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Cover :

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

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.



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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

[Sri Ramakrishna was telling of the various types of monks who used to visit Dakshineswar:] 'Ramawat "fathers"¹—men of fervent renunciation, devout and dispassionate "fathers"—began to pour in, in large numbers. Ah, what devotion and what faith they had and how steadfast was their service to the Lord! It was from one of them² that Ramlala³ came to me. That is a long story.

'That "father" served the image for a long time. He took it with him wherever he went. He cooked whatever he got by Bhiksha [begging] and offered the cooked food to it. That was not all; he actually saw that Ramlala ate or wished to eat something or wanted to go for a walk or insisted on the satisfaction of a fancy, and so on. In the company of the image he was beside himself with bliss and always remained "inebriated". I also saw Ramlala doing all that. I sat all the twenty-four hours of the day with the "father", and kept gazing on Ramlala.

'As days passed on, Ramlala's love for me went on increasing. As long as I remained with the "father", Ramlala felt happy—he played and sported; but as soon as I came away from that place to my room, he also followed me immediately there. He did not remain with the Sadhu [Jatadhari] although I forbade him to come. I at first thought it was perhaps a fancy of my brain. How could it otherwise be possible that the boy (in the image) loved me more than him—the boy worshipped by the Sadhu for a long time, whom he loved so dearly, and served so tenderly with devotion? But of what avail were these thoughts? I actually saw—just as I see you before me—that Ramlala accompanied me dancing, now preceding, now following me. Sometimes he impor-

¹ Ramawat: a denomination of worshippers of Sri Rama, founded by saint Ramana-
nanda. Ramawat sadhus are known as Babajis or 'fathers' throughout India.

² His name was Jatadhari. By him the Master was initiated in the *mantra* of
Rama, and from him he later received the image of the child Ramlala.

³ In northwestern India, boys and girls are affectionately called 'lala' and 'lali',
respectively. Therefore the image of the boy Rama, made of eight metals, was
called Ramlala by Jatadhari.

tuned to be carried in my arms. Again, when I took him in my arms, he would by no means remain there. He would go down to run hither and thither, collect flowers in thorny jungles or go to the Ganga to swim and splash water there. I said over and over again, "My child, don't do that, you will get blisters on your soles if you run in the sun; do not remain in water so long, you will catch cold and get fever." But he did not give ear to my words, however much I might forbid him. Unconcerned he went on with his pranks as if I was speaking to someone else. He would sometimes grin and look at me with his two eyes, beautiful like the petals of a lotus, or carry on his pranks with a vengeance. He would pout both his lips and grimace and make faces at me. I would then actually be angry and scold him, "You rascal, wait, I will give you a sound beating today and pound your bones to powder." Saying so, I would pull him away from the sun or from the water and then cajole him by giving him this thing or that and then ask him to play within the room. Again, finding it impossible to restrain his naughtiness, I would sometimes give him a slap or two. Thus beaten, he would pout his beautiful lips and sob and look at me with tears in his eyes, when I would feel pained. I then took him affectionately on my lap and cajoled him. I actually saw and acted thus.

'One day I was going to bathe, when he took an obstinate fancy to go with me. What could I do? I took him with me. Then he would not come out of the water. He turned a deaf ear to all my pleadings. At last I became angry, immersed him in the water and said, "Be now in the water as long as you like;" and I actually saw that he panted and writhed under the water. Seeing him suffer thus and thinking to myself, "What have I done?" I took him out of water onto my lap.

'It cannot be described how much I felt pained for him on another occasion and how much I wept. That day Ramlala was obstinately demanding something to eat, and I gave him some parched paddy not properly husked, in order to pacify him. I then found that his soft and delicate tongue got lacerated by the husk of the paddy as he was eating. Dear me! What a great pain I felt then! I took him on my lap, wept loudly and taking hold of his chin, sobbed out the words, "I was so rash and foolish that I did not at all hesitate to put such contemptible food into the mouth which mother Kausalya used to feed solicitously with such soft delicacies as butter, thickened milk and cream, lest they should hurt him.'"

ONWARD FOR EVER!

Desires of materialisation, that is, being dragged down more and more to the plane of mechanical action, belong to the animal man. It is only when the desire to prevent all such bondage to the senses arises that religion dawns in the heart of man. Thus we see that the whole scope of religion is to prevent man from falling into the bondage of the senses and to help him to assert his freedom. The first effort of this power of Nivritti [turning inwards], towards that end, is called morality. The scope of all morality is to prevent this degradation and break this bondage. All morality can be divided into the positive and the negative elements; it says either, 'Do this' or 'Do not do this.'...

Now this morality is only possible if there be a liberty to be attained by man. Apart from the question of the chances of attaining perfect liberty, it is clear that the whole universe is a case of struggle to expand, or in other words, to obtain liberty. This infinite space is not sufficient for even one atom. The struggle for expansion must go on eternally until perfect liberty is attained. It cannot be said that this struggle to gain freedom is to avoid pain or to attain pleasure. The lowest grade of beings, who can have no such feeling, are also struggling for expansion; and according to many, man himself is the expansion of these very beings.

Swikhandh

SANKARA'S PREFACES TO HIS COMMENTARIES ON THE UPANIŞADS

EDITORIAL

I

Śaṅkara, sage and philosopher, reformer and rebuilders of Vedāntic Hinduism, is unique among Indian spiritual teachers. Even after more than a thousand years, the powerful influence he shed on India's religion and history can be clearly felt. His great commentaries and other works are still studied and taught at ancient and modern seats of learning, and a vast section of Hindus knowingly or unknowingly follows the course of discipline laid down by him. The great pontifical seats which he founded in the four corners of India, as well as his ten monastic orders, are even today living and flourishing. Without Śaṅkara's appearance at that critical juncture of Indian history, it is difficult to conceive how Hinduism could have been saved from catastrophe.

The contemporary scene, as Śaṅkara surveyed it with his keen prophetic vision, was that of a religion weakened by disunity, purposelessness, and an extreme addiction to Vedic ritualism (notably the *karma-kāṇḍa* as advocated by the Mīmāṃsakas) — the whole structure meanwhile under heavy attack from heterodox faiths such as Buddhism. So Śaṅkara began by appealing to the authority of the Upaniṣads to show that Brahman, in its conditioned and unconditioned aspects, is the one real goal of all worship and prayers. Then against this unifying background of Brahman or the Supreme Reality, Śaṅkara advocated and instituted the worship of the six important deities—Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Skanda, Śiva, Viṣṇu, and the Divine Mother — and to guide the individual's spiritual life he taught primarily the paths of knowledge and devotion. By

his marvellous commentaries on the major Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-sūtras*, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he reconstituted a strong philosophical foundation for the bewildered Hindus. Again, through these commentaries and numerous dialectical debates, he refuted the arguments of the Buddhists, Mīmāṃsakas, and other chief opponents, and won back to Vedāntic Hinduism a great deal of lost ground.

Among these, nevertheless, his greatest achievements are undoubtedly those brilliant commentaries, which were entirely pioneering work. Before Śaṅkara there may have been sporadic and limited efforts in the direction of exegetical interpretation of these triple canonical texts. But unfortunately, none of these commentaries is available to posterity, nor were any even to Śaṅkara, so far as known. Through his versatile learning and mystical insight, Śaṅkara achieved unique success in revealing the deep significance of these scriptures. All commentators who came after him, and built their own separate schools, followed the trails made by Śaṅkara, though obviously differing with him in their conclusions. Referring to the striking fact that Śaṅkara had completed his writings by the age of sixteen, Swami Vivekananda paid this tribute: 'The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy.'¹ A noted modern Indian thinker concluded thus a learned essay on the essentials of Śaṅkara's philosophy:

'The greatness of Śaṅkara's metaphysical achievement rests on the intensity and splendour of thought with which the search for reality is conducted, on the high idealism of spirit with which he grapples the difficult problems of life, and on the vision of

a consummation which places a divine glory on human life.'²

II

Here however, we would like to concentrate on the prefaces that Śaṅkara has written to his Upaniṣadic commentaries. Two of them contain invocatory verses, and in one of these he not only salutes the supreme, all-pervading Reality, but also the ancient teachers who had expounded these scriptures. Further indications of this his spirit of humility shine through such phrases as—that what he is going to write is a 'brief commentary', and that what he explains therein is 'to the best of our understanding'.³ Again, when an Upaniṣad begins with a dialogue between a teacher and disciple, Śaṅkara thus explains the significance of that format:

'However, the subject matter (of the inquiry) being subtle, the presentation in the form of questions and answers of the student and teacher, leads to easy comprehension; and it is also shown that the subject (of Brahman-knowledge) is not attainable through mere logical discussions.'⁴

Śaṅkara almost invariably tells us in each preface how the Upaniṣad in question is linked with a particular part of the Vedas. He however never forgets to remind us that the Upaniṣad has the sole function of teaching the Knowledge of Brahman, and has nothing whatever to do with ritualistic observances. Furthermore,

² *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* (Ed'l board under the chairmanship of S. Radhakrishnan, Pub. by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Ruskin House, Museum St., London, 1967), Vol. I, p. 284

³ Preface to the commentary on *Kātha-upaniṣad* [K.U.]; also *vide* prefaces to *Taittirīya-upaniṣad* and *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* [C.U.]

⁴ Preface to the com. on *Kena-upaniṣad* [Ke.U.]. He also says that such question-answer mould is 'for eulogizing the knowledge (taught in the Upaniṣads)' [*vide* preface of *Praśna-upaniṣad* commentary.]

¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. III (1960), p. 265

he generally discusses four important topics, namely: the preliminary questions (*anubandha*), the derivation of the word *upaniṣad*, the impossibility of rituals (*karma*) becoming means to liberation, and the incompatibility of Karma with knowledge. An invariable feature of his commentaries—namely the positing of plausible objections by opponents, and their rebuttal from his own nondualistic standpoint—is also often seen in these prefaces. Here, we will take up the above-noted four main topics one by one, for a brief study.

(1) *Anubandha*:

Any Vedāntic treatise has, by ancient tradition, at the outset to state and clarify these four preliminary questions, namely:

(a) What are the qualifications of the competent student (*adhikārī*) thereof?

(b) What is its subject matter (*viśaya*)?

(c) What is the connexion between the subject and the treatise (*sambandha*)?

(d) What is the end to be attained or the benefit to be derived (*prayojana*) from the study? If these questions are cleared up at the beginning of a text, the student becomes more readily interested in its study. Śaṅkara—competent Vedāntic exegete that he is—almost always discusses afresh these issues in his prefaces, before proceeding with the body of the commentary.

(a) The *competent student* of the Upaniṣads is he who possesses a keen faculty of discrimination between the real and the unreal, has intense dispassion towards any kind of enjoyment, is possessed of great self-control, ethical virtues and calmness, and yearns for perfect freedom. Śaṅkara emphasizes all of these qualifications in concise and stirring phrases. (He brings out the need of these in the seeker, as we shall see later, in the very derivation of the word *upaniṣad*.) Says Śaṅkara, for instance, in two of the prefaces:

'One who is eager to rid himself of the suffering and delusion of *samsāra*

(relative existence), created by ignorance, and attain Supreme Bliss, is entitled to read this Upaniṣad.'⁵

'... he who is pure in heart and free from desires, and who, on account of the good tendencies produced as the result of meritorious work done in this or in a previous birth, cultivates detachment from external and transitory actions, characterized by means and ends, alone makes inquiries into the nature of the innermost Self (which is the subject-matter of the Upaniṣad).'⁶

(b) The *subject* of every Vedānta text—what to speak of the Upaniṣads—is the declaration of the pure and perfect nature of the Self and Its identity with Brahman, the ultimate Reality. There may however be—and to be sure, are—other topics which the Upaniṣads and other Vedāntic treatises discuss. But these are of secondary importance. In his prefaces, thus, Śaṅkara leaves no doubt as to the purpose and import of each and all of the Upaniṣads: the Knowledge of Brahman which itself means liberation. 'And the subject matter of the Knowledge [as taught in the Upaniṣad]', says Śaṅkara in his *Kaṭha*-commentary preface, 'is also shown to be a characteristically unique thing, namely, the supreme Brahman that is the indwelling Self.' Again in his preface of the *Taittirīya*-commentary, Śaṅkara concludes that the teaching of that Upaniṣad—as also of others—can, if strictly followed, bring about liberation by destroying ignorance:

'Therefore, liberation consists in continuance in one's own Self, following on the cessation of the real cause [of bondage], namely, ignorance, desire and activity. The Self, in truth, is Brahman. And from the knowledge of Brahman follows liberation consisting in the eradication of ignorance. Hence is commenced this Upaniṣad which is calculated to lead to the acquisition of the Knowledge of Brahman.'

⁵ Com. on *Īśā-upaniṣad*

⁶ Com. on *Ke. U.*

(c) *Sambandha* is defined by Sadānanda, a fifteenth-century teacher of non-dualistic Vedānta, following the traditional form, as the connexion existing between the Ātman-Brahman identity to be realized, and the evidence of the Upaniṣads that establishes it. He says this connexion is 'as between a thing to be known and that which tells of it' (*bodhya-bodhaka-bhāva*). In his preface to the *Māṇḍūkya*-commentary, for instance, Śaṅkara says that the four *anubandhas*—of which *sambandha* is one—which are applicable to Vedāntic treatises, are applicable to this Upaniṣad also (as to the others). Yet, as a commentator, he felt it his duty to state them afresh in that context. 'In this connexion', he says, 'it is to be noted that by the very fact that a scripture, (whether an Upaniṣad or a treatise on it), reveals the spiritual disciplines conducive to the goal, it becomes endowed with a subject matter; and from this fact it indirectly fulfils the conditions of a Vedāntic treatise, by pointing out a distinct relationship, a subject matter and the utility [of its study].' Again, in his preface to the commentary on the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, he speaks of the *sambandha* as the relationship existing between the means and its end. Similarly, Ānanda Giri's gloss on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* makes it clear that the relationship shown in Śaṅkara's preface, between the teachings in the Upaniṣad and the goal of self-knowledge is, again, as between means and end.

(d) The *goal* to be attained or the benefit to be derived from the study of the Vedāntic text is the removal of ignorance obscuring the awareness of identity with Brahman—and thereby the gaining of infinite bliss and freedom. Misery and death are conquered by such knowledge. Duality disappears altogether. In his preface to the commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya-*

upaniṣad, Śaṅkara very tersely says, 'The end in view is the realization of nonduality—*advaitabhāvaḥ prayojanam*.' He explains and elaborates on the goal to be attained by Upaniṣadic study, in his preface to the *Īśā-upaniṣad* commentary:

'Therefore the mantras of the *Īśā-upaniṣad* reveal the true nature of the Ātman and thereby destroy the natural ignorance regarding It. Further, they produce in us the knowledge of the oneness of the Ātman by means of which we can uproot grief, delusion, and other characteristics of *samsāra*.'

(2) *Etymological meaning of Upaniṣad*:

Since Sanskrit is a most versatile and comprehensive language, the word *upaniṣad* has several etymological as well as traditionally accepted meanings. One of its simplest literal meanings is—a knowledge learnt sitting close by the teacher. The word occurs at several places in the texts of the Upaniṣads themselves,⁷ where Śaṅkara gives somewhat differing interpretations, as contrasted with his uniform ones in the prefaces. One of its more common derived meanings is 'secret doctrine'. Because the knowledge of the innermost Self, taught by the Upaniṣads, is profound and not comprehensible by ineligibles, it is said to be a secret wisdom. In one instance Śaṅkara gives the word *upaniṣad* the meaning of 'concentration and meditation'. However, as Śrī Dramiḍācārya, a pre-Śaṅkara thinker and commentator, interpreted the word to signify the knowledge of Brahman which destroys the beginningless ignorance, Śaṅkara seems to have caught that idea and elaborated upon it.

We find Śaṅkara's most complete and convincing etymological derivations of the word *upaniṣad* in the preface of his *Kaṭha*-commentary. To quote this in part:

⁷ *Vide* for instance: *Brhadraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, II. 1. 20; *C. U.*, I. 1. 10; 13. 4; *Ke. U.*, IV 7

'The word *upaniṣad* is formed by adding the suffix *kvip* and the prefixes *upa* and *ni* to the verbal root *sad*, which means to *loosen*, to *destroy*, and to *attain*. The word denotes the Knowledge of the Entity (that is, Brahman) sought to be established by the book we are about to explain.

'By what etymological process does the word *upaniṣad* signify that Knowledge? We reply: This Knowledge is called *upaniṣad* because it *shatters*, *kills*, and *destroys avidyā* (ignorance), the seed of *samsāra*, in those seekers after liberation who, having lost all thirst for objects seen and heard of, *approach (upasad)* the Knowledge to be presented hereafter, and cultivate it with utter firmness and devotion...

'Or the Knowledge of Brahman, *Brahmavidyā*, is termed *upaniṣad* because it is a means to the attainment of Brahman. It enables seekers of liberation who are endowed with the above-mentioned qualities to attain the Supreme Brahman...'

In this context, as specially applicable to the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara says that a third meaning of the word *upaniṣad* can be the *agnividyā* (Knowledge of Fire) obtained by Naciketas through his second boon from Yama, the God of Death. Towards the end of his preface for the *Taittirīya*-commentary, Śaṅkara gives another possible meaning of *upaniṣad*. He says that by *upaniṣad* is meant the highest wisdom, because 'the highest good is proximately embedded in it'.

To a question about students' practice of applying the word *upaniṣad* even to the books teaching the knowledge, Śaṅkara gives a convincing reply:

'...there is no fault in such use of the word. The meaning of the verbal root *sad*, as has already been stated, is the destruction of *avidyā*, the cause of *samsāra*. This is possible only through Knowledge and not merely through a book. But the book, also, serves the same purpose, namely, the establishment of the Knowledge of Brahman; it is therefore properly designated by

this name. For instance, one uses such an expression as "The clarified butter is, verily, life." [What is meant thereby is that the clarified butter nourishes life.] Therefore the word *upaniṣad* means primarily Knowledge, and secondarily the book.'⁸

(3) *Karma (Ritual) Never a Means of Liberation:*

For at least two very important reasons, Śaṅkara seems to have taken a very stern stance against Karma or ritualistic action. Firstly, at the time of his advent, Hinduism was dominated by the influence of the Mīmāṃsakas. Jaimini, their foremost guru, had gone to the extent of declaring that since the Vedas teach ritualistic action, their portions, such as the Upaniṣads, which have no bearing on Karma, are meaningless. Orthodox followers of Hinduism sought to overcome misery, bondage, and death, not by realizing the immortal Ātman, but by trying to get to different heavens through the performance of sacrifices. Śaṅkara wanted to wean his co-religionists from a ritualistic preoccupation—whose results were as doubtful and ephemeral as anything else connected with this world or an after-life—to the path of knowledge and realization, with the goal of liberation attainable even here, as taught by the Upaniṣads.

Secondly, Śaṅkara wanted to dissociate the Upaniṣads, which deal with the knowledge of the Self and Its identity with the Supreme Brahman, completely from any lingering connection with the ritualistic portions of the Vedas, notably the Brāhmaṇas. The Upaniṣads, as most of our readers are likely to know, come at the end of the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas ('forest books' dealing with ritualistic symbology and meditations), and thus a bit of ritualism peeps, as it were, into them. Śaṅkara wanted to cut this 'umbi-

⁸ Preface to the commentary on *K. U.*

lical cord' of the Upaniṣads and divest them of all ritualistic leanings. This, we know, he did with remarkable success in process of writing his invaluable commentaries on them.

Almost invariably, Śaṅkara makes it unambiguously clear in his prefaces, that the Upaniṣad on which he is to comment, though occurring in the ritualistic section of the Vedas, has nothing to do with Karma. Karma, whether ritualistic or even the so-called philanthropic, springs from selfish desire, which again is rooted in ignorance. Since the Upaniṣads teach the true nature of the Ātman, whose knowledge destroys ignorance altogether, they are opposed to ritualistic Karma. Furthermore, Karma depends upon the multiplicity of agent, action, accessories, and results. On the contrary, the knowledge taught by the Upaniṣads brings about nondual consciousness where there is no room for diversity. In his preface to the commentary on the *Īśā-upaniṣad*, for instance, Śaṅkara argues vigorously:

'The *mantras* beginning with *Īśāvā-syam* in the Upaniṣad are not to be used for ritualistic action, because they reveal the true nature of the Ātman, which cannot be attained as a result of any action... the Ātman, in its real nature, is pure, sinless, nondual, eternal, incorporeal, and omnipresent, and therefore the knowledge of It is in conflict with work...

'Furthermore, the Ātman, as described above, cannot be connected with an action, because It is not something that is attained, created or produced through the process of purification or transformation; and also because It is not of the nature of a doer or an enjoyer.'

In his preface to the *Aitareya*-commentary—perhaps the longest of all prefaces by him — Śaṅkara takes on the Mīmāṃsaka adversaries and refutes systematically their arguments. In the process, he asserts very daringly and pointedly that not even the

Vedas can command a *jñānin* (man of wisdom) to perform action! He says:

'A man endowed with the knowledge of the Ātman cannot be commanded by anyone to engage in action; for the Vedas, the authority for such an injunction, have come out of his Self. No one can be directed by words that are the product of his own wisdom. An ignorant servant cannot order about his master endowed with much knowledge.'

However, Śaṅkara does admit that disinterested performance of actions brings about purification of mind, which gradually leads to complete renunciation of desires, inwardness, and the attainment of nondual knowledge. The preface of the commentary on the *Kena-upaniṣad* says in part:

'When all these rituals and meditations described above are faithfully performed, they tend to purify the mind of the seeker of liberation who is free from desires. On the contrary, he who performs the actions laid down in the Vedas and other scriptures, but cherishes desires and is devoid of knowledge, follows, as a result, the Southern Path and returns to *samsāra*.'

(4) *Karma and Knowledge Incompatible*:

If Karma alone is incapable of bringing about an end of ignorance, and deliverance from bondage, it may still be deemed capable of that function if combined with knowledge. There seems to have prevailed at the time of Śaṅkara, such an opinion and with considerable following. The ritualistic meditation, characterizing the *Āraṇyaka* books and the *vānaprastha* stage of life (householder's retirement to the forest), seems to lend support to such a belief. But in Śaṅkara's opinion, such a 'marriage' between ritualistic Karma and the knowledge of the Ātman, is utterly incompatible—like the coexistence of darkness and light. In his different prefatory discussions of the Upaniṣadic commen-

taries, he refutes in various ways this superficially attractive idea.

In his preface to the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad* commentary we read:

'...not even in dream can Karma proceed side by side with the vision of the identity of the Self with Brahman. Knowledge brooks no temporal limitation, as it has no association with any time and is not dependent on definite causes whereas the performance of Karma is bound up with various rules about time and other factors.'

Śaṅkara's preface to the *Kena-upaniṣad* commentary also 'has a strong refutation of this idea of combining Karma with knowledge, in which he quotes passages from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* in support of his argument. Then he proceeds

to show further reason for the incompatibility of these:

'Another reason...is that the knowledge of the non-duality of the inmost Self and Brahman is antagonistic to Karma. Karma presupposes the knowledge of the distinction between doer and results, but the unitive knowledge of the inmost Self and Brahman puts an end to the perception of distinctions. Therefore Karma and the Knowledge of the inmost Self cannot coexist.'

Thus these prefaces, written in Śaṅkara's sparkling and lucid style, shed bright light on the true spirit of the Upaniṣads, and at the same time provide a perspective of nondualistic doctrines as advocated by this great philosopher-sage of ninth-century India.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
24/7/27

My dear—,

I have duly received yours of 19 July as well as the earlier one. I could not reply all this time, as I was busy in many affairs. So please don't mind at all. ...Accept my blessings and good wishes which are always there towards you, and convey the same to C— and others at the Ashrama.... I am so-so....

Here it has started raining again from yesterday.

I have, as far as I could, answered your questions. I hope the answers will be able to allay your doubts to a certain extent.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

[Questions]

1. '...the supreme Self or the divine Lord who is indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss resides in Its own nature of pure Consciousness in the space or the ether existing in the aperture in the crown of the head. The coiled power has a great attraction for It, or to put it in another way, the divine Lord is continually attracting it.'¹

¹ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1952), p. 367

In what manner is it possible to understand or experience this attraction?

2. In *Saṭcakra*, *Śivasamhitā*, and other Yoga-scriptures, it has been specified that in the first *cakra* (*mūlādhāra*) the lotus has four petals, and it has been described that *kuṇḍalinī* rises (awakens) from the lotus of *mūlādhāra*. But seeing the picture in Revered Swamiji's [Vivekananda's] *Rāja-yoga*, it seems that *kuṇḍalinī* is rising from the *svādhiṣṭhāna* lotus (having six petals). I can't understand the reason for this divergence.

3. What are the signs preceding the *kuṇḍalinī*'s ascent to the *ājñā-cakra* (psychic centre between the eyebrows)? That is to say, what kinds of experiences occur before it rises to that centre?

4. 'The supreme Self is directly known and the individual experiences samādhi when the mind comes up here. There remains then but a thin transparent screen separating the supreme Self and the individual self.'²

Where does the Jīvātman (the embodied self) reside? The Jīvātman surely is itself the Paramātman (the supreme Self). When *kuṇḍalinī* is raised to the head, then the Jīvātman itself assumes the nature of the Paramātman; or manifests as the Paramātman? Furthermore, are not the visions of gods and goddesses perceived in the *cakras* of the fourth and fifth planes, before the mind rises to the centre between the eyebrows, called samādhi?

For how many days does that samādhi last which occurs when *kuṇḍalinī* first arrives at the *ājñā-cakra*; and does it become necessary to bring down the mind of such a man, and to feed him? Or does it not?

What is the meaning of the *antarātman* (inner self) and where does it abide?

5. Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] used to say, 'If you feed an intoxicated man with the water in which rice has been washed, you will see, his intoxication disappears.' By feeding such water, will alcoholic intoxication also disappear—or only some other intoxications? Or is there some other implication in this?

6. Continually for about seven years I have been mostly seeing at the time of meditation, and in dreams, a vulture, or crow in flight. What does this signify?

7. During that samādhi which occurs when the *kuṇḍalinī* first rises to the *ājñā-cakra*, cannot the aspirant remain in the sitting posture?

[Answers]

1. How the Lord is attracting the *kuṇḍalinī* power, and rising whence that power mingles with the Paramātman in which place—such things are understandable by him for whom samādhi has become natural. It is not possible to explain this, and make him understand, who has never experienced samādhi. For it is a matter of experience, and not one to be comprehended through reasoning.

2. Whatever is written in *Śivasamhitā* and other books—that is, *kuṇḍalinī* rises from the four-petalled *mūlādhāra* lotus—that is right. That very fact

² *ibid.*, p. 368

is written on p. 66 of Swamiji's *Rāja-yoga*, 'The goal of *prāṇāyāma* (control of vital energy through breath-control) is to rouse the *kuṇḍalinī* power, lying coiled up at the *mūlādhāra*.' The picture was made in America; therefore it has not been probably possible for the artists of that country to draw it accurately.

3. 'The Jīva attains samādhi if the mind rises to *ājñā-cakra* located between the eyebrows.'³ 'The supreme Self is so near then that it seems as if one is merged in Him, identified with Him. But the identification is yet to be. Henceforth if the mind comes down at all, it will at the most descend to the throat, or heart; below that it can by no means come.'⁴ If the desire to remain absorbed in Him day and night arises, it can be known to what stage the mind has ascended.

4. The abode of the Jīvātman is the heart—the *anāhata* lotus. The difference between the Jīvātman and Paramātman is this—as Thakur used to say: 'Bound down, Jīva; bond-free, Śiva.' It is said in the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* also, 'The wise say that the enjoyer (Jīva) is that which is united with the body, senses, and mind.' When the Paramātman feels, 'I am characterized by senses and mind', then He gets Jīvahood and experiences happiness and sorrow. If one is able to be detached from that [Jīvahood], then one dwells in the Paramātman—or the stage of 'attaining identity with Him' is reached.

The vision of gods and goddesses, seen in the *cakras* of the fourth and fifth planes, is also called samādhi. It is either *bhāva-samādhi* or *savikalpa-samādhi*.

If *kuṇḍalinī* of a Jīva (ordinary being) rises to the *ājñā-cakra*, his mind will not come down. After remaining uninterruptedly in samādhi for twenty-one days, there comes complete union with the Paramātman in the *sahasrāra*. If the preservation of the body of such an aspirant, in such a state, becomes divinely necessary, then through the Lord's grace all provision will be made for this, and the arrangement to bring his mind down from samādhi by giving him some food will also be done.

The Ātman, limited by mind and its various faculties and states, is the *antarātman*. Its dwelling—or the mind's—is from the centre of the eyebrows to the navel. The residence of *buddhi* (determinative faculty) is in the head; that of *manas* (faculty of considering pros and cons) is at the throat; of *ahaṅkāra* (egoism), at the heart; and of *citta* (memory) is at the navel.

5. The intoxication caused by *siddhi* and *gāñjā* (hemp, orally taken, or smoked) goes off through rice-washed water. Possibly the intoxication due to alcoholic drink also goes.

6. It is probable that during meditation and in dreams, one often sees the scene of the cremation ground. It is not bad, but good.

7. If on reaching the *ājñā-cakra* an aspirant experiences samādhi, then some persons can remain seated in that state.

³ *vide* loc. cit.

⁴ *vide* *ibid.*, p. 370



PROFILES IN GREATNESS

NĀRADA: THE DIVINE MINSTREL

‘Nārada?’ ‘Yes, Nārada.’ ‘Why, of all persons, Nārada?’ ‘Because he is unique.’ ‘Unique he is, as everyone is; but his uniqueness consists in carrying tales and making others fight, while he stands aside rubbing his hands in glee, is it not?’ ‘Well, that is a popular notion about that saintly soul.’ ‘Why only a popular notion? Was it not said of him from ancient times, *Nāradaḥ kalahapriyaḥ*—that he is fond of (watching others) quarrel?’ ‘Yes, there is an impression like that, but it is a wrong one. It is a great mistake on our part to accuse such a sage, to whom we owe so much, of such mean conduct. Though he in his generosity may forgive us, yet we will be doing a grievous wrong to ourselves and to others, to talk thus and forget the debt due to him.

‘Don’t you know, for instance, that Nārada was the preceptor of Vālmīki, through whom the classical Sanskrit poetry made its first appearance? The very first verse of Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* is eloquent testimony to the inspiration from Nārada for the composition of that immortal epic. It was Nārada, again, who advised the depressed Vyāsa to sing the divine melody called the *Bhāgavatam*. It was Nārada moreover who moulded the son of a demon king into the foremost of devotees, and gave us Prahlāda. Can it be denied that it

was Nārada who instructed and initiated the baby Dhruva into the path of God and enabled him to become the ever-shining, ever-steady pole-star? And it was Nārada, as we must know, who especially proclaimed the glories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa to the world. He was the author of several works, among which the *Bhakti-sūtras* (Aphorisms on Devotion) is the most authoritative of books on its subject. He was the first religious ‘missionary’; and he was the first among the sages to give us an autobiography.

‘Do you now see how much we owe to this celestial minstrel and how wrong we were in our first estimate of him?’ ‘Yes, I get a glimpse of his glories from what you say; but I should like to hear something more of his life.’

Well, you see, Nārada was a pioneer in several fields. There is a general charge brought against Indian sages, that they are only voices without forms. And there is something to it: we know precious little about the place, period, profession, or parentage of most of our sages, not excluding even the most celebrated ones like Vyāsa and Śuka. Even many historically later personages suffer from such obscurity. The reason for this is the general Indian apathy for personal reputation. The sages lived for certain principles, discovered certain

truths. They have left profound and prolific records on eternal principles. But on personal and temporal details they are indifferent and usually silent. All glory to their self-effacement! But thus we are denied the light of their living personal examples. There are only a few glorious exceptions to this general tendency. One is Nārada and another Vālmīki. We do get a fleeting glimpse of Vālmīki's early career as a highway robber, and of the circumstances which led to his transformation. Yet even this outline we get, not from his own works but from the *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*. As for Nārada however, we have plenty of material scattered through our religious literature, which if culled and co-ordinated can give us a wide perspective on that versatile personality. He himself has, in the *Bhāgavatam*, given us an inkling as to his earlier embodiments, and he is thus the first such great soul to leave us an autobiographical narrative. It may even be that his was the first autobiography on this earth. He is unique in many respects. If he be removed from our religious scene, much of our history and poetry will become mere dust. Now let us turn to him and hear him speak.

For our first scene, the stage is Indra-prastha (capital of the Pāṇḍavas) and the time, immediately after Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya (a royal sacrifice performed by a paramount ruler). Kṛṣṇa had cut off Śiśupāla's head for his scurrilous vituperation. But to the surprise of all, and in the sight of all, Śiśupāla's soul forthwith entered into Kṛṣṇa. This naturally shocked Yudhiṣṭhira since he had a thorough knowledge of Śiśupāla's crimes; and he asked Nārada the meaning of this phenomenon. Nārada then narrated Śiśupāla's earlier history starting from his fall from Vaikuṅṭha (the abode of Viṣṇu), where, though he was the Lord's servant, he was cursed by sages. During this account,

Nārada digressed to tell, with justifiable pride, the story in detail of his beloved disciple and spiritual child Prahlāda. In his *Bhakti-sūtras* Nārada says that the grace (or curse) of the godly can help (or hinder) the progress of the soul. For this statement, Prahlāda bears witness to the positive, and Śiśupāla to the negative aspect. Nārada congratulated the Pāṇḍavas, thus, for their having the grace, the constant concern, of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then since he himself had had experience of both the negative and positive results flowing from actions of the godly, he continued :

'In the last Kalpa (cycle) I was a Gandharva (celestial minstrel) named Upabarhaṇa. I was a popular chap among my fellows. Endowed with a charming form, sweet speech, and fine features, I was a favourite of the fair sex. I used to get drunk and indulge in amorous revelries. Once the elders arranged for a religious gathering and singing. All the Gandharvas were invited. I too heard of it, and went there surrounded by a group of belles and singing merrily. The elders felt offended at the indecorous manner of my appearance there, and they pronounced a curse on me, "Get thee hence, shorn of all thy excellences, and be thou born as a Śūdra for thy insulting ill-manners." In consequence, I was born as the son of a maidservant. There I was privileged to serve some saintly souls well versed in the Vedas, and by their grace, I was reborn as the son of Brahmā.'¹

The curse of the great thus brought the Gandharva down. He was born on earth as a poor human creature. This bitter experience did not make that blessed soul sour: he was destined for immortal roles. But because of this, what he says in his Aphorisms on Devotion about the place of

¹ *Bhāgavatam*, VII. xv. 69-73

the grace (or curse) of the wise has all the force and poignancy of personal experience.

Next the scene shifts. We now go to Vyāsa's Āśrama called Samyaprasa, on the western bank of the river Saraswatī—many ages ago. The time is just after sunrise. Vyāsa had risen early, performed his morning ablutions and devotions, and was lost in a reverie. He brooded over his contributions and achievements. They were very impressive. Perhaps none else had so much to his credit in any field. Yet, he was sad, he was disconsolate, his heart was empty. Why?—he was groping for an answer. But he had only a vague notion of what he lacked. At this very juncture there appeared Nārada. Vyāsa received him respectfully, they exchanged courtesies, and then Nārada congratulated the great poet for his achievements. But then he perceived a shade of sadness on the poet-sage's face and asked him the cause of it. Vyāsa confessed he was sad, said he could not diagnose the malady properly, and requested Nārada to discover the cause and suggest the remedy. The sage soon found that it was a case of emptiness of heart and heaviness of head. As a result of writing the *Brahma-sūtras*, Vyāsa's mind had become satisfied. Bnt man is not all brain, nor mind. He has a heart as well, and Vyāsa's was athirst. Nārada therefore advised him to sing the glories of Hari, the Lord and Enchanter of all hearts, fill his heart with love for Him, and show to weary souls the way of the heart. Concluding his counsel to Vyāsa, Nārada said, 'The wise say that the prime purpose and the imperishable fruit of austerity, spiritual education, sacrifice, beneficial advice, intelligence, and charity, are the singing of the glories of God.' (As the result, Vyāsa later composed the *Bhāgavatam*, which is soaked in the syrup of love for God, and he became himself whole and hearty.)

Then Nārada brought in a personal note. He said :

'In my previous birth, O Sage, I was the son of a servant-maid. During a rainy season a number of religious men came to the house where my mother was employed. My master deputed me, though a very little boy, to serve the guests. I did my duty as best I could : I spoke little, was quiet, disciplined, humble, obedient, and serviceable. They felt pity for me. I ate what was left after their meals. The sacred food and the holy company made my mind clear and pure ; and I developed interest in their spiritual pursuits. They used to sing the glories of God every day; by their grace I thus heard of the charming sports of the Lord which soon greatly attracted me. As days went by, I became more and more attached to these ideas. As my attachment grew, my mind became fixed on the Lord. Through the intensity of devotion, I saw my soul to be non-different from the Oversoul, and all this world of name and form to be mere shadows conjured up by the Lord's Māyā. For the two seasons of monsoon and autumn, every day I was privileged to hear the purifying glories of God sung by the great sages, and thus devotion to God became natural to me. As they prepared to depart after their short sojourn there, taking pity on me, still a boy of five, they set me firmly on the spiritual path which the Lord Himself had proclaimed. Thereby I got a glimpse of God's immense glories. O Sage, I am only giving you a hint as to how to be rid of all ills and pains, and that is by dedicating to God all that one does. Indigestion caused by eating butter cannot be removed by consuming more butter; bnt if the butter is treated with certain medicaments and then taken, the indigestion will disappear. Similarly, actions that bring in their wake more and more cares and worries, if done as offerings to God, will no more be

causes for bondage. On the contrary, they will redeem the soul from its thralldom to the body. If duties are done for pleasing God, then, from that practice will flow wisdom and devotion. The more one does one's duties for the sake of pleasing God, the more will one remember God and sing His glories and names. Salutations unto Him who manifests Himself variously. Salutations unto the Manifest and the Unmanifest. Whoever worships Him through dedicated duties becomes same-sighted. Finding me to have fulfilled His behest, the Lord endowed me with enlightenment, divine powers, and unflinching devotion. You also, O wise one, glorify the Lord. The thirst of earnest seekers can be quenched only by that. And in no other way can the miseries of the afflicted be removed.'²

Hearing this short personal account from Nārada, Vyāsa became eager to learn more about his earlier embodiment. So he asked Nārada: 'What did you do after the wise men, your teachers, had gone away? How did you spend the rest of your life? And how did you cast off your physical body? It is really surprising that Time, the devourer of everything, has not been able to deprive you of the memory of your previous birth which took place before the last deluge.'^{3a}

Nārada said in reply: 'This is what I, a mere child, did after my teachers had left. I was the only child of my mother; she was an ordinary woman, ignorant of the ways of the world and a servant-maid. She was very much attached to me who was a helpless boy. She wished very much to keep me happy and to make my future

bright and easy. But, what could she do, a servant in another's house? For, after all, the world is only a mere marionette in the hands of that Supreme Player. I was a lad of five, steeped in ignorance. I too lived there with my mother. One day at sundown, as my mother was going out of the house to milk the cow, she stepped on a snake, and, as fate would have it, the snake turned and bit her and she died. Accepting the calamity as a blessing of the Lord who wishes well of His devotees, I betook myself to the northern hills. A long way I had to go. I passed through villages, towns, mining areas, nomad habitations, farms, forests, hills, dales, lakes, and streams. On and on I went and at last reached a dense forest. A terrible place! Snakes were crawling, owls were screeching, jackals were howling. I was dead tired. I reached a river, drank a lot of water, bathed, offered oblations, and felt refreshed. In that solitary spot I sat under a spreading peepul tree and started meditating on the soul in the manner I had been instructed by my teachers. As I meditated on the lotus feet of the Lord Hari with a heart melting in devotion and with tears of beatitude rolling down my cheeks, gradually the Lord made His appearance in my heart. Bathed in blessedness, covered with horripilation, I was plunged in an ocean of bliss and was not conscious either of the Lord or of myself. Then missing the enchanting form of the Lord, saddened and shuddering I got up in haste; but restless for the vision, I again sat down and meditated. But try however much I would, I had no luck this time, and so became very sad and forlorn. As I was struggling hard again in the woods, a celestial voice accosted me and said: "Alas, in this birth, thou shalt not see Me again. It is hard for the immature to get a vision of Me. It was to whet thy desire that a vision was vouchsafed to thee once. He who

² *ibid.*, I. v. 22-39

³ *ibid.*, I. vi. 2-4. Deluge: the great flood said to occur at the end of each Kalpa (cycle of creation) when the whole universe is withdrawn into the Lord.

hungers after Me becomes pure in heart in course of time. Owing to the short association thou hast had with the wise, thou hast developed deep devotion unto Me. Divesting thyself of this mortal cage, thou shalt attain to the fellowship of My devotees. There shall be no diminution to thy devotion to Me and thy memory shall not fail thee even after the lapse of an aeon, by My grace.' So saying the voice fell silent. Thus blest, I made obeisance to the Voice without form. Thence I started a life of wandering on earth, singing His glories and dwelling on His divine deeds. I was happy and contented, and I waited patiently for the end of my days. And this came with lightning swiftness. I was, however, fully prepared for the event, for my mind was perfectly pure, as my soul was totally soaked in devotion to God. As I was being invested with the pure celestial body of a servant of the Lord, my mortal body fell. Mingling with the breath of Brahmā, who entered into Viṣṇu as He was about to begin His mystic sleep, withdrawing everything unto Himself, I too entered inside the Lord at the time of the great deluge.^{3b} After the lapse of a thousand Yugas when Brahmā emerged from Viṣṇu and engaged himself in the creation of the universe anew, Marīci (one of the Prajāpatis, who were the ten Lords of Creation—sons of Brahmā), I, and others were born of his limbs. From that time on, I have been going about the three worlds without any let or hindrance anywhere by the grace of the great Viṣṇu. I go about singing the hymns of Hari, playing on this lute given to me by my father. As I sing His glories, the Lord rushes into my heart, as a beloved would when summoned by the lover. This—the singing of the lays of the Lord—is the only ferry for those who are drowning in the ocean of sensuality. One constantly troubled by lust, greed, and other such enemies, is not comforted and consol-

ed so much by penances and abstentions as by the love of God. Thus, O sage, I have told you all about my life and work, about which you had asked me.

Then taking leave of Vyāsa, and having tuned his lute, the celestial bard resumed his wanderings. Verily blest is Nārada, who, singing God's glories to the accompaniment of his lute, enchants the suffering world.

We also learn from the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* that Nārada was a disciple of Sanatkumāra, one of the greatest of illumined sages, from whom he received instruction in the science of the spirit. He was well accomplished in all the arts and material sciences also. He had performed severe penances for a hundred years in the Himalayas, and had thus received the vision and the blessings of Viṣṇu. At one time he persuaded ten thousand sons of Dakṣa (one of the Prajāpatis) known as Haryaśvas, to embrace the life of renunciation. Dakṣa at this became afire with rage. He begat another ten thousand, known as Śabalāśvas. But these also Nārada converted to asceticism. Then the father could no longer endure it; and he cursed the sage, 'As thou hast wrecked my family and then again wronged me, thou shalt be a vagabond in the worlds, without any respite.' Even this curse Nārada accepted in good humour. And we must all be thankful to Dakṣa, for making Nārada an ever-itinerant minstrel rather than an anchorite. Since then, moreover, the sage seems to have made some modifications in his *modus operandi*, as result of his experience with Dakṣa. We no longer find him initiating people straightaway into sannyāsa. Henceforward we find him more and more as a preacher of the path of devotion. He composed his *magnum opus* the *Bhakti-sūtras*,

⁴ vide *Bhāgavatam*, I. vi

basing them on his own personal experiences, having also tested their validity through several devotees—especially Prahlāda. Further, as we have seen, he persuaded Vyāsa to write the sacred *Bhāgavatam*, which may well be considered to be an elaborate commentary on his *Sūtras*.

Thus Nārada is unique in the Hindu religious tradition. It is his melody that sweetens our spiritual lore, and it is his voice that we hear through Vyāsa and Vālmīki. This visionary and missionary of God is unique; and it is no wonder that the dull and the

purblind misunderstand him and call him a mischief-monger—unable as they are to glimpse the wonders of the inscrutable *līlā* (sport) of the Lord, which so often and so clearly *requires* troubles and quarrels to 'thicken the plot'. But he, in his boundless charity and magnanimity will, we can be sure, only smile at our smallness, shower his blessings on us, and lead us all on to the lotus feet of the Lord.

—Swami Siddhinathananda

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XII

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Most aspirants need a personal God on whom to centre their feelings. Most people find it difficult to continue spiritual practice for long without the aid of Divine Personality. They need a Personality to adore, to love, to serve, and by whom to be blessed and loved in return. There is nothing wrong in this. One can establish any kind of relationship with the Divine. One can look upon Him as the Lord, Father, Mother, Friend, Child, or Beloved. But what is most important is to look upon oneself as the Spirit, separate from the body. If you cannot look upon yourself as an impersonal entity devoid of a body and feelings, you should at least look upon yourself as the Spirit—which has here put on a pure subtle body. We should look upon ourselves as pure, non-material and luminous. So also, we should think of the Divine as luminous, blissful, and the embodiment of pure consciousness and love.

We are, for instance, beyond all ideas of sex in our real, divine nature. We are the spiritual children of God who in essence is

pure Spirit. We should not soil our relation to God by dragging it down to our worldly level of relationships. Our relationship with God must be something sublime, pure and permanent. It is an eternal relationship. We should know that it is not a mere imagination. We are related to God more intimately than we are to our nearest kith and kin.

Our relationship to God must be positive, not negative. People sometimes turn to God as a vague 'somebody', when they find they cannot love anyone else in this world. That should not be our attitude. God is the only Reality and our relationship to Him should be more real than any other relationship. We should turn to God only because He alone is our true lover, father or mother. This is certainly no mere imagination. We can realize this through spiritual practice and experience.

Divine grace manifests itself through our striving. Through striving we reach God. When we attain Him we get the highest knowledge and peace. It is as if God is

always telling us: 'Come to Me. I will give you illumination and bliss!'

*

There are two types of devotees: the baby-monkey type, and the kitten type. The baby-monkey clings to its mother, that is, to the Divine. Devotees of this type put their main stress on self-effort. The kitten wholly depends on its mother, expecting her to do everything for it. Devotees of this type wholly depend on the Divine, and put great emphasis on divine grace. The first type exercise greater will-power and reasoning. Those of the second type are more devotional and prefer to wait until they get the needed inner and outer help.

*

But there are a few who are tired of such personal relationships. They want to realize themselves as parts of a vast cosmic consciousness. They have a yearning for unity, a deep thirst for the Infinite.

Compare the two types. The devotional type thinks, 'Oh Lord, I am Thine.' We are nothing, Thou art everything. The monistic type thinks, 'I am Thyself.' He denies his individual finite existence and thinks himself to be one with the Infinite. But the bubble as bubble cannot become one with the infinite ocean. It is possible only when the bubble-form is dissolved. Until that takes place, as far as their ignorance is concerned, there is not much difference between the devotee and the monist. On the lower planes the two types seem to differ widely, on the higher planes the difference is very little.

*

The most important thing is to be in tune with the Divine. The way of achieving this is only of secondary importance. Let us strive our best and He will do the rest for us. Let us profit even by our mistakes. Blessed be the mistake if it makes us wiser. Sincerity is all that is needed. God looks at our sincerity and rewards us. Be sure of that.

In spiritual matters also, there is the law of supply and demand. The Divine gives us what we need, though not necessarily what we wish. God does not give us up even if we do not care for Him. He waits for the opportunity to manifest Himself to us. This is God's grace.

Let us be sincere and leave the fruit of our striving to Him. Even in spiritual life we should not be overanxious about the results. We should leave them to the divine dispensation. Our sincere striving is more important than the results. We must strive to realize Him through meditation, ethical culture, selfless service, etc. If, then, in a moment of exaltation we can come into union with the Divine, everything is achieved.

*

The duties of life should be looked upon as forms of spiritual discipline. Don't shirk them. You should discharge them in a spirit of worship. Work is worship.

*

Every day make it a habit to read some holy texts. These readings too are to be looked upon as a part of our daily spiritual practice. Do not put off your readings out of laziness. Find some time each day for these readings.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: DEVENDRANATH MAZUMDAR

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

'Who dares say there is no God? There must be a God, otherwise who saved Aghorenath?'—shouted Devendranath like a madman. His deep yearning for God had driven him hither and thither, but to no avail. Now sitting in the parlour of his maternal uncle, Harish Mustafi, Devendra was leafing through the pages of a biography of Sadhu Aghorenath.¹ He came upon the incident in which Aghorenath, fallen into the hands of a band of dacoits, had miraculously escaped being killed. Deeply impressed, Devendra rushed home, confined himself in a room, and prayed to God passionately, sometimes even banging his head against the wall. Thus three days and nights passed, without even food or sleep. On the fourth morning he climbed to the roof of the house and, looking at the rising sun, exclaimed: 'Who says there is no God? Here is an illustration of the glory of God!' And now his inner voice prompted him to find out his spiritual guide without delay.

Born in a brāhmaṇa family of the village Jagannathpur in Jessore (now in Bangladesh) in 1844, Devendranath was brought up in an orthodox way. His father, Prasan-nanath Bandyopadhyay Mazumdar (the family had dropped the 'Bandopadhyay' subsequently) died when Devendra was only two months old, and Devendra's elder brother Surendranath took up the responsibility of the family. Their mother Bama-sundari, a pious lady, came to have great influence over Devendra. As he grew out

of childhood he studied in a day school for five or six years, but was not a promising pupil and took little interest in formal education. But through the close association with his brother Surendra who became a poet of considerable reputation, Devendra developed a taste for Bengali literature. At 27, he was forced to marry, by his mother's undertaking a 'fast unto death' for this purpose. Then eight years later Surendra died, and Devendra had to take up the family's support, through great hardships. He took a clerical job in the manager's office of the Tagore family at Jorasanko, and hired a humble cottage in Nimu Goswami Lane, in Ahiritola, Calcutta.

Being of a religious temperament, Devendra had meanwhile learnt the practice of Yoga from his elder brother; and such earnest practice through about eleven years had brought him visions of various kinds. But these could not satisfy him, since he strongly felt the need of direct perception of God. He began visiting Keshab Chandra Sen's Brahma Samaj. He was introduced to Keshab, the most popular among the Brahma leaders of the day, but the latter did not prove to be that well of spirituality whence he had hoped to quench his thirst.

So, now, he set out in all earnest in search of a reliable spiritual guide. One day thus, he set out to visit Bhagawan Das Babaji, the well-known Vaiṣṇava saint of Kalna, but being late, he missed the steamer and therefore could not go. On the way back, he dropped in at the house of an acquaintance, Nagendranath Mukhopadhyay, at Pathuriaghata Street. Though Nagendra-nath was not at home, a book was lying on his table; and casually looking through

¹ *Sādhu Aghore-nāther Jīvancaṛit* (Bengali) 3rd ed., pp. 31-3. Quoted in Brahmachari Praneshkumar: *Mahātmā Devendranāth* (Bengali) (Calcutta, B. E. 1337), p. 35

its pages, Devendra chanced on mention of Paramahansa Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar.² It struck him that the Paramahansa must be a person of highly advanced spirituality and that such a one might be of help to him. Becoming deeply thoughtful, he walked homeward. On the way he met another acquaintance, who told him the whereabouts of the Paramahansa. Reaching home, and perhaps collecting some coins, he immediately set out for Dakshineswar. It was a day in the first part of February 1884,³ and around ten in the morning.

Devendra took a boat at Ahiritola. During the boat-ride, he tried to form a mental image of the Paramahansa, for he had heard precious little about him so far. Now and then he thought he was perhaps hasty in undertaking such a visit—should he not go back rather than go through the ordeal of meeting such an advanced soul? But there was no time for retreat, for the boatman soon thereafter announced their arrival at Dakshineswar. Devendra's eyes fell on a person wearing

a red-bordered *dhoti*, with one bandaged hand resting in a sling. That man was standing on the bank, as if eagerly waiting for someone.⁴ Devendra got off the boat with some trepidation, but in the process lost sight of that person.

Then following the directions given by a young man⁵ at the bathing-ghat, Devendra went to the porch on the western side of Sri Ramakrishna's room. He found the room empty; but soon after there entered a man wearing slippers and with one end of his *dhoti* resting on his shoulders. His left hand was bandaged and supported by a sling. Devendra recognized him as the one he had seen on the bank of the river. It struck him suddenly that this might be the Paramahansa he had come to meet. But his ideas about Paramahansas, as with matted hair, ochre robe, and so on, did not seem to hold good here. He bowed low before him and took the dust of his feet. Sri Ramakrishna—for it indeed proved to be he—then said in rustic Bengali, 'Come in through the other entrance.' Devendra went around and, approaching the northern entrance of the room, found Sri Ramakrishna waiting to receive him. The Master said: 'Don't put your shoes there; thieves may take them away. Please leave them here.' Devendra obeyed, and stood in front of Sri Ramakrishna.⁶

The Master was then almost forty-eight years old, with a few hairs in his beard turning grey. Some days ago he had accidentally fallen and sustained a dislocation in his left wrist. He had already attracted the admiration of Keshab Chandra Sen and

² The book was *Bhakti-caitanya-candrikā* (Bengali) by Trailokya Nath Sanyal (p. 63). Cf. Gurudas Burman: *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-carit* (Bengali) (Sri Kalinath Sinha, Calcutta, 1st ed.), Vol. I, page 276

³ One day in January 1884, Sri Ramakrishna was going alone towards the pine grove at the Dakshineswar garden, when he went into one of his frequent ecstatic moods. He fell and a bone in his left wrist was dislocated. From the account of 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947), p. 331 etc., it can be inferred that the accident happened some time between 6 January and 1 February, 1884—presumably some time after Keshab's death on 8 January, 1884. Since it is noted that a physician bandaged the forearm on 2 February, it appears the injury was shortly before this date. This gives an approximation for Devendra's visit. In the following conversations it is evident that the diagnosis (fracture or dislocation) was still unclear.

⁴ Brahmachari Praneshkumar: op. cit., pp. 39-40

⁵ Swami Gambhirananda: *Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-bhaktamālikā* (Bengali) Udbodhan, Calcutta, B. E. 1359). Vol. II, p. 328. Devendra soon came to know this young man as Sri Niranjana Ghosh, later Swami Niranjanananda.

⁶ Gurudas Burman: op. cit., p. 278

many others from among the educated middle class of Calcutta. Though he himself spurned formal education, his keen insight into the heart of men and his great spirituality made him a Master of a high order. He could study the spiritual potentialities of his visitors with an expertise that was phenomenal. His natural simplicity and purity made profound impression on all who met him and who had spiritual inclination.

Sri Ramakrishna enquired of Devendra, 'Where do you come from?' 'From Calcutta', was the reply. Thereupon Sri Ramakrishna, who was standing, assumed the typical posture of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with one leg gracefully bent across the other and hands in the position of holding a flute—and asked Devendra, 'Well, have you come to see this?'⁷ 'No,' came the reply, 'I have come to see you, sir.' On hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna rejoined in a troubled voice: 'What will you see of me? I have broken my hand in a fall. You see,—feel it. Look, here it is. Please see if a bone is really fractured. Terrible pain! What shall I do?'

Devendra examined the hand. He asked, 'How have you got this fracture, sir?' In the same complaining voice Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Oh, I am often seized by a strange state of mind. In such a condition I fell down a few days ago and broke my hand. Medicine often aggravates the pain. Adhar Sen applied some drugs but they have increased the swelling. Since then I have stopped applying medicines. Well, shall I all be right again?' Devendra pondered a little. He thought that, being a holy man, he would soon get cured, and he tried to console him saying, 'Surely! You will be quite well again.'

⁷ Thereby Sri Ramakrishna was by implication asking if he had come to see the image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This visibly gladdened the Paramahansa. He called others and began to tell them: 'Look here, he says my hand will be all right again. He is a man from Calcutta.' Never before had Devendranath seen such a naive person. A doubt thus crossed his mind. He thought: 'Is this the nature of a Paramahansa? Whereas I have come to see a saint, he now takes *me* for an all-knowing person? He takes my words as authentic and conclusive. Because I have told him, he thinks he will get cured. Is it possible that any human being can have such childlike faith? Well, perhaps all this is fake!' And now, to make a definite assessment of the man before him, he looked intently at his face. He had observed already that Sri Ramakrishna's body seemed tender as a woman's and his mind appeared as clean as that of a child. Now on the whole, the Master's childlike demeanour made a favourable impress on Devendra's mind. He soon lost all suspicion about feigning and became convinced that such childlike simplicity was but natural to this man.⁸

After a while, at Sri Ramakrishna's bidding a young man named Harish gave the visitor some offered sweets (*prasāda*). Devendra partook of these. Then Sri Ramakrishna began to speak on love of God. 'Do you know what is *prema*—ecstatic love of God? At the upsurge of such love one forgets all outer things, forgets the world; one even forgets one's own body which is so dear to all. As in a dust-storm one cannot distinguish the trees and the houses—all look alike—, similarly at the dawn of love for God all ideas of distinction vanish.' These words enchanted Devendra: he had never before heard anyone speak thus. In the course of this talk the Master referred again to Adhar Sen, a deputy magistrate and an acquaintance of Devendra's who used to visit Sri Rama-

⁸ Brahmachari Praneshkumar: op. cit, p. 42

krishna frequently. Devendra could now see there was something unique about the Master. He felt deeply drawn towards him.

It was time for the midday meal. Sri Ramakrishna said to Devendra: 'Look, high-caste brāhmaṇas take their food here, for there is a temple. No one should object to partaking of the *prasāda* of the deity. So, you too eat here ; don't go home now.'

Staunch brāhmaṇa that he was, Devendra was very particular about his food. However, the sweet words of Sri Ramakrishna now dispelled his hesitation. Addressing Ramlal, his nephew, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Look here, he is a pious man. He will take food here today. Give him the *prasāda* offered to Lord Viṣṇu.' Devendra was wonderstruck—recalling the Master's assuming the posture of Lord Kṛṣṇa immediately on meeting Devendra, his anticipation of his visitor's strictness about food, and now this specific choice of *prasāda*, he thought: 'How could he know I am a strict vegetarian since childhood? How did he find out my inborn love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa? It seems he definitely can read others' minds.' Devendra then partook of *prasāda* from the Rādhākānta temple, though he had that day to forgo his regular bath.

Sri Ramakrishna had so much impressed Devendra that, while with Ramalal, he talked of nothing else but the Master. Then after some rest-time, he came and sat before Sri Ramakrishna. He listened with rapt attention to all that came out of his lips. The Master, dwelling again on the love of God, said: 'The one goal of life is to cultivate love for God, a love like that of the milkmaids, the milkmen, and the cow-herd boys of Vrindaban for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When He went away to Mathura the cowherds roamed about Vrindaban weeping bitterly because of their separation from Him.' Saying this,

Sri Ramakrishna burst forth with a rapturous song on Śrī Kṛṣṇa.⁹

Himself a composer of songs,¹⁰ Devendra was stirred to the depths of his soul. The sweet song, laden with love, brought tears to his eyes. Sri Ramakrishna had captured his heart.

Then at the Master's bidding Devendra went to visit the temples in the compound and returned. After a little more talk, Sri Ramakrishna remarked, 'Why do I find your face sickly?' Devendra had till now given no thought to himself ; but now the affectionate words of Sri Ramakrishna made him aware that he was feeling quite feverish. Anxiously Sri Ramakrishna further enquired, 'Do you have any chronic illness?' Devendra told him that he had been laid up with malaria fever, but had had no such fever for the last three months. Very worried, like a mother for her child, Sri Ramakrishna moved about restlessly in the room. At last he arranged an escort, Baburam (later Swami Premananda) a young devotee who had just come there to enjoy his holy company. Standing on the western porch of his room, facing the Ganga, Sri Ramakrishna waited till he noticed a boat with a roof-cover. At his bidding Baburam called the boatman and engaged him for the journey.

While Devendra was taking his leave, Sri Ramakrishna endearingly told him: 'On your return home please consult a good physician and when you have gotten over the illness please call at this place again. Well, will you come?' Devendra replied, 'Yes, sir.' Holding Baburam's hand, the Master said to him: 'You please

⁹ Akshay Kumar Sen, *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Punthi* (Bengali), (Udbodhan, Calcutta, 2nd ed.), p. 383

¹⁰ Besides the composition of many devotional songs, Devendra composed (later on) the famous *Gurustavāṣṭaka*—Eight stanzas on the Guru—in 'Totaka' metre.

visit here another day. I shall talk a lot with you that day. You please escort him home now.' So the two boarded the boat and left for Calcutta, while Sri Ramakrishna stood on the bank to see them off. With the help of Baburam, Devendra that day could barely reach the house of one of his relatives. He could go no further, and for the next forty-one days he was dangerously ill, with high fever, prostration, and often unconscious. During those long days, whenever he opened his eyes he saw the loving form of Sri Ramakrishna sitting near him and in delirium he was often heard to mutter the name of Sri Ramakrishna. However, as he convalesced, one idea troubled him: 'A visit to a holy man brings good and peace. But this time it almost cost me my life. Enough of it! I had better not go that way again.' Thus doubt once again assailed his mind. And he dismissed these visions of Sri Ramakrishna as mere hallucinations.

However, many days later, Devendra came across the news in the *Sulabh Samachar* (Brahmo newspaper), of Sri Ramakrishna's next visit to Balaram Bose's house at Baghbazar. On reading of this, he felt as it were forcibly drawn to Balaram's house on that day. There he saw, in the evening light, Sri Ramakrishna dancing to the accompaniment of *kīrtan* (devotional singing) sung by a group of devotees. The Master's rhythmic dance, expressing deep feelings, greatly impressed the devotionally-minded Devendra. Finally Sri Ramakrishna stood still, deep in *samādhi*, and the assembled people began to take the dust of his feet. Devendra wanted to make his obeisance incognito. But as he touched the Master's feet, he heard to his surprise the sweet voice of Sri Ramakrishna who had by now regained a little outer consciousness: 'Well, how do you do? Why haven't you visited Dakshineswar so long? I do often

think of you.' These endearing words melted wholly the mists of doubt that had besieged Devendra, and he promised to visit Dakshineswar soon.

Thereafter Devendra began visiting Dakshineswar as often as he could. Soon he became convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was far from an ordinary holy man and that a gracious glance from him could ensure liberation of a soul! Until his contact with the Master, he had met no one whose life and words carried nearly such immediacy of impact for him. Devendra was now completely won by the great love, purity, and holiness of Sri Ramakrishna.

One day Devendra prayed for formal initiation, which Sri Ramakrishna gently but firmly declined. But some days later, seeing that the desire was still in Devendra's mind, he told him: 'Look, you will not have to do any special practice. You simply chant "Harinām" (the name of Hari) while clapping your hands. That will be enough for you.'¹¹ And indeed, following this simple instruction, Devendra found great peace of mind. This as well as the affectionate treatment by the Master, brought him to Dakshineswar even more frequently. One day, the Master asked him: 'Well, as you visit here so frequently, what do you think of "this place" (referring to himself thus)? What have you found?' The unpretentious Devendra frankly replied: 'I have not found anything very special. However, no more do I feel that urge for moving hither and thither in search of God and religion. Again I do not have that restlessness in my mind any more.' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'You have tried much, no doubt.' Then interlocking his fingers in between his two palms, he said: 'But the sword has not been fitted into the right scabbard. You know, every-

¹¹ *Udbodhan*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, p. 68

one has his own characteristics.'¹² Henceforth Devendra directed his efforts into the proper channel, under the guidance of the Master.

One day Devendra prostrated himself at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna and earnestly prayed for *sannyāsa* (monastic vows). The Master did not agree. On the other hand, he lifted the disciple from the floor and sang a song describing the pangs of Śacī-mātā, the mother of Śrī Caitanya:

'Why, golden Gaur, should you leave
Nadia to become a mendicant?

Oh, what will happen to your wife

Viṣṇupriyā?

Viśwarūp's loss still I do harbour;

Do you, too, want to hurt your unfor-
tunate mother?'

Clearly the Master thus hinted that Devendra's old mother had not yet been reconciled to the death of her eldest son Surendra. Again, Devendra should remember that his pious wife was there to be cared for.¹³ And actually it seems that this song convinced him that monasticism was not meant for

him. His life's course was ordained otherwise.

Like the other disciples, Devendranath too enjoyed a personal and exalted relationship with Sri Ramakrishna. But unlike many others he was favoured with the disclosure of the nature of that relationship. One day the Master, explaining the significance of a dream of Devendra's, said: 'Do you know, your attitude is that of the *gopīs* to Kṛṣṇa. That's why you have seen such a dream. You are extremely lucky. Such dreams indicate the gradual blotting out of lust.'¹⁴ Thus made aware of this inner nature of his mind, Devendra made progress steadily, and so much that he became saturated, as it were, with the *gopī-bhāva* (attitude of the *gopīs*). He became absorbed in thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna, and gradually proved to be a very effective instrument for the spread of the message of his Great Master. He among other things, built 'Sri Ramakrishna Archanalaya' at Entally in Calcutta, and spent his latter days there, full of the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna. Finally he breathed his last on 11 September 1911.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 69

¹³ Akshay Kumar Sen: *op. cit.*, p. 556

¹⁴ *Udbodhan*, Vol. XXIX, No. 5, p. 267

THE MIND OF MAN

DR. RALPH W. G. WYCKOFF

(Continued from the previous issue)

Just as we establish the structure of the world of matter and decide about occurrences within it by applying the criterion of truth to sensory experiences and propositions about them formed within the mind, so we give them life by the values we place on them, by the feeling judgments we make

concerning them. Some decisions of a primitive nature have an emotional irrational motivation but it should be realized that feeling judgments can be as rigorously disciplined and hence as rational as the intellectual judgments we have learned to make about truth. The logic behind these feel-

ing judgments is, however, of a somewhat different character and is to be cultivated by a different discipline. Judgments concerning value usually involve comparisons, explicit or implied, between experience and some mental, previously established ideal (an absolute). In real life such absolutes are rarely attained and the decisions we must in practice make can scarcely be expected to have the simple yes-or-no character we seek when dealing with objective truth. Things that on the whole seem desirable usually have an undesirable aspect—beauty is never perfect nor is the good man entirely without blemish. Choices involving value most often require some element of compromise, and discipline in making them should teach us how best to deal with questions for which there are several conceivable answers. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the compromise solutions thus reached have no place in investigations of the truths of Nature.

With questions about value the 'reality' must be sought, not in the outer world, but within ourselves. The great and continuing problem is what these inner values are and how we have come to know them. Origins far back in evolution can be seen in the distinction even simple animals so obviously make between what is physiologically pleasurable and what is painful. We still value things for the pleasure they give and do all we can to avoid pain but these primitive biological reactions are supplemented in us by other values that have evolved as the mind has come into being. It is important to trace this development.

Long ago man's appreciation of the physiologically pleasurable began to be refined in ways that transcend its purely sensory origins. We know how taste and smell can be educated to provide an exquisite enjoyment of what we eat and drink. Touch develops early in the child and it can be trained so that in the skilled crafts-

man, the blind man, the musician or the sculptor it becomes an instrument of truly extraordinary sensitivity. Both the eye and the hand of the painter are similarly made more sensitive by training, and to the millions who love beautiful music, the discrimination in sound that comes from hearing it needs no emphasis.

Art as an expression of beauty is man's highest development of this collaboration between our sense organs and the mind. Beauty is something we apprehend intuitively and many forms of beauty are recognized as such by peoples who have had no contacts with one another. We do not have to be taught to perceive the beauties of Nature nor have Westerners and Orientals failed to appreciate the great artistic creations of their very different cultures. A feeling for beauty can also become almost entirely an affair of the mind. It is to be recognized in manifold creations of the intellect—in ideas, *per se*, in geometry and other formulations of mathematics and natural science, in the masterpieces of literature. It is supremely expressed in the lives of many persons through the quality of their disciplined feeling for others and the nobility of their actions.

In dealing with such aesthetic qualities of the mind we make contact with that other category of values which since earliest times has centred in an idea of the good. Unlike the feeling for beauty which is typically individualistic, a sense of what is good has arisen out of man's relations with his fellows. Most of us have a deep intuition of the good, both as it applies to our own thoughts and actions and to society as a whole; and efforts to express it have produced much that is finest in our cultural inheritance.

Our sense of the good, and of the various social values that are its practical expression, has roots far back in evolution with the development of a tendency and a

desire to live in groups. A society can persist only if its members accept definite rules governing their conduct with respect to one another. Among the social animals these rules are matters of instinct. In man these instinctive patterns have been progressively replaced by consciously established regulations; and history has repeatedly demonstrated the decline in civilization that invariably follows their widespread neglect.

One of the first social values to arise must have been a sense of justice governing the relations between individuals and providing an acceptable basis for settling inevitable differences. The most primitive societies have customs that embody these rules and every advanced civilization has developed a code of laws and a system for administering it as the practical expression of this sense of justice.

Closely allied is the ethical sense of the good, and of evil as its opposite. It commonly has supplied the standards by which justice has been gauged and administered. As with all of man's higher values, we intuitively know what we mean by the good, but when stated explicitly the definitions often are not identical. On the collective, social level, what is good is that which benefits society and evil is that which tends to destroy it. Most civilizations put this into practice by devising moral codes to which individuals are expected to conform. Morals bear to a sense of the good the same relation that a legal code bears to the sense of justice. Like laws, morals may differ somewhat according to the social conditions to which they apply, without deviating in spirit from the ethical principles they are designed to implement. Goodness in a person determines his attitude towards life and his relations to other men. It fosters an uninterrupted self-development throughout life irrespective of his material circumstances, and a

serenity of spirit that persists in the accidents of fortune, be they favourable or ill. Though above all a quality of the mind, it manifests itself through a respect for the rights of others which forbids a person's making himself an unnecessary charge on his confreres or his developing a self-assertion that is damaging to them.

The primary requirement for all life is its own perpetuation. Throughout the plant kingdom and among the primitive animals it is the species that is perpetuated and this is achieved by the production of a vast progeny, only a few of whom survive to repeat the process. Any one individual is of small account. This situation no longer prevails among the higher animals, where possession of a complex nervous system and training by the parents makes each individual important as the embodiment of the characteristics of the species. In man, whose life is dominated by his conscious awareness and whose further development must be the product of conscious effort, the individual assumes a still greater importance. In part as an expression of his effort to survive in an often hostile environment, the human individual has developed an assertive ego that is first evident in a child's growing awareness of itself. This ego is by its very nature self-seeking, and further human development requires that its self-centredness be mitigated and directed towards a higher purpose. This is accomplished, most notably, through the experience of love.

The sentiment of love and the quality of goodness have much in common but they differ in the way they involve the person experiencing them. The good is appreciated through a rationally functioning judgment while love involves an outflowing of feeling to encounter the beloved object. It likewise has its roots in man's evolution. Parents bestow tender care and self-sacrificing attention upon their offspring and

this instinctive action is seen among the higher animals as well as in man. A similar love, also biological in its origins, is instinctively shown for their mates by both animals and men who further exhibit a capacity for self-sacrifice up to death in the interests of the group of which they form part. In man the development of disciplined feeling has continuously refined this innate concern for others and raised it to heights beyond the purely biological. The family is the natural means through which this feeling is nurtured, and it is here that the initially biological and unconscious can grow into an ever-deepening understanding of and sympathy for the aspirations and tribulations of others. In the healthily maturing individual the love thus initiated will spread beyond the family and carry him out of his original self-centredness.

When we seek to do good, or when we choose the objects of our love, we frequently fail to consider the consequences. If we invoke our values only after establishing the realities of a situation, we can act with wisdom. The wise man is one who has disciplined himself thus to combine in his life the two sides of his mind: rational feeling judgments about values and intellectual judgments concerning the real.

Yet transcending these several types of value, is what we understand as the spiritual. As we succeed in freeing ourselves from the constraints imposed by our ego-centredness, and from the all-encompassing desire to possess, which is the ego's dominant trait, we are better able to see the created world in its entirety and the direction in which it is tending. As the ego ceases to be the pivot about which all else turns, the life of the senses that feeds this ego gradually loses its domination. Only then, as we enter the domain of the spiritual, can we appreciate and accept our true place. Few of us can do more than

glimpse this region, which even then must appear as the ultimate goal of life. A few individuals in the course of human history have made themselves completely at one with it; to ordinary human beings they seem superhuman. Christ and the Buddha have been the most generally revered but from time to time down to the present there have been others. Most have become so surrounded by legend that it is now impossible to know much about them and their actual lives. Ramakrishna, living in India during the last century, is an exception in that there are contemporary accounts by educated persons of the minute details of his daily life and sayings. Through these verified records we can follow to its culmination the attitude towards life and its meaning, which is the product of intense spiritual experience—an attitude developed in varying degree by numberless Western and Oriental saints. When we consider these men it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that their lives and the spirituality which illumines them are outlining the route man is intended to follow in achieving the ultimate objective of bringing spirit to bear on the universe of matter.

The lives of all who have in some measure experienced the spiritual show us something of this route. It involves a most drastic discipline of the mind aimed at replacing the ordinary life of the senses by one oriented towards the inner dictates of the spirit. This does not necessarily mean a withdrawal from the everyday world but it does involve the solution of life's problems in terms of a new and different insight that no longer seeks personal advantage. All who have gained experience of the spiritual, be they Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Mohammedan, or Far Eastern, have testified to the same experience; and this should give pause to those tempted to doubt its fundamental reality. Though

the outward trappings of their lives may have been different, these sanctified persons have seen Life in the same terms. The disciplines they have employed have also been essentially the same, no matter when or where they have lived; all require complete absorption in an ideal divorced from the sensory world. They are directed towards a state reached only through a discipline that greatly increases consciousness and power of mental concentration. When successful this discipline has resulted in a sudden change in the personality which has set these individuals apart from—and recognizably superior to what they were before—ordinary men. In the saintliness of their lives and in the augmented consciousness that accompanies it they seem forerunners of man's future development.

The gradual evolution of our system of values from the biological to the spiritual is beyond question. What is debatable is the source from which our higher values have come. Have they been created within and by the brain and mind of man, or are they part of a spiritual reality with which our minds begin to make contact? In asking this question we are again enquiring, in different language, if materialism offers a complete explanation of all human experience. For the materialist, the highest flights of man's creative genius and the superhuman sanctity of thought and behaviour of the greatest of men are the unaided achievements of a human brain that has evolved in response to the problems faced in the course of evolution. In opposition to this is the fact that men of highly developed spirituality have been unanimous in asserting that help and inspiration have come as an inner experience arising from some source greater than themselves. In the past this testimony has been accepted without serious question by many who lacked direct experience. The growth of science

has accustomed us to discount all word of authority and to seek support for what we believe in what we ourselves can experience. In response to this need, it is to be noted that a sense of the spiritual is not restricted to the highly gifted. Men of quite ordinary capacities have intimations of it, and its perception grows with the effort to cultivate it. This is indeed the objective of true meditation and prayer as practised by religious men of all persuasions. For most, the understanding of the spiritual, thus gained, is limited and often fleeting; but there is ample evidence that those who are diligent in their efforts can continue to advance. Whether or not they come to share with the saintly a conviction of personal contact with a divine reality external to their minds, must remain a matter of individual experience. It may be especially hard for modern man whose entire life is a preoccupation with the material world, to imagine such a reality. One cannot, however, with justice deny the direct experience of others because he has not himself had it, especially if the requisite effort to do so has not been made.

The question of whether or not all human experience is compatible with a purely materialistic outlook, is the most important question man faces today because the answer must determine human life as it is to be lived now and in the future. The growth of science has *given precision* to the question but *cannot answer* it. Science requires us to believe that everything that happens in the world of matter, including the brain as the material basis for mind, will follow the dictates of universally applicable law. If there is a reality apart from the purely material, as so many creative and spiritually developed persons believe, it is to be sought in mental stimuli of non-sensory origin by the immaterial mind of man.

In spite of the advance in understanding which modern science has brought, we live surrounded by profound mysteries which each person must deal with from the standpoint of his own immediate experience. This very advance has shown our substantial, material universe to consist of manifestations of an immaterial energy whose nature is beyond our comprehension; and this fact alone should give pause to all who deny the possibility of an immaterial spiritual reality. For the materialists who are satisfied that all they can experience will ultimately be explained through the physiological activities of the material brain, man is the supreme and only intelligent product of an evolutionary process arising out of the purposeless, inevitable interaction of natural

forces. Other men who accept the possibility of a superhuman spiritual reality see themselves in a different light. This immaterial reality will appear to them to be operating throughout the course of evolution to foster the emergence of channels through which it can exert an ever-greater influence over matter. They will see the brain and the human mind as such a channel, and man as the instrument through which this penetration of the material universe is being accomplished. The possibility of thus becoming an effective element in this continuing evolutionary process is what gives life for them its supreme challenge and opportunity.

(Concluded)

PRE-TRANSCENDENTALIST AMERICAN INTEREST IN INDIAN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

DR. GORDON R. STAVIG

In regard to the American Bicentennial it is pertinent to examine the relationship between America and India during the eighteenth century, and early nineteenth century. Only a small portion of the literature dealing with American-Indian contact covers the pre-transcendentalist period prior to 1840.¹ There were three major channels

of communication through which information about Indian religion, philosophy, and culture flowed to America during that period.

First, many American Christian missionaries were interested in India. The well-known American Congregational minister Cotton Mather (1663-1728) published a treatise entitled *India Christiana*² The book was written for the purpose of propagating Christianity and missionary activity both in India and among the American Indians. *India Christiana* contains three letters. The first letter was written by August Francke a German Pietist to Mather

¹ The most extensive secondary source dealing with the relationship between America and India in the pre-transcendental period is Dale Riepe: *The Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought* (Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1970), pp. 3-24. Another competent secondary source is John Reid: *Indian Influences in American Literature and Thought* (Bhatkal Books International, Bombay, 1965), pp. 1-17.

² Cotton Mather: *India Christiana* (B. Green, Boston, Mass., 1721).

discussing the work of the Protestant missionaries in India.³ Francke commented on the problems in converting the Malabar to Christianity:

'The Pagans were generally possessed with an utter aversion to the Christian religion: and this for no other reason, but because they saw so much impiety and profaneness abounding among those that call themselves by this name.'⁴

In a second letter Mather corresponded with Bartholomew Ziegenbalgh (1717), a pastor of the Indian Church. Ziegenbalgh, a native of Germany, was sent by Frederick IV, King of Denmark, to Malabar, arriving in 1706.⁵ The reply was written by another German missionary in the Malabar region John Grundler (1719).⁶ Mather sent books and money to the German Protestant missionaries in India. In return they sent him a Tamil translation of the New Testament.⁷ All in all, Mather learned very little about Indian thought from his correspondence with the missionaries.

The earliest American missionaries to Asia were Judison and Newell who landed in East India in 1812.⁸ A missionary society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, sent two representatives to Bombay in 1813.⁹ The primary interest of the American missionaries was to convert 'pagans' and 'heathens'. They were not receptive to Indian culture

and did little during this period to spread Indian thought to the West.

A second major contact between America and India occurred in the areas of trade and commerce. The first American voyage to India took place in 1784, only a year after the independence of the United States was established. The ship *United States* arrived at Madras on the coast of Coromandel on Christmas day in 1784. After calls at Indian ports, the *United States* returned to Philadelphia on September 13, 1785.¹⁰ In the years following, American ships visited Indian ports, trading within the limits permitted by the East India Company. The American ships brought back spices, indigo, fine cloth, tea, curios of wood, metal, ivory, textiles and various Indian artifacts. Even today Indian sculptures and miniature paintings procured during that era can still be found in New England homes.¹¹ Since the traders were guided primarily by the profit motive and financial interests they did little to promote cultural interchange between America and India. Also, the traders upheld a general policy of not meddling with the religious and social customs of the Indians.

Isolated incidents are recorded of small scale interactions between Americans and Indians. For example, an Indian adventurer from Madras arrived at Salem, Massachusetts in 1790. He was described by the Reverend William Bentley as being, '...of

³ *ibid.*, pp. 56-61.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 75-87.

⁷ Bernard Stern: *American Views of India and Indians, 1857-1900* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa., 1956).

⁸ John Hurst: *Indika* (Harper & Brothers, New York, N. Y., 1891), p. 435.

⁹ Samuel Jackson (Ed.): *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Funk, New York, N. Y., 1909), vol. 5, p. 477.

¹⁰ see: Holden Furber, 'The Beginnings of American Trade with India 1784-1812', *New England Quarterly*, vol. 11 (June, 1938), pp. 235-65; James Gould: *First American Contact With Asia* (Claremont College, Claremont, Calif., 1960), pp. 1-11; and James Snyder: 'The First American Voyage to India', *Americana*, vol. 32 (April, 1938), pp. 285-304.

¹¹ W. Norman Brown: *The United States and India and Pakistan* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 263.

very dark complexion, long black hair, soft countenance, tall, and well proportioned'.¹²

The third and by far the most important channel through which Indian thought reached America was provided by the European scholars. They were extremely productive in translating ancient Indian texts and in writing commentaries about them. The transmission of ancient Indian religion, and philosophy, eventually culminated in the American Transcendental movement led by Emerson and Thoreau.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) met Sir William Jones (1746-1794), the famous Orientalist, in 1779. Jones was sympathetic with American democracy. Jones discussed with Franklin the possibilities of reconciliation of at least the commercial ties between Great Britain and America. Unfortunately, Franklin's acquaintance with Jones occurred prior to Jones's appointment to the supreme judicature of India in 1783.¹³ For this reason very little of their correspondence deals with Indian thought. Jones's writings on India were all published in the later period of his life from 1784 to his untimely death in 1794.

Sir William Jones translated the drama *Sakuntala* (1789), written by the famous fifth century Indian playwright Kālidāsa. In America, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) acquired a copy of *Sakuntala* in 1791.¹⁴ The drama was widely circulated, being published in Boston's most influential periodical *The Monthly Anthology* in 1805.¹⁵

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), the famous scientist and clergyman, came from Great Britain to the United States in 1793.

Priestley was the first person on American soil, to attempt to transmit Indian religious and philosophical thought. His work entitled *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses With Those of the Hindoos and Other Ancient Nations* gave a 300 page account of the religion, philosophy, and social customs of India. Priestley drew heavily on English and French sources which included the writings of Sir William Jones, La Croze, Langles, Wilkins, and Holwell.¹⁶ Priestley wrote the book in order to prove the superiority of the institutions of Moses and the Old Testament to those of the Hindus and all other ancient religions. However, he held great respect for the ancient Indian civilization. He said:

'The institutions of the Hindoos, civil and religious, are the most respectable for their antiquity of any that now subsist, at least of any that are extant in writing.'¹⁷

Priestley mentioned that the ancient Hindus were far advanced in the arts and sciences, particularly astronomy to most other nations.¹⁸ He mentioned that many European scholars held the highest admiration for the institutions of the Hindus.¹⁹ Yet, Priestley's central theme was that while the ancient Hindus far surpassed the Old Testament Hebrews in the arts and science, the opposite was the case in the area of religion. He considered the books of the Old Testament particularly the writings of Moses—because of their divine origin—, to be superior to the religious writings of the Hindus. Concerning the Old Testament he said:

'Its superiority in sentiment and practice to anything that the most enlightened of

¹² William Bentley: *The Diary of William Bentley* (Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass., 1962), vol. 1, p. 228.

¹³ see J. P. Rao Rayapati: *Early American*.

¹⁴ see *ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

¹⁵ see Reid: *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Interest in Vedanta (Asia Publishing House, New York, N. Y., 1973), pp. 41-2, 45-6.

¹⁶ see Joseph Priestley: *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses With Those of the Hindoos and Other Ancient Nations* (A. Kennedy, Northumberland, Pa., 1799).

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ see *ibid.*, p. 279.

¹⁹ see *ibid.*, p. 2.

mankind have ever devised is so great, that it cannot be rationally accounted for, but by supposing it to have had a truly divine origin.’²⁰

Priestley’s understanding of the Hindu religion was rather superficial since his knowledge was derived primarily from second-hand sources and lesser known Hindu scriptures which were often poorly translated. The majority of the sacred Hindu scriptures and commentaries had not been translated into English at that time.

In America, Priestley preached a set of discourses on the Evidences of Christianity. He preached from the pulpit of the Universalist church though he was acknowledged to be a unitarian. Among his congregation were many notables including the then Vice-President of the United States, John Adams (1735-1826) and several members of both Houses of Congress. Adams was an old acquaintance and correspondent of Priestley and frequently attended his sermons. Priestley was also an occasional visitor to President George Washington (1732-1799) in Philadelphia.²¹ After Priestley’s death in 1804, Adams—by now an ex-President? continued to be interested in Priestley and his writings. In fact, John Adams was more sympathetic with Indian religion and philosophy than any other American intellectual during the pre-transcendental period. During the latter part of his life theology became one of his major interests. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson dated 25 December 1813, Adams criticized Priestley’s book for not mentioning that in India Pythagoras,

‘...conversed with the Brahmins, and read the Shasta [Shastra?], five thousand years old, written in language of

the sacred Sansosistes [Sanskritists?], with the elegance and sentiments of Plato.’²²

Adams continued:

‘Where is to be found theology more orthodox, or philosophy more profound, than in the introduction to the Shasta [Shastra?]? “God is one creator of all universal spheres, without beginning, without end...” These doctrines, sublime, if ever there were any sublime, Pythagoras learned in India...’²³

Adams also mentioned that Pythagoras learned of metempsychosis in India.²⁴ A couple of months later (February, 1814) Adams wrote to Jefferson that he had read everything he could collect concerning Oriental history and the Hindu religion. Adams again criticized Priestley because his comparisons were limited to the laws and institutions of Moses—presumably divine — with those of the Hindu sages whom he regarded as only human. He did not compare the Old Testament scriptures with the Hindu *śāstras* (scriptures). Priestley had little knowledge of the original Vedas and other scriptures which form the core of the Hindu religion. Adams also took Priestley to task for not having given a full development of the doctrine of metempsychosis, for not covering certain ideas of Pythagoras and Plato which were derived from India and for not tracing the prophecies of Enoch back to their possible Indian origin.²⁵ A little over three years later (26 May 1817) Adams mentioned to Jefferson in a letter that he had read some of Sir William Jones’s writings on India. Adams specifically mentioned that intel-

²² Andrew Lipscomb: *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, Washington D.C., 1905), vol. 14, p. 39.

²³ *ibid.*, vol. 14, p. 39.

²⁴ see *ibid.*, vol. 14, pp. 39-40.

²⁵ see *ibid.*, vol. 14, pp. 106-8.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. vii.

²¹ see Anne Holt: *A Life of Joseph Priestley* (Oxford University Press, London, 1931), pp. 194-6, 200-1.

lectual confrontations occurred between materialists and non-materialists in ancient India and that many of the ideas discovered by Newton were known to the Indians at an earlier date.²⁶ Jefferson was

less interested in Indian thought but nevertheless he was the person whom Adams chose to confide in on this subject. After Adams's death more translations of Indian scriptures gradually made their way to America via Western Europe culminating in the Transcendental movement.

²⁶ see *ibid.*, vol. 15, p. 122.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), pp. 526-7.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 146-7.

The prefaces of Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Upaniṣads give a foretaste of the great commentator's nondualistic thoughts and of his 'lucid and profound' style. These prefaces form the subject of our editorial essay this month in which falls the holy birthday of Śrī Śaṅkara. We hope our readers will welcome this writing as our humble tribute to the memory of one of the greatest sage-philosophers of India as of all humanity.

While in this study we have taken note of the prefaces of all the commentaries on the ten principal Upaniṣads, we have not even taken into consideration that of the second commentary on the *Kena-upaniṣad*—called the *Vākya-bhāṣya*—or of the commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*. Śaṅkara's authorship of these two commentaries is not well authenticated.

Nārada (lit., one who gives the knowledge pertaining to the Supreme Self) is a greatly

revered character in Hindu tradition. Even in the *R̥g-veda*, the oldest religious scripture of humanity, Nārada's name figures as one of the sages. But it is in the Purāṇas that he is best seen, shedding his powerful influence in turning the minds of innumerable persons towards God. 'Nārada: the Divine Minstrel', by Swami Siddhinathanda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, gives us a brilliant profile of this great sage of India.

Of the householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Devendranath Mazumdar is among those especially well known to the devotees of the Great Master, through the many sweet and soul-stirring songs and hymns that he composed about Sri Ramakrishna. His spiritual saga holds many lessons of inspiration for earnest aspirants. During all his years after meeting Sri Ramakrishna, he worked hard—and successfully—for spreading the Master's message in and outside Bengal. A moving account of his First Meeting, with a peep into his holy life, is contributed to our columns this month by Swami Prabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

In this second and concluding part of 'The Mind of Man', Dr. Ralph W. G. Wyckoff insightfully traces the direction that the development of man's mind has

taken from its primitive stages, and strongly urges that the acquisition of spiritual wisdom is the true and ultimate goal of this developmental process. The first part of this erudite paper appeared in our April issue.

Dr. Wyckoff is Professor of Physics and Microbiology at the University of Arizona, U.S.A. and, among other things, has long been one of the leading men in the fields of crystallography and electron microscopy. Furthermore, his association with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York has been a long-standing one.

American interest in Indian religious thought and culture found far-reaching ex-

pression and acquired widespread popularity through the Transcendentalist movement, associated with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau and other notables. But though this sort of interest existed in a smaller way before the Transcendentalist movement, this fact has been little known. 'Pre-Transcendentalist American Interest in Indian Religion and Philosophy', by Dr. Gordon R. Stavig, is an enlightening paper, painstakingly prepared, on this interesting theme. Dr. Stavig recently received his 'Ph.D.' degree in Sociology from the University of Southern California. He is, furthermore, a member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Hollywood.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

INTRODUCTION TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA—ITS PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURAL SETTING: BY GEORG FEUERSTEIN, Published by Rider & Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W-1, 1974, pp. 191, Price—paper, £1.95, cased, £3.60.

This elegantly published Introduction sets out to perform a twofold task. According to the author it seeks to mediate between 'outright academic studies' and 'popular "digests"'. He explains that his focal point of interest in Indian thought has gradually shifted from world-negating '*moksa-sastra*' to world-affirming '*dharma-sastra*', 'the foundation and nutrient substratum of the path to deliverance', '*moksa*...the pinnacle of spiritual life'. In the first main section, comprising eight chapters, we are given something in the nature of the setting of the *Gita*. Though much erudition has gone into it, it constitutes not much more than an attractive 'digest'. Its brevity obviates thoroughness. The second part running to about a hundred pages attempts to present the essential doctrines concerning God, man, and nature, the 'Path of Transformation... Yoga', and emancipation conceived as 'self-awakening in God'. It is obvious that the author is heavily indebted to the major previous studies on these fundamental themes.

His desire to do justice to the '*dharma-sastra*' aspect of the *Gita* must be supposed to have been mainly achieved in his chapter on 'The Ethics of Krsna'. This chapter is however loosely constructed and does not rise to the expectations aroused. It traverses the familiar categories of ethics, such as the absoluteness and relativity of moral standards, motive and consequence, and society-centred ethics, and individualistic ethics, and does not appear to focus itself on the central moral philosophy of the *Gita*.

But the major deficiency of the book is its attitude to Sankara. One wonders how the following pronouncements can be authenticated: 'Krsna questions the value of the monastic life... and *passionately* defends the life of the householder...' (p. 138). (italics ours)

'Sankara, the *great adversary of Krsna*, explains this anomaly [how it is that man is unaware of his essential oneness] by introducing the concept of nescience (*avidya*)'. (p. 92) (italics ours)

'Sankara's reply [to a sceptical king who had confronted him with a mad elephant] is characteristic: "In truth, neither the elephant is real, nor you, nor I. It was merely an illusion of

yours that you saw me escape from the elephant”’ (p. 34)

Not that the great Hindu commentator on the *Gita* should not be criticized. But the alleged antagonism between the *Gita* and Sankara is badly in need of demonstration. Even the confirmed adversaries of Sankara in India are less dogmatic.

Nevertheless the neat little book is eminently readable and useful to beginners.

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

THE VEDAS: BY JEANINE MILLER, Published by Rider & Co., 3 Fitzroy Square, London W-1, 1974, pp. xxxvi + 240, Price £ 3.75.

A remarkable study of the Vedas as the fountainhead of the Indian theory and practice of meditation, revelation, and audition. The author does not accept the superficial readings of the Hymns, by Western scholars like Wilson, Muir, Max Muller, etc. She points out with telling illustrations how they have missed the truth of the Vedic imagery, mythology and mantric poetry because of their alien background and intellectual prejudice.

The Vedic age as represented in these Hymns is not at all the primitive stage of a pastoral community, but an end of an epoch which saw a fruitful communion between men and Nature and the Powers that pulsate behind the natural phenomena. The gods—Agni, Indra, Varuna, Surya—are much more than Deities presiding over the physical universe; they are psychological Powers leading the development of individual consciousness Godward. With plenty of illustrations from the *Rig-veda* (and the *Atharva*), the Upanishads and even from the later Puranas, Miss Miller expounds how the origins of Indian Yoga and *dhyana* (meditation) are to be found in the mantras. The section on Vedic Eschatology is brilliant. The author brings out the profound meaning of death, heaven and immortality, to the seers of the Vedas. Her explanations of the Tree of Life, the significance of Yama, the Two Paths, and the content of Immortality, are especially well documented and convincing.

We do hope an Indian edition of this authentic study of the Vedic tradition will soon be brought out.

SRI M. P. PANDIT
Sri Aurobindo Ashrama
Pondicherry

MALAYALAM

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAMRITAM — Vol. I: TRANSLATED BY SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur 680551, 1974, pp. 450+60, Price Rs. 25/-.

Religion is realization, nothing short of that. This is the basic teaching of Hinduism, and this has been repeatedly emphasized by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. And what is the easiest path to realization? Of all paths leading to realization, the easiest and most natural one is, according to Sri Ramakrishna, that of *bhakti*—intense love of God—as expounded by the sage Narada in his famous *Bhakti-sutras*. Nowhere else is such intensity of love towards God as taught in the *Bhakti-sutras* so fully illustrated as in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the most sublime of all the Puranas. No wonder that it is so, since Vyasa got the inspiration to write this sublime treatise from Narada himself. Not only the inspiration, but even the essence of what he was to write, Vyasa got from Narada; and it was this that he later expanded and shaped into his most elevating *Srimad Bhagavatam*, of which the book under review is a beautiful Malayalam translation. The present is only the first volume, containing the first nine books. The second volume containing the last three books is expected soon.

The language of the Sanskrit original is rather difficult to understand; yet if one somehow succeeds in understanding even a little, it becomes to him *amritam* (divine nectar) itself both because of its unearthly sweetness and because it leads one to immortality. Ignorance of Sanskrit is now the main hindrance to one's enjoying that divine nectar; it is at least so with the vast majority of yearning hearts. That hindrance is now removed for millions, once for all, by Swami Siddhinathananda, in presenting to readers his translation in chaste, simple, fluent and forceful Malayalam prose. This is the author's latest contribution to the spiritual branch of Malayalam literature, which he has already enriched by many such publications, both translations and original works. The present work, we may note, comes with financial assistance from the Government of India, Department of Culture.

This book of course cannot be said to be a complete translation, since in some parts, especially in the fifth and ninth books, some details and repetitions have been either omitted or abridged. But ideas have been kept intact, and

ideas are more important than such details. Even a cursory reading will convince one of the effectiveness of this rather bold step taken by the author. The scholarly introduction by Prof. Vasudevan Elayath, and the most detailed preface by the author himself are really helpful for proper understanding of the book.

SRI A. KARUNAKARA MENON
Retired Principal
Teachers' Training School, Trichur

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE MIND OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—An Anthology and A Study: BY GAUTAM SEN, Published by Jaico Books, 125 Mahatma Gandhi Rd., Bombay-1, 1975, pp. 142, Price Rs. 6/-.

THE 'MAD WOMAN': BY TRIVENI, Published by Jaico, 1975, pp. 156, Price Rs. 6/-.

GEMS FROM THE EAST: BY MME. H. P. BLAVATSKY, Published by Himalaya Prakashan, 37, 8th Cross, N. R. Colony, Bangalore 560-019, (New Edition 1975), pp. 40, Price Rs. 2.50.

WHITEHEAD'S CONCEPT OF GOD: BY DR. G. SRINIVASAN, Published by Karnatak Book Agency, No. 13 Kumara Park East, High

Ground: Bangalore 560-001, 1975, pp. ix+155, Price Rs. 15/-.

LONG JOURNEY HOME—A Biography of Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita): BY BARBARA FOXE, Published by Rider & Co., 3 Fitzroy Square, London, W-1, 1975, pp. 239, Price £3.25.

SISTER NIVEDITA'S LECTURES AND WRITINGS: Written and published by Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 5 Nivedita Lane, Calcutta 700-003, pp. 427, Price Rs. 25/-.

THE CONCEPT OF JIVANMUKTI: BY K. N. N. ELAYATH, Published by Academic Publications, Trivandrum (Kerala), 1975, pp. 55, Price not given.

CONTEMPORARY STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM: Edited BY JOHN HOWIE AND THOMAS O. BURFORD, Published by Claude Stark & Co., Cape Cod, Mass., 02670, U.S.A., 1975, pp. xiii+290, Price \$ 15.00.

SANSKRIT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA-DEVASYA CHARITAM: BY SWAMI HARSHANANDA-PURI, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore--570002, 1975, pp. 32, Price Re. 1/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

REPORT: APRIL 1974—MARCH 1975

The Centre, with Swami Nityabodhananda as its Head, has since 1972 had its own house overlooking the lake of Geneva, at Corsier, six miles from the city of Geneva.

The Centre has been focusing its attention on two objectives:

(1) Spreading Vedanta through lectures, interviews, and publication of books and tracts.

(2) Cultivating what may be called 'the ground of reciprocity' which exists between the world religions. The Centre worked actively with the Consultative Committee for the Unity of great Religions founded a few years ago in Geneva here; at the Centre, sessions were organized in which the members of the Committee

studied common problems like Revelation, prayer and allied subjects. The religions represented on the Committee are Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Shintoism.

The usual classes in French and English continued. Those in French were on the subjects: (a) 'How to Live the Mantra'; (b) 'Joy and Suffering'; (c) 'India's Presence in Modern Western Thought'; (d) 'The Role of the Heart in Man's Accomplishment'. The English talks were on the *Bhagavad-Gita*. During the year under review the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna and the Durga-puja were celebrated.

As in previous years since 1962, the Swami was invited by the Geneva University Faculty of Letters to deliver a series of eight lectures on comparative religion and philosophy. The snb-

ject chosen this year was 'Hinduism-Taoism-Sufism'. The lectures were largely attended.

The Swami was invited to Inter-religious Congresses held in Paris and Rome. He also directed retreats in Munich in Germany, Bordeaux and Nimes in France.

The Centre has to its credit six publications in French.

**RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADAPITHA,
P.O. BELUR MATH, Dt. HOWRAH
REPORT: 1971-1974**

Started in 1941, adjacent to the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, the Saradapitha is one of the largest educational institutions of the Mission. It now has eight major departments, the work of which will be described below, seriatim. But first may be mentioned a few of the functions in which many or all departments participated: (1) The Jagaddhatri Puja was performed in the image with due eclat, solemnity and devotion during the first two of the years under review. Many devotees participated, and a large number of Daridra Narayanas (God in the form of the poor) was fed. (During the third year it unfortunately could not be celebrated). (2) The Saraswati Puja was celebrated by the students with all enthusiasm and grandeur in their respective institutions. (3) The Viswakarma Puja was performed by the students of the Shilpamandira and Shilpayatana.

VIDYAMANDIRA

This wholly residential Three-Year Degree College, affiliated to Calcutta University, had in these years between 392 and 324 boys enrolled. Out of 86 and 89 candidates sent up for B.A./B.Sc. Part II examinations in 1971 and 1972, 74 and 85 came out successful. 1973 results are not yet complete. The students lived under supervision of monastic members of the Order, and had regular periods of study, work, prayer, games, etc.; occasionally they were taken to visit places of interest and inspiration. Religious classes were regularly held both in the college and the hostels. Two companies of National Cadet Corps were raised in the college. Under the National Service Scheme, a unit of Vidyamandira boys worked in such activities as Flood Relief, feeding of undernourished children and mothers, running Night-schools, and cleaning of the locality. A valuable Library now is equipped with 12,286 books.

SIKSHANAMANDIRA

A Government-sponsored residential Teachers'

Training College affiliated to the University of Calcutta, this aims at all-round training of teachers and freshers for B.Ed. degree. There were between 138 and 112 trainees during the years under review. In the B.Ed. examination of the first year, 12 secured first class (of total of 138) and 114 second class. In second year, out of 117, 11 secured first class and 98 second class. The College has a well-equipped library, publishes its annual magazine *Sandipan*, and each year organizes an Educational Exhibition for Vivekananda's birthday-celebration.

SHILPAMANDIRA

This Government-sponsored Polytechnic offered three-year (increased in 1974 to four-year) diploma courses in Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering—adequate for the licentiate examination. Between 338 and 397 students were enrolled in the years under review, including many poor and meritorious students receiving financial assistance. All received also regular N.C.C. training. The Library has 6053 books, mostly on science and technology; the institution continued its annual magazine *Trayee*.

SHILPAYATANA

A Government-sponsored free Junior Technical School for boys of approximately 14 to 17 years' age, this offers a three-year Junior Diploma Course in Engineering. Though begun only in 1963, the School already had between 92 and 136 students enrolled in the years under review. In the first of these years, all 28 students who were sent up for the final examination came out successful (25 being first-division), and of 21 sent in the second year, 19 came out successful.

SHILPAVIDYALAYA

This, the oldest branch of the Saradapitha, imparts free training for one to three years to poor and deserving students in Electrical maintenance, Auto-Mechanics, Turning, Fitting, Weaving, Carpentry, and Incense-making. On its rolls were from 37 to 68 trainees during the years under review, plus in the latter two years, 12 to 22 trainees in motor-driving (a new section). Most of the successful candidates get jobs in factories and workshops.

JANASIKSHAMANDIRA

Since its start in 1949, this section has conducted many forms of mass education and public service, with active cooperation by various clubs and associations of the area, its small staff of monastics being augmented by many devotee-

volunteers and students of Vidyamandira. In the current three years, 317 adults were made literate in its nine night schools. The audio-visual mobile unit exhibited 353 films of educational interest, attended by 3,42,320 people. The free public library contained 17,746 books, from which 50,286 loans were made, many via Mobile Van and Bicycle squad units. Nearly 200 poor children were served nutritious tiffin six times weekly. Further, the Mandira supervised distribution of basic food-supplements to undernourished children and mothers (foods supplied by UNICEF and CARE)—by the last year under review there were 47 distributing centres involved, serving an average of 10,000 beneficiaries per day. (During the second of the three years, the programme had been temporarily discontinued.) For the youth of the locality, there were programmes of games, sports, crafts-teaching, study circle, etc.

TATTWAMANDIRA

This section, with a personnel of five or six monastic members, held regular scriptural classes for the inmates and weekly religious discourses for the public. 'Ramnama Samkirtana' was regularly sung. Besides the Secretary, some senior monks delivered a number of lectures, near and far. A library of 1,600 books on philosophical and Sanskritic studies is maintained.

PUBLICATION-CUM-PRODUCTION

This section is engaged in devising and manufacturing equipments, metal photo frames, lockets, etc. It also has a photographic department. The publication department has through the years published 20 books centring around the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. A well-furnished Sales-cum-Showroom is stocked with Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and scriptures in different languages, plus photos of various sizes, and products of the Carpentry, Weaving, and Incense-making departments of the Shilpavidyala.

All donations to the Saradapitha are exempted from Income-tax; and may be kindly addressed to (cheques drawn in favour of) 'Ramakrishna Mission Saradapith', P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, W. Bengal, 711-202.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—NEW DELHI

REPORT: APRIL 1974—MARCH 1975

Begun on a modest scale in 1927, this Centre was finally established in its own premises in

1935, since when its growth has been notable and steady. Presently it conducts a Free Library and Reading Room, Tuberculosis Clinic, Outdoor Homoeopathic Dispensary, Sarada Mandir (Sunday class for children) as well as many religious classes and lectures. The centrally-placed Temple of Sri Ramakrishna, and the spacious Auditorium, are special attractions.

RELIGIOUS WORK: In addition to regular daily worship, meditation and *bhajans* in the Temple, regular Sunday discourses and occasional lectures were given, with warm public response. This was especially visible in the large gatherings for the celebrations of *birthdays of the Great Teachers*. In the cases of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, these celebrations began with Janmatithi Puja (meditation, Mangalarati, Vedic chanting, readings from their teachings, and devotional music); then special Puja and Havan; and in the evening, Arati and *bhajans*. An average of around 3,000 devotees received *prasad* in hand after the special Puja and Havan. Then, on the following Sunday, large public meetings were held. And in connection with Vivekananda's birthday, Speech and Recitation Competitions for College and School students were held, from three days before the event till a week after it. 1,556 students took part, and 228 prizes, totalling Rs. 2,885, were awarded. Further, the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda were celebrated jointly at the University of Delhi under auspices of the Vedanta Samiti of the University, the meeting being conducted by the Mission's Secretary. A week later, a public celebration of these birthdays was held at Sarojini Nagar in South Delhi.

The Birthdays of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Guru Nanak, Chaitanya and Tulasidas, and Gita Jayanti, were observed through worship, *bhajans*, readings from the scriptures, and discourses by specially invited speakers.

CULTURAL AND PREACHING WORK: In the Mission Auditorium, regular Sunday evening Discourses were delivered, either by the Secretary or by distinguished guests. Regular Wednesday-evening Bengali class on *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* was conducted by either the Secretary or Assistant Secretary. Weekly discourses in Hindi on *Sri Ramacharit-Manas* were given by distinguished Ramayan scholars. At the Vedanta Samiti, Delhi University, regular weekly classes were conducted by the Swamis. The Secretary, further, was invited to many institutions and groups in the city for discourses.

The *Free Library and Reading Room* continued its years of steady growth, the daily average of visitors being this year 448, and 802 new books being added therein, bringing the total number of books (including the children's section) to 26,777. 19,442 book-loans were made; and in the Reading Room, 17 newspapers and 171 periodicals were available. In this year, grants-in-aid totalling Rs. 18,400 were received from various branches of the City administration.

The *University Students' Section Library*, added in 1962, and maintained with financial help from the University of Delhi, also continued to grow: this year there were 486 student-members, and 128 daily used the Library, borrowing an average of 400 books from the total of 4867 available.

The *Sarada Mandir*, a children's Sunday School, had weekly attendance of about thirty; besides the regular programme of prayers, meditation, music and story-telling, the children performed two dramas and a ballet, on appropriate holy birthdays. The *Sarada Mahila Samiti* directed the latter, as well as helping in the entire programme.

The *Sarada Mahila Samiti*, a woman's group named after the Holy Mother, devoted to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, held monthly meetings with exposition of the *Uddhava-gita* by the Secretary, weekly classes on the *Bhagavad-gita*, and continued the programme of medico-social service at the Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital for Women.

CHARITABLE WORK: The *Free Tuberculosis Clinic*, begun in 1933 as the first institution in Delhi for organized treatment of the disease—and still the only non-official institution of its kind in the Union Territory of Delhi—has now full facilities for diagnosis and treatment of Tuberculosis in all aspects, including minor surgery. Besides detailed diagnosis and treatment of ambulatory patients, it has a 28-bed Observation ward, where short-period rest-treatment may be given; further, it actively refers to larger hospitals those patients needing extended care, and conducts its own Domiciliary Service Unit for home-treatment before-and-after-Hospital. The latter Unit works closely with the Delhi Tuberculosis Association, as also the examining and follow-up of contacts of all patients. During this year, 3,231 cases (with 1,69,656 re-visits) were treated outdoors, and 243 Indoor cases. From city Administration branches, grants of Rs. 48,000/- came in this year.

The *Free Homoeopathic Dispensary* continued its 45 years of service to the locality, particularly its poorer section, from the Mission premises. This year it treated 4,725 new cases, with over 60,000 re-visits.

Individual charities: during the year, Rs. 9,409.94 were spent to help poor and deserving people, in cash or kind. Of the latter, Rs. 1,965/- went for woollen blankets and Rs. 777.50 for dhotis.

CURRENT NEEDS: Some of the more pressing of these are: (1) for Free Tuberculosis Clinic: Endowment for beds—each needing Rs. 30,000; Laboratory instruments needing Rs. 8,000. (2) For the Ashrama: urgently needed additional water supply—Rs. 12,000; Almirahs for storage—Rs. 5,000; Electrical system renovation—Rs. 10,000. (3) For Social and Cultural Work: Auditorium—improvements in acoustics and public-address system—Rs. 15,000; Movie Film Projector—Rs. 8,000; Slide Projector—Rs. 3,000. Donations should be sent to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Ramakrishna Ashrama Marg, New Delhi 110055. All such are exempt from Income Tax.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, RAIPUR, M.P.

DEDICATION OF THE NEW TEMPLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The dedication ceremony of the newly erected Temple of Sri Ramakrishna, and the installation of his marble image in it, were performed at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, with great eclat. The ceremony started from 23rd January, the '*tithi-puja*' day of Swami Vivekananda, with special *puja* and *havan* in the old shrine. From 24th to 31st January, nine different competitions were held for middle, higher secondary and college students concerning the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. On 27th January, Shri S. C. Shukla, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, visited the Ashrama to pay his respects to the memorial of Swami Vivekananda which has been erected in the form of a temple dedicated to his master, Sri Ramakrishna Deva. It is significant that Swami Vivekananda stayed at Raipur for two years during his boyhood from 1877 to 1879. In the morning of 1st February, the priests performed the *mandapa-poojanam* after *punyah-vachanam*, in the *yajna-mandapam* and went through other rites. In the evening, the preliminary rites of invocation, etc, of the image were performed. In the early morning of 2nd February, *mangala-*

ratrikam was performed in the old shrine followed by *sankirtan* and *bhajan*. As the first rays of the sun shot through the clear sky, a procession was taken out from the old shrine with Swami Apurvananda carrying the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Gauriswarananda, the picture of the Holy Mother, and Swami Hiranmayananda, the picture of Swami Vivekananda. The procession was led by monks of the Order with ochre-coloured festoons, a pitcher filled with water, and a cow with calf. Parched rice and flower petals were showered upon the pictures. *Sankirtan* and singing parties accompanied the procession with the Brahmacharins of the Raipur centre chanting Vedic *mantras*, going ahead of them. More than 500 devotees from various places and nearly 2,000 devotees from Raipur, besides 60 monks of the Ramakrishna Order, attended this blissful function. Monks and devotees joined the procession carrying lighted incense sticks. While the procession wended its way towards the new temple, the atmosphere seemed surcharged with spiritual fervour, serenity and joy, with numerous conch-shells blowing and *huludhwani* coming from devoted throats. After going round the temple three times, the procession which was joined by Swami Vireswaranandaji during the third round, entered the Temple after its main gate was formally declared open by the Rev. President Maharaj. He led the procession inside and placed the picture of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar on which the statue had been placed. The other two pictures were also placed on the different wooden thrones by him. While special *puja* started at 7-40 a.m. in the new temple, the priests performed *vastu-yag* and *graha-yag*, etc, in the *yajna-mandapam*. All these rites and rituals continued till 2-30 p.m. with *havan* and dedication of the temple to the presiding deity. Simultaneously, the chanting of the *Gita* and the *Chandi* was also going on in the temple. More than 3,000 devotees received *prasad* after the *puja*. In the evening, after the *aratrikam* in the temple, there was a religious music recital programme, *Geet Ramayan*, in Hindi in the huge pandal outside. The artist, Dr. A. K. Sen, started the programme with his beautiful Hindi composition on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In the night there was

Kali-puja which continued till 3 a.m.

On the 3rd morning there was a talk by Swami Vyomananda in Hindi on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. In the evening at 6-30 p.m., a public meeting was held presided over by Swami Ranganathananda. Swami Vireswaranandaji gave his benedictory address in English emphasizing the necessity of a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. This was translated into Hindi by Swami Atmananda. Swami Vyomarpandananda, in his Hindi speech, spoke on Sarva-Dharma-Samanvayacharya Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Ranganathananda, in his presidential address in English, stressed the special significance of the temple at Raipur.... Swami Atmananda rendered the speech into Hindi. The programme was attended by more than 4,000 people.

On the 4th morning, Swami Vyomarpandananda gave a discourse in Hindi on the *Gita* and in the evening at 6-30 p.m. there was an inter-religious conference presided over by Swami Hiranmayananda....

On the 5th evening at 6-30 p.m., Shri Shrimannarayan, the well-known Gandhian thinker, who was once India's Ambassador in Nepal and Governor in Gujarat, inaugurated the Vivekananda Anniversary celebrations. He also released the Temple Dedication Souvenir brought out by the Ashrama on this occasion. The meeting was presided over by Shri T. L. Tembhe, Minister for Revenue and Agriculture in the Government of Madhya Pradesh. Shri Tembhe gave away the prizes for the various competitions organized by the Ashrama.

From 6th to 15th February, Pandit Ramkinkar Upadhyaya, the famous exponent of Goswami Tulsidasji's *Ramacharitmanas*, gave illuminating discourses on the *Ramayana*. From 16th to 25th February, Shri Atulkrishna Goswami of Vrindaban gave learned discourses on the *Srimadbhagavad*, and from 26 to 29th February, the child-prodigies Kumari Sarojbala and Vishnu Arora gave thrilling discourses in Hindi on religious topics. All these functions were attended by more than 10,000 persons daily. The 38-day long programme came to a close on 29th February. Elaborate arrangements had been made for the stay, etc, of more than 500 devotees and 50 sadhus who had come from outside....