), I, 1, 5

²³ *Nyāyasūtras of Gautama* (with the commentary by Vātsyāyana, Anandashrama Sanskrit Series 91, 1922), II, 1, 55



HUMAN TRENDS

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIETY: NEED FOR MUTUAL RESPONSE

There has been since independence in India, a phenomenal increase in the number of colleges and universities—and with that, of the debate over education. Many get exercised over the supposedly less attention being paid to secondary and elementary schools. If the larger section of the nation, they would ask, remains morassed in illiteracy, what good will it be to have a few very highly educated? Should we give higher education to a few and deny literacy to the masses? Others say in reply that higher education cannot be denied to those who seek it; and that there has been a great deal of demand for higher education. Furthermore, education should aim at the highest. The nation needs skill, learning, leadership of the highest order. Still, since truth seems to lie often in the middle of the road, both arguments would seem to have merits.

Literacy of the general populace should no doubt top our priorities; but the literacy of the laity cannot be easily defined: it is necessarily related to the society and time, to the demands made on response and awareness. The more complex the image of the society is in the individual consciousness, the more sophisticated should be the education received, as far as it prepares the recipient for a social role. It is

unthinkable that a society at any given time can strictly prescribe the quality and amount of education needed by the people, but ultimately the adequacy of an educational system has to be measured by what the society demands of the individual. For example, it is a fallacy to think that the Indian populace was largely illiterate before the British introduced English education. But Indian society did not then identify literacy with the mere ability to read and write. Before the advent of the British, Indian society had been for a long time in a state of medieval quiescence. The brāhmaṇas read the scriptures, studied the traditional grammarians and philosophers; the people at large read the epics and *purāṇas* (mythological books) or had them read out to them; they saw *yātrās* (a kind of folk-drama), *Rāmlīlas* (life and doings of Rāma represented in folk-theatrical performances), wept over the banishment of Rāma and rejection of Sītā: they found the affirmation of their faith in the triumph of the just and truthful. Popular education was in fact a lively contact with tradition, an example of a viable cultural ecology.

I am not trying to make a case for obscurantism (a term, like all other terms ending in 'ism', too often used uncritically),

nor denying historical dynamism; but the mere ability to read and write may in certain situations not be of any actual utility. After all, we still have very few road-signs, for instance; and most kinds of written instructions and interdicts are not paid much attention anyway. But, facetiousness apart, all educational planning should be undertaken with careful regard for the society and civilization it is to serve. Where do the roots of our educational system lead to? What nourishes them? What native soil? For too long a time, literacy in this country has been identified with the British-introduced education. This education, we have long been told, had to overcome much ignorance and superstition. But on the other side of the shield we find a paradoxical reality: English education itself created a new illiteracy, a new ignorance. The ability to read and write the vernaculars, the education of the village *pāṭhaśālās* (schools) was no longer relevant to understanding of the new order. Education, politics, law and its enforcement, civil and military administration, became limited to the chosen few who somehow could learn English and of these, only those who proved pleasing to foreign masters. English education indeed thus perpetuated a long-growing evil of Indian society: monopolization of higher learning by the few. For too long a time the scriptures and philosophical texts had remained closed books to the people at large. (How many of our people, for example, still have any idea of philosophical Hinduism?) The monopolization of education and learning by a priestly class, and restricted access to Sanskrit learning had produced a situation similar to that prevailing in other medieval societies—large-scale popular ignorance of the scriptures and philosophical texts, and the obscuring of their core and substance by soulless rituals and rites. The Reforma-

tion movements in sixteenth-century Europe were largely a matter of putting the Bible into the hands of the people, in their own language. What could compare with their joy and enlightenment at this discovery of the word and its spirit, after the centuries of domination of the mind of society by priestly rituals, of the intellect by the dull and barren disquisitions of the scholastics? Now in India, with English remaining an alien and increasingly obscure language to the people, and education in English a dull and barren ritual with no close contact with their lives, the prospect for a lapse into a new but similar kind of stagnation becomes indeed real.

There certainly are, it seems to me, strong medievalizing trends in our education. Education is becoming a matter of form without content, ritual without meaning. It has become a mere pursuit of degrees and diplomas, of honorifics to be prefixed or suffixed to names; it is perfunctory rather than functional. It gives diplomas and labels to the privileged few, enabling them to earn a certain social status. It leads to further social stratification; but even worse than that, to an intellectual and moral vacuity in the leaders of the society. It severs its links with quest and exploration, with the pursuit of knowledge as an ongoing process. Higher education in fact is threatened with the loss of its meaning, and for that matter it may better be called horizontal education, because its success is measured not by the height of mental development but by the length of its duration, with the stages of termination appropriately linked with pay scales and increment slots.

But true education is an onward, propulsive force, *leading* (for that is the etymological meaning of the word) the mind of the pupil along the paths of mental development and of moral refinement. It expands the minds of both the

teacher and the taught and is an exploration and quest on the part of both. When it is successful it places them at the threshold of new discoveries. It is never primarily meant to give a certain social status, for this becomes secondary when the music of ideas sounds in the soul. For after all, is not knowledge a joy and a melody, singing to the spirit ditties of no tone?

I do not, however, mean that the educated should become a bemused soul, merely drawing his sustenance from a subjective world. He should communicate with other souls and should have the opportunity to do so, because that is what education means. If the knowledge of one does not embrace many (and vice versa), what good is education to the society? Ideas must flow out of one soul to the other. The movement of ideas does not, however, have to be in one direction, it should be in both directions. It augments and refines itself in the process of giving and receiving.

There is a pernicious idea that has entered our educational institutions through the backdoors of indulgence and connivance—that education is a mass delivery system by which neat capsules flow out of the brief-case of the teacher to be caught and recorded by the students in various degrees of mutations. Everybody now likes the system; it saves the teacher from continuous homework and the student from any study at all, except intensive cramming on the eve of the examinations, which can give him what he wants—the degree, the certificate, the label. This creates a vicious circle, making the word *participate* taboo in the classroom. The student does not want to be a participant in the learning process, he wants to be a passive recipient: he does not want to do any work for the teacher; he will not respond to what is being discussed, if one can call a monologue a discussion. What is a teacher for if he would not digest the course content

for the student? 'Why sholde he studie and become a wood?'

Horizontal education turns the teacher-taught relationship, as it has long existed in India, upside down. The collective will of the student-body tells the teacher what to teach and how. The teacher is not supposed to ask any questions. He is to tell the students what the questions are likely to be in the examination and dictate to them the answers. The students like this system best and will not voluntarily change it for any other. If this system is to continue, it would make better sense to cyclostyle the 'lectures' and mail them to the student at home. It may add to the paper-bill and typing expense and all, but it would be economical for all parties; little transportation and lodging cost for the students (that is, their parents) and much saving in building maintenance cost for the institution, all pointing to the final solution; teaching by correspondence, the stay-at-home university. But where is the joy and benefit of listening to a better informed and more cultivated mind? What becomes of the stimulation of the intellect by the give-and-take method of learning? Where is the excitement and emulation of the classroom? Ay, where are they? Horizontal education is in reality education at a standstill, there is no progression. The students do not have to come up to any standard, the teacher must go down to theirs.

I am not trying to blame any party, be it the students, the teachers, or the educational administrators and policy-makers. I am only commenting on the situation as it prevails today: there is a shattering cynical attitude engrafted in the heart of the educational system which has transformed it into a system of mass delivery. It should be the other way round; it should be a system of mass *participation*. It was said wisely by the poet that we receive but what we give.

I do not want to end on a gloomy note. I am sure that our educational institutions in their growing numbers are bound to make an impact on society. But the society as their beneficiary should try to maximize their effectiveness. It should not try to dictate terms to them, because they have the vital need of being free of external interference. But basically both are inter-linked and the internal links should be kept alive and sustaining. We cannot yet forget that our educational system was imported from another culture and the process of indigenizing it has still to continue. A healthy natural growth must cover like green grass the scars and fissures of the graft. The society and educational system

should have knowledge of each other and the will to support interdependence. Each should know what the other demands and should be willing to fulfil that demand. When this unity of purpose is established, we may hope to see an end of the chronic chaos afflicting our educational system. It would then be, as it deserves to be, one of the best in the world. In music when the strings are not set properly there is noise instead of harmony. Much in our educational system is loose and askew, and some strings even snapped and contorted. Let them be straightened and set harmoniously.

—Dr. Kalyan K. Chatterjee

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970). References—*Gospel*: No. 1, p. 723; No. 2, p. 509. *Great Master*: No. 3, p. 586; No. 4, p. 452.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. I (1962), pp. 411-2

'Yajna', wrote Mahatma Gandhi in the *Young India*, 'is a word full of beauty and power. Hence with the growth of knowledge and experience and with the change of time its meaning is likely to grow and change. "Yajna" literally means worship; hence sacrifice; hence any sacrificial act or

any act of service. And in this sense every age may and should have its own particular *yajna*. For mankind lives by *yajna*, sacrifice.' True to these thoughtful remarks, the concept of *yajña*, instead of shrinking or disappearing in this age of science and technology, had continued to grow and influence the spiritual thinking and striving of humanity even beyond the borders of India. The *Editorial* this month discusses the implication of this wonderful concept, against the background of its beneficent course through our religious history, and how it can be a powerful influence for good on our inner development in today's context and for the long future.

Of the many endowments that the evolutionary process has conferred on man, his brain—the centre of his emotional and psychological activities—is the most mar-

vellous. While the capacity for awareness and instinctual reactions he shares with sub-human beings, his capacity for rational and reflective thinking, moral and spiritual aspiration and effort seems to be man's unique possession. The story of the cerebral and mental evolution of man is most fascinating. 'The Mind of Man' is such an absorbing and illuminating story retold by Dr. Ralph W. G. Wyckoff, a scientist of eminence and Professor of Physics and Microbiology at the University of Arizona. A reputed author of several scientific works and numerous papers, Dr. Wyckoff is especially known for his contributions in the fields of crystallography and electron microscopy. Moreover, he is a long-time friend of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, New York, and devoted to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The second and concluding part of this article will be published in our next issue.

'True Religion Always Helps', by Swami Budhananda, is the second and concluding part of the Essay on Applied Religion whose first part appeared in our March issue.

'Truth to Oneself' by S. P. embodies a spirited exhortation to make truth the ideal and life conform to that ideal. We trust it will be appreciated by our readers. As the author said in his letter to us, the reader will have no difficulty 'in catching the stress and rhythm' provided he reads it 'according to punctuation and sense, without paying much attention to the arrangement of the lines', and provided he reads it, as should be done in reading all poetry, 'aloud or as if aloud'.

Silence and sound are generally understood as inseparably associated, the former as the absence of the latter. When silence

is raised to the mental level it is called tranquillity—the 'silence' of all thought-waves, which are caused mainly by sense-activity or its memory, or both. 'Tranquil, meditate on Brahman', says the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*. Because the realization of the true nature of Brahman—which alone confers perfect freedom and illumination—is possible only when the mind and senses are calmed perfectly. Though this silence is of the very nature of the transcendent Reality, still all activity, initiated by the primal 'sound' emanating from that Reality, also proceeds from It. By following the trail of that primal sound, one can reach the transcendent Reality. Though explained variously, this is the key idea behind the repetition of holy names and formulae, as a great aid in spiritual struggle. The Vedas and the various Hindu philosophical scriptures and systems dwell *in extenso* on this theme.

'Some Concepts of Silence and Sound in Sanskrit' by Prof. K. Subrahmanian, is a wide-ranging, erudite paper on this basic theme of the Hindu scriptures and spiritual practice. The author is Officer-in-charge, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Shillong, Meghalaya.

Twenty-eight years have passed since India became politically independent. While the Indian's national awareness has grown and become strong in the political field, in other important fields such as education it seems to be still in the incipient stage. For this the blame may facilely be laid on the educational system inherited from the erstwhile British masters. But truly the major share of the blame should be accepted by the Indian society and the educational planners in post-independence India. Education in independent India is yet to get a national soul of its own. When that happens, India may be said to have attained true independence. Because it is

education of the right type that integrates and undergirds the character and personality of an individual. Dr. Kalyan K. Chatterjee—Senior Reader and Head of the Department of English at Himachal Pradesh University, Simla—discusses constructively

the present dismal state of higher education in Indian universities, and the role of society and educational planners, in his thoughtful 'Human Trends' contribution: 'Higher Education and Society: Need for Mutual Response'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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

The book under review is remarkable in many ways. Its title is taken from a staggering simile used in the *Gita* for the terrible and yet fascinating Cosmic Form of the Divine, which had also been appropriately applied by Robert Oppenheimer to the blaze of the first atomic bomb blast. Rudolph Otto regarded the presentation of this Divine form in the *Gita* as the finest illustration of the 'Numinous' or 'Mysterium Tremendum' which he considered the core of the religious consciousness. The category of the Numinous is super-rational and transcendent; our author chooses to describe this often as the 'absurd'—and it is truly such from the standpoint of conventional empirical ratiocination. Again, Martin Buber's fixing up of the 'Thou' as against the 'It', as definitive of religion in its authentic attitude, has clearly influenced the author. In fact, all the profounder investigations of religion in studies of recent years, colour this perceptive approach.

The author, a Unitarian minister as well as student and teacher of World Scriptures, living in the southwestern U.S.A., has produced in this book a powerful argument for the Renewal of Religion. The plea is backed with a singularly informed, insightful and poetic review of the religions of the world, starting from the 'beautiful superstitions' of primitive religion, and going on to cover all the major religions of today except Islam and the Sufi movement. Included are poetic religion of the Vedas, the philosophical religion of the *Gita*, the Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Ethical Theisms, the humanitarian religions of the Buddha and Confucius, and the mystical perspective of Taoism. The survey is a vibrant and almost a dramatic ex-

position of the quintessence of these great movements of the spirit. This refreshing recovery is cast in the mould of the modern predicament of man and the emergent direction for man's redemption is luminously intimated. The significant past is woven into the fabric of a vital drive towards Renewal. In a way the book is 'Sacramental' in the special sense that the author attaches to the word.

Two lapses may be noticed in the otherwise flawless performance. The omission of Islam and the great Sufi movement is one. Secondly the ascription of the doctrine of transmigration of souls to Dravidian origins needs proof.

The reading of the book is a rewarding and strengthening experience. One wishes that the author knew of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR
Retired Professor of Philosophy
University of Mysore

HINDUISM: BY SWAMI GURUDASANANDA, Published by the Author, Sri Janaky Matha Ashram, 15 Ganapathy Nagar, Thanjavur, 1975, pp. 96, Price Rs. 3.50.

In this brief primer on Hinduism, the author outlines the nature and contents of the Vedas and Upanisads, the *smritis* (secondary or derivative scriptures), the conceptions of the four *ashramas* (stages of life) and *purusharthas* (values of life), and the four *varnas* (castes). He corrects many popular notions about heaven and hell, karma and rebirth, life after death, etc. He concludes by pointing out two of the unique contributions of Hinduism: *adhikara* (fitness for entering on the path towards Brahman) and *ishta* (Chosen Ideal). We do hope the second edition of this book will be an enlarged one.

SRI M. P. PANDIT
Sri Aurobindo Ashrama, Pondicherry

THE ENTIRE AVESTA IS ONE WHOLE: By H. S. SPENCER, Published by H. P. Vaswani, 3 Sadhu Vaswani Path, Poona-411-001, 1975, pp. xii+111, Price Rs. 15/-.

Some western scholars speak of certain portions of the *Rig-veda* as having come from an earlier time and others from a later age. Needless to say, this is an unwarranted conclusion: there is a powerful unity of thought throughout the ten Books of the *Rig-veda*. Similarly, such scholars—with a background totally foreign to either subject—classify the Gatha portions of the Avesta as the work of the Prophet and other portions as of subsequent periods. The author of this book controverts this opinion, and proves with the help of internal evidence that the whole of the Avesta is of one inspiration.

The author also draws interesting parallels between certain conceptions in the Avesta and those in the Tantras; e.g., Thousand-pillared Home, and Thousand-petalled Lotus.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA: BY GEORG FEUERSTEIN, Published by Rider and Co., 3 Fitzroy Sq., London W-1, 1974, pp. 224, Price £ 2.15

The author of this book is on firm ground when he points to Yoga and spirituality as the soul of the Indian civilization. He divides the several lines of Yoga into two broad categories: mythic, that is, those that turn away from the world and end in a total withdrawal into the Beyond or the Immutable; and holistic, that is, those that seek to integrate the values and powers of Spirit and Matter and perfect life in the mould of the Divine. One may or may not agree with this classification. One may also disagree with him in his conclusions on the Aryan invasion of an indigenous people and the synthesis between their religious traditions. Still, his study of the Patanjala Yoga, Hatha Yoga, the contribution of the Tantra, the place of *siddhis* (occult powers) in yogic development, is an outstanding contribution to the psycho-history of Indian civilization.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

KARTTIKEYA THE DIVINE CHILD: BY RATNA NAVARATNAM, Published by Bharatiya

Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7, 1973 pp. xxiii + 271, Price Rs. 6.00

The legend of the manifestation of the Divine Force and Wisdom as the birth of Skanda dates in Sanskrit literature from the hymns of the *Rig-veda*. It undergoes significant variations in the Upanishads, the Tantras, and the Puranas, but the main character of Skanda-Kumara (Kumara being another of the many names of Skanda) being an embodiment of the Agni principle remains throughout. The author of this treatise examines the growth of the same legend in the South, in Tamil scriptures and classics, and traces their correlation. She dwells upon the cult of Muruga in the southern kingdoms of Tamil kings and in Ceylon, the literature that has grown up, the modes of worship and ritual and the pilgrim centres where the six-faced Divinity is specially worshipped. A book of historical and religious research.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

BENGALI

CHHOTADER SARADA DEVI: BY SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA, Published by Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta, 1976, pp. 48, Price Rs. 4/-.

To our knowledge Swami Lokeswarananda is the first author of a Life of Sri Sarada Devi for Children in Bengali. Written in sweet homely Bengali in 27 Chapters, the book presents the main aspects of her unique life in 48 pages and also some of her teachings.

The well-balanced tenderness, insight and circumspection which the author uses in presenting a life manifesting highest spiritual attainments are all respectfully adapted to children's power of understanding and assimilation without losing sight of the possibilities of their growth. The facts of her life as presented blossom naturally like flowers, and her teachings quietly spread like their fragrance.

Through the reading of this book, Sarada Devi will spontaneously grow in the consciousness of children as their great universal Mother, whom all can individually feel and claim as their very own.

The book, which fills a felt want, is animated by 23 beautiful pictures drawn by the reputed artist, Ramananda Bandyopadhyaya.

S. B.

NEWS AND REPORTS

UNITED CULTURAL INSTITUTE AND RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SALISBURY (RHODESIA)

REPORT: OCTOBER 1973 THROUGH SEPTEMBER
1975

Following pioneering work by Swamis Adyananda and Ghanananda in Africa, starting over forty years ago, Swami Nisreyasananda was the first to undertake permanent establishments in that continent for the Ramakrishna Mission. After several months' work in 1954, he returned in 1959 at the request of the Salisbury Study-Circle, and his work there has gradually continued and extended. The United Cultural Institute grew out of this work, and in 1972 was established the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, with rooms at 35, Rhodes Avenue. Until then, lectures and classes had been held in private homes.

During the period under review, all classes have been continued as usual, with of necessity some interruptions for the Swami's frequent visits to other places on invitation. Many of the latter have come from other countries, particularly the Republic of South Africa and Zambia. Lectures and classes are mainly based on the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-gita*, and works by eastern and western writers relating thereto or to similar spiritual themes.

An important feature of the work recently has been showing of motion-picture films of devotional interest. The film on Mirabai in (16 mm.) was shown to enthusiastic audiences wherever suitable projector could be had—about forty places in this period. Films, including some in colour, on appropriate subjects, were supplied by several Embassies and shown as parts of the Society's programmes. In view of the evident benefits from the above, some friends have donated to the Society a 'Super-8' Camera and Projector, both with sound attachments, plus a 16 mm. projector. Recently 16 mm. (black-and-white) films on Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi have been received for showing. Meanwhile the Society's collection of appropriate Slides has been growing, especially with additions kindly sent by Vedanta Centres of San Francisco, Sacramento, Berkeley, and Buenos Aires. Now more than a thousand slides, many in colour, are on hand, as well as three slide-projectors of different sizes and types.

Recently also, the Society brought out 5,000 copies of Vivekananda's *Essentials of Hinduism*,

for free distribution in this area, by kind permission of the publishers, Advaita Ashrama. A staunch devotee in Cape Town (South Africa), very generously did all the printing and binding free of charge.

The Society's Library is steadily growing; recently the family of an esteemed devotee of the Society whose death still grieves us, donated a number of worth-while books out of her collection. Books also are coming from publishing Centres of the Ramakrishna Mission, as well as regular issues of four of the Journals therefrom.

The Society now owns six houses (in Rhodesia), some of which are being rented to help in financial support of the activities above noted. The latest house was acquired during the period under review.

Other Centres: The Swami, as above noted, has to cover great distances to answer the many requests from devotees. In *Zambia*, there are three Ramakrishna-Vedanta Centres. In Lusaka, the Capital of the country, spacious land was given at nominal price by the Corporation; a Hall (with two good rooms with all conveniences) to seat about 300 people, is nearing completion; and a small library has been opened. At Luanshya, where the Vedanta work first started in this country, the Centre owns two houses; and the chairman of its Committee has purchased a 16 mm. Projector for audio-visual work. The Centre at Mufulira has its own building, and this year it maintains two African High School students.

In *South Africa*, besides items above noted, the groups in Johannesburg and Cape Town have put in Fixed Deposit the sum of about Rand 3,500—the interest to be used annually for the work. In Pietermaritzburg, construction of the Vedanta Study Circle's Hall is progressing satisfactorily.

Immediate Needs: (1) For the *Library*: additional books, and book-shelves, etc. Also, sets of frequently used books, to be kept separately in Johannesburg (South Africa) and other places often visited by the Swami, where local groups continue to function. Until this latter can be accomplished, books will have to be carried by air from country to country—at great expense and trouble. (2) For the *Preaching and Religious Services Fund*, the interest from which is used periodically for such items as tape-recording apparatus, photographic equipment and films, etc.