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AWAKENED INDIA



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

Describing the wonderful behaviour of the boy Ramlala, Sri Ramakrishna said:

'On some days the holy "father" [that is, Jatadhari] would cook food to offer it to Ramlala but could not find him. Wounded at heart, he would then run up here (to the Master's room) and find him playing in the room. With his feeling of love wounded, he would then scold him: "I took so much trouble to cook food for you and am searching for you hither and thither; and free from care and forgetful of everything, you are here! That has ever been your way. You do as you fancy. You have no kindness or affection. You left behind your father and went to the forest; your poor father died of weeping but still you did not return to show yourself to him."¹ With these and other similar words he used to drag Ramlala to his place and feed him. Time passed in that way. The Sadhu was here for a long time, for Ramlala did not like to leave this place (that is, Sri Ramakrishna) and go away. He also could not leave behind Ramlala whom he had loved so long.

'Dissolved in tears, the "father" then came one day and said: "Ramlala has shown himself to me in the way I wanted to have his vision and has thus quenched the thirst of my life. Moreover, he said he would not go from here; he does not like to leave you behind here and go away. My mind is now free from sorrow and pain. He lives happily with you and plays and sports; I feel beside myself with bliss to see it. I am now in such a state that I feel happy at his happiness. Therefore, I can now leave him with you and go elsewhere. Thinking he is happy with you, I will be happy." Saying so and giving Ramlala to me he bade good-bye. Ramlala has been here since then.'²

¹ A crucial episode in the *Ramayana* was Sri Rama's voluntary exile to the forest, to redeem a pledge made by his father. The father died of grief at separation from Rama; but the latter could not return to him because of his (Rama's) high sense of duty.

² Swami Saradananda here explains that the 'father' had realized pure, selfless love as result of the company of Sri Ramakrishna: thus he saw that his chosen Ideal (Ramlala) was always with him and he could see Him whenever he liked.

'On another occasion there came a Sadhu who had absolute faith in the name of God. He also belonged to the Ramawat denomination. He had nothing with him except a water-pot and a book. The book was very dear to him. He used to worship it daily with flowers, and open and read it now and then. When I became acquainted with him, one day I persuaded him to lend me the book. When I opened it, I found that the only thing written in it with red ink in big letters, was "*Aum Ramah*". He said: "What is the use of reading a large number of books? For, it is from the one divine Lord, that the Vedas and Puranas have come out; He and His name are non-separate. Therefore, what is contained in the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas and all the other scriptures, is there in any one of His names. That is why His name is my only companion." Such was the Sadhu's faith in the name of God!'

*

'The people of upper India are greatly devoted to sadhus. The sons and nephews of the Jung Bahadur³ of Nepal once visited the temple garden; before me they showed great respect and humility. Once a young girl of Nepal came to see me with Captain. She was a great devotee, and unmarried; she knew the whole of the *Gitagovinda* by heart. Dwarika Babu⁴ and the others wanted to hear her music. When she sang the *Gitagovinda*,⁵ Dwarika Babu was profoundly moved and wiped the tears from his eyes with his handkerchief. She was asked why she was not married. She said: "I am the handmaid of God. Whom else shall I serve?" Her people respect her as a goddess, as the scriptures enjoin.'

*

'Ah! There was such beauty then that people used to stare at me; the chest and the face used always to be red, as if a light emanated from the body. As people used to stare, I always kept the body covered with a thick wrapper and asked the divine Mother importunately, "Here is your external beauty, Mother, please take it back and give me internal beauty." I used to pass my hand over the body and slapping it again and again, say, "Go in, go in". As the result of this the exterior became pale, as you see it.'⁶

³ A high official of the Maharaja of Nepal.

⁴ A son of Mathur Babu.

⁵ A poetical work, by Jayadeva, describing Sri Krishna's disports with the Gopis. On another occasion the Master mentioned that this girl sang to the accompaniment of the *esraj*, a stringed musical instrument.

⁶ On another occasion (*cf.*, *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Aug. 9, 1885) the Master added: 'If my body were still luminous, people would have tormented me; a crowd would always have thronged here. Now there is no outer manifestation. That keeps weeds away. Only genuine devotees will remain with me now.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

If there is sincerity of spirit, I tell you, for a certainty, you will attain it [self-realization] in this very life. But manly endeavour is wanted. Do you know what it is? 'I shall certainly attain Self-knowledge. Whatever obstacles may come, I shall certainly overcome them'—a firm determination like this is Purushakara [personal endeavour]. 'Whether my mother, father, friends, brothers, wife, and children live or die, whether this body remains or goes, I shall never turn back till I attain to the vision of the Atman'—this resolute endeavour to advance towards one's goal setting at naught all other considerations, is termed manly endeavour. Otherwise, endeavour for creature comforts, even beasts and birds show. Man has got this body simply to realize Self-knowledge... Advance like a hero. Don't be thwarted by anything. How many days will this body last, with its happiness and misery? When you have got the human body, then rouse the Atman within and say—I have reached the state of fearlessness! Say — I am that Atman in which my lower ego has become merged for ever. Be perfect in this idea; and then as long as the body endures, speak unto others this message of fearlessness—'Thou art That', 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!'

Vivekananda

REFLEXIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ

EDITORIAL

I

As in most of the monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order, our daily routine at Mayavati includes a gathering of all brothers after the night meal, when a holy book is read. Any guests at the Ashrama are also welcome to join the listeners' group. If any of the listeners has any doubts or questions, these are usually answered at the end, by the head of the Ashrama, or by senior brothers. Sometimes a general discussion may also begin. Recently we had as our guest a spiritual aspirant from Canada who is a follower of one of the leading modern religious movements in India. He joined us at the reading, and then asked about the meaning of māyā. 'What is this māyā?' he said. 'Why should this world, perceived and experienced by us, be an illusion?' We tried several explanations. Quoting Swami Vivekananda's famous statement, one of us said, 'Māyā is not illusion. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us.' But none of our explanations seemed to satisfy him. He obviously was clinging firmly to a misleading interpretation of māyā, as being an illusion or magic or make-believe, as given by his own leader. Without dislodging such preconceptions, as all of us know, it is not possible to help a person see from a new angle. To be sure, the discussion ended on a friendly note—but approximately where it began. Well, any discussion on māyā is bound to leave most people unconvinced: and that is indeed māyā!

But why should we wonder at a foreigner and follower of a movement which is dead set against the concept of māyā? For, most Hindus, even those who

have some doctrinal background and accept the concept of Śakti or God's power—who is also called Mahāmāyā—, would shake their heads in disagreement at the end of any such discussion. Yet Śaṅkarācārya, the great non-dualistic philosopher of India, whose name is inseparably associated with the doctrine of māyā, did not originate it himself. It has its roots in the triple texts of Vedānta—the Upaniṣads, the *Brahmā-sūtras*, and the *Gītā*—and its outlines are to be found in the writings of pre-Śaṅkara philosophers such Bādarāyaṇa and Gauḍapāda. But Śaṅkara, being the systematizer of the school of non-dualism whose writings are available to us today, was the first to develop and work out the theory of māyā in logical terms. His main objective was to reconcile apparently contradictory statements in the scriptures about the formless, attributeless non-dual spiritual Reality, and the origination, from It, of multiplicity: this boundless creation consisting of innumerable worlds and species of living beings including man. Following Śaṅkara, philosophers of non-dualism such as Śrī Harṣa, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Vidyāraṇya, and Appayya Dīkṣita have laboured to classify and consolidate this doctrine of māyā. But as an almost necessary result, even among non-dualists there have come into being several subdivisions of doctrinal variations. In its application, especially to cosmic and individual aspects, the māyā doctrine has come to assume a very complex structure. However, in its essentials it remains much the same as when first propounded by Śaṅkara.

II

In discussing the concept of māyā we should always bear in mind that its purpose is not to explain the nature of the world or the paradoxical predicament of man. It is an attempted answer—pro-

bably the most satisfactory—to the profoundest of all metaphysical riddles, namely, the *limitation* of the unlimited, the *conditioning* of the unconditioned, or the *relativity* of the Absolute. The Upaniṣads declare categorically that Brahman is the non-dual Truth and Reality, that the whole universe is nothing but Brahman, and that the Ātman, indwelling each being, is identical with Brahman. But the common experience of us all is utterly opposed to this assertion. We do not see this unitary infinite Truth. On the contrary, we clearly and constantly perceive the phenomenal universe with its endless diversity, characterized by change and destruction, clash and conflict. Moreover, our inner individual experience is also one of utter limitation, discontent, and inadequacy. In our thoughts and emotions, doubts and aspirations, we fail to see any unchanging centre of reality. Why should this be so? Has the non-dual Brahman really changed into the concrete material universe, and the restless individual ever pursuing peace? The proponents of the māyā-concept say, on the basis of scriptural teaching and the experience of sages: 'No, Brahman remains actually unchanged. The phenomenal universe, the individuals, and all else, perceived in Brahman, are only *apparent*. It is like seeing a snake in a rope in dim light. The rope does not actually change into a snake. The transformation of the rope into a snake is only apparent—as long as the misperception lasts. With the arrival of a bright light the rope is perceived as it is. Thus when the knowledge of reality dawns, no multiplicity is seen: only the non-dual Brahman is perceived.' Since the experience of the limited universe and of one's own personality as *in* or *arising from Brahman*, is inexplicable, the nature of māyā also remains inscrutable. *Māyāvāda* or the doctrine of māyā, is also called *vivarta-*

vāda, as it offers the explanation of an apparent transformation (*vivarta*) of Brahman into the empirical universe and the individual souls.

The Upaniṣads, which embody the mystical experiences of the Vedic seers and which form the foundation of Śaṅkara's non-dualistic philosophy, declare in many passages that the non-dual Brahman alone is the one all-pervading Being or Existence which is the substratum and substance of the phenomenal universe. Thus:

'In the beginning, my dear, this [universe] was Being (*sat*) alone, one only without a second. Some say that in the beginning this was non-being (*asat*) alone, one only without a second; and from that non-being was born. 'But how, indeed, could it be thus, my dear? How could being be born from non-being? No, my dear, it was Being alone that existed in the beginning, one only without a second.'

'... that which is the subtle essence—in it all that exists has its self. That is the True, That is the Self. That thou art, O Śvetaketu.'¹

'All this is verily Brahman. From It the universe comes forth, in It the universe merges, and in It the universe breathes...'²

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

'Whatever there is—the whole universe—vibrates because it has gone forth from Brahman, which exists as its Ground... Those who know It become immortal.'³

Śaṅkara, in his commentaries on the above texts and on many others,⁴ makes it

¹ *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VI. ii. 1-2; viii. 7

² *ibid.*, III. xiv. 1

³ *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* (*K. U.*), II. ii. 13; iii. 2

⁴ *Vide* for instance, Śaṅkara's commentaries on *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, II. 6-7; *K. U.*, II. iii. 12-3; *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, I. i. 7

perfectly clear that Reality or Being is the essence of creation; it is only the mould of name and form that is insubstantial. Just as when pots and pans are manufactured out of clay or ornaments out of gold, the substance of clay or gold remains intact, so with Reality. What make us forget the substance, clay or gold, are the names and forms of pots and pans or ornaments. 'The whole world', says Śaṅkara in one place while commenting on the *Brahmasūtras*, 'is an effect of Brahman, and is non-different from It.' In consonance with the teaching of the Upaniṣads, tracing the origination of the relative world to Brahman, Śaṅkara attributes a dual aspect to Brahman—'the relative with its multiplicity engendered by names and forms, and the Absolute, devoid of all adjuncts'.⁵ It is thus clear that Śaṅkara's purpose in emphasizing the concept of *māyā* is not to devalue the empirical world and individual souls as illusory, but to assert their essential identity with the Absolute. That the essence of the phenomenal world is nothing but Brahman is well brought out by a verse in a Vedāntic treatise, ascribed by some scholars to Śaṅkara himself:

'Every entity has five characteristics, namely, existence, cognizability, attractiveness, form, and name. Of these, the first three belong to Brahman and the next two to the world.'⁶

The first three characteristics correspond to the Existence (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), and Bliss (*ānanda*) of Brahman, the Absolute, and the latter two constitute the chief features of *māyā*.

Sages who rise beyond the relative consciousness experience the truth of Brahman in the multiplicity of the phenomenal

⁵ द्विरूपं हि ब्रह्म अवगम्यते नामरूपविकार भेदो-
पाधिविशिष्टं, तद्विपरीतं सर्वोपाधिविवर्जितम् ।

Śaṅkara on *Brahmasūtras*, I. i. 12

⁶ *Dṛg-dṛśya-viveka*, 20

world. For them, the nature of *māyā* is revealed. Swami Vivekananda was once asked by a western devotee, 'Did Buddha teach that the many was real and the ego unreal, while Orthodox Hinduism regards the One as the Real, and the many as unreal?' 'Yes,' answered the Swami. 'And what Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I have added to this is, that the Many and the One are same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes.'⁷ A devotee once asked Sri Ramana Maharshi, an Advaitic sage of this century, 'Is not Maya illusion?' Maharshi replied: 'Maya is used to signify the manifestations of the Reality. Thus Maya is only Reality.'⁸

III

When Śaṅkara says or implies that *māyā* is not real, it is to be understood that *māyā* is not absolutely real. Absolute reality or *pāramārthika-satyatva* belongs to Brahman alone, for It does not change a whit in Its essential nature. Change and transience characterize space-time-bound entities. But Brahman transcends space and time. Space, time, and causation—which may also be summarized as name and form—are the very stuff of *māyā*. It has its 'reality' in the empirical existence of subject-object experience, where individuals feel their separate egos and perceive the world of phenomena. So, on this level, *māyā* is real. Śaṅkara accords it empirical reality (*vyāvahārika-satyatva*). *Māyā* is thus not unreal, in the sense of an illusion or dream or void.⁹ Its unreality is

stated only by comparison to the category of *pāramārthika* verity.

But man's destiny is the realization of his absolute, unconditioned, infinitely blissful nature. In this empirical existence, this real nature is covered, as it were, by a veil of *māyā*, otherwise called *avidyā* (nescience). This *avidyā*, according to Vedāntic thinkers, has a dual function, namely, *āvaraṇa* and *vikṣepa* (veiling and projection). Since the infinite, real nature of the soul is covered, man identifies himself with his ego, mind, body and senses, and becomes entangled in a plethora of relations with the phenomenal world. The power of *māyā* in hiding the real nature of the soul and conjuring up finite ego-based entanglements is very well illustrated by the following story:

'Indra, the king of the gods, once became a pig, wallowing in mire. He had a she-pig and a lot of baby pigs, and was very happy. Then some gods saw his plight, and came to him, and told him: "You are the king of the gods, you have all the gods under your command. Why are you here?" But Indra said, "Never mind; I am all right here: I do not care for heaven, while I have this sow and these little pigs." The poor gods were at their wits' end. After a time they decided to slay all the pigs one after another. When all were dead, Indra began to weep and mourn. Then the gods ripped his pig-body open, and he came out of it and began to laugh when he realized what a hideous experience he had had—he, the king of the gods, to have become a pig, and to have thought that that pig-life was the only life!'

Most of us are more or less in the situation of Indra in the story, being deeply attached to our egos and the webs or relations we have woven. But then *māyā* itself will not allow us human beings to forget our true nature altogether! She has such disconcerting paradoxes within herself, that she will shock us repeatedly till we are utterly out of our slumber of igno-

⁷ *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 5 Nivedita Lane, Calcutta-3, 1967), Vol. I. p. 29

⁸ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (3 volumes in one) (Sri Ramanashramam, Tiruvannamalai, S. India, 1968), p. 16

⁹ *vide* Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-sūtras*, II. ii, 28-9

rance. Human life is full of inexplicable contradictions and insoluble riddles. Man has an insatiable desire to know. But finality can never be reached in any direction. Man wants to cling firmly to life. But the inevitable fact of death mocks at this clinging. Acquisition and enjoyment are the goals of the majority. But penury and misery are the common fate of most of them. Thinkers, philosophers, and social and political leaders want to usher in the millennium, but find that problems of individuals and societies become more and more complex: in the place of one problem solved, five more sprout. Pushed and pummelled from within and without, man at last begins to perceive that the contradictions of māyā cannot be solved by going deeper into māyā, but only by transcending it. To transcend māyā is to reach the Absolute where all contradictions cease, and to realize that what appears to be caught within the network of māyā is also the same Absolute Reality.

A well-known prayer in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* appeals to the Lord to lead the devotee from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality. What is referred to here as unreality, darkness and death, is multiplicity, wrought by māyā. But the way to the great Beyond also lies through māyā—a strange mixture of truth and untruth, darkness and light. The great fact that such a passage is possible—as witnessed by saints and sages—shows that māyā is not utterly false. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has expressed it:

‘If the world were altogether unreal, we cannot progress from the unreal to the Real. If a passage is possible from the empirical to the Real, the Real is to be found in the empirical also. The ignorance of the mind and the senses and the apparent futilities of the human mind are the material for the self-expression of that Being, for its unfold-

ing. *Brahman* accepts world existence. The Ultimate Reality sustains the play of the world and dwells in it.’¹⁰

By overcoming the effects of the projective power of māyā and by cleaving through its veils, we destroy māyā and realize our true nature. This can be done by taking recourse to the positive, helpful aspect of māyā, called *vidyā-māyā* (māyā of knowledge) and detaching oneself utterly through alert discrimination from its opposite, *avidyā-māyā*. Qualities such as discrimination, renunciation, self-control, detachment, contemplativeness, and humility, constitute *vidyā-māyā*. The mind purified and directed back on itself, in deep contemplation of the Reality, gets the power of rending the meshes of space-time-causation, the veil thrown by māyā over every soul. Similarly, the devotee who takes up a divine form or the personality of an Incarnation of God, for meditation, and the holy name for repetition, thereby claims the aid of *vidyā-māyā* to transcend māyā itself by realizing the divine Ideal which is none other than Brahman in Its personal aspect. By thus transcending māyā, we attain true freedom, bliss, and wisdom. By such realization of the Reality, one’s vision is completely transformed. ‘Turning one’s sight into wisdom-vision, one should see this world as made of Brahman. That is the noblest gaze, and not the one directed to the tip of one’s nose.’¹¹ The eyes of such a wise man cease to see the distinctions of the relative and Absolute, the lower and higher, the limited and unlimited. Sri Ramakrishna, who had himself attained this type of vision, the ‘spiritual eye’, speaks metaphorically of the perception of a man of wisdom, thus:

¹⁰ S. Radhakrishnan: *The Principal Upaniṣads* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1953), p. 85

¹¹ Śaṅkara: *Aparokṣānubhūti*, 116

'Some have heard of milk, some have seen milk, and some have drunk milk. He who has merely heard of it is "ignorant". He who has seen it is a jnani. But he who has drunk it has vijnana, that is to say a fuller knowledge of it. After having the vision of God one talks to Him as if He were an intimate relative. That is vijnana. '...You want to climb to the roof; then you must eliminate and leave behind all the steps, one by one. The steps are by no means the roof. But after reaching the roof you find that the steps are made of the same materials—brick, lime, and brick-dust—as the roof. It is the Supreme Brahman that has become the universe and its living beings and the twenty-four cosmic principles. That which is Atman has become the five elements... 'After attaining vijnana one can live in the world as well. Then one clearly

realizes that God Himself has become the universe and all living beings, that He is not outside the world.'¹²

In conclusion we may recollect here a verse from the *Mahābhārata* which asserts the reality of both the creation with its creatures, and the Absolute:

'Brahman is true, the universe is true, and true, verily, is Prajāpati (lord of creation). All beings are born of the Truth. This universe, filled with living beings, is true.'¹³

¹² 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), pp. 367-8

¹³ ब्रह्म सत्यं जगत् सत्यं सत्यं चैव प्रजापतिः ।
सत्याद् भूतनि जातानि सत्यं भूतमयं जगत् ॥

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

25/5/18

Sriman —,

Owing to illness my reply to yours of 14/5 has been delayed. Your body has been enfeebled, and so your mind has also become very unsteady and disturbed. Therefore it will not be a bad idea if you stay away from the Ashrama for a few months. R— has conveyed to you the opinion of the Holy Mother. If, begging your food, you wander about in many places, your health will become still worse, and so the Holy Mother has asked you to stay at ... itself. In my opinion, it is truly the right thing.

You have written, 'Where is duty? Where is the dividend?' That is right. But, concerning the hypothetical duty and dividend, there is surely no end to your disputation. If you had shown in action the duty and dividend, and then disputed, the solution would have been simple enough. Be that as it may, when your health gets better, then after calmly considering all aspects, we may decide on what is to be done.

G— left for Sylhet this morning. The health of the Holy Mother is still weak, and the possibility of the fever's recurring is quite strong. The Ayurvedic treatment is going on. I had fever for a few days, but now am better. Accept my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
25th Paus, 1328¹

My dear —,

I am glad to receive yours of 29/12/21. . . During the practice of *nāḍī-śuddhi* (purification of the nerves) the timings of inhalation and exhalation remain the same—there is no need to alter them. For instance: if you inhale for 16 countings of the *japa* [repetition of a *mantra* or Om] then for another 16 countings of the *japa* you exhale. . .

I am keeping well. Accept my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
10th Śrāvaṇ, '30²

My dear —,

Accept my blessings. Here is the reply to yours of 8th Āṣāḍh:²

(1) The general rule is to perform two *prāṇāyāmas* (yogic breathing exercises) each time you sit for *japa* and meditation, as in the morning, evening, etc. For example: after taking your seat for *japa* and meditation, perform one *prāṇāyāma*, and at the end of your *japa*, perform another *prāṇāyāma* and offer your *japa* [to the Lord] (as I have instructed you already). In the evening too, do likewise. For those who begin to gasp—or experience pain in the chest after a few days' practice—if they keep the counting of 8—32—16,³ for them, at first, the rule is to keep the 4—16—8 number. *Prāṇāyāma* is to be practised on an empty stomach: that is, before taking any food. You may do *japa* with a full stomach, but do not then practise *prāṇāyāma*.

(2) If you do *prāṇāyāma* at least four hours after taking food, it will not be wrong. Follow this rule during the day as well as night. During *prāṇāyāma* you must think that the *mantra*, mingling with the breath, is rousing the *kuṇḍalinī*⁴ from the *mūlādhāra* centre (located at the base of the

¹ Paus: The ninth month of the Bengali year, usually falling within December-January. 1328 (Bengali Era) corresponds to 1921-22.

² Śrāvaṇ: fourth month of Bengali year, usually coinciding with July-August. The "'30" presumably means B.E. 1330, in this case corresponding with 1923. Āṣāḍh is the month preceding Śrāvaṇ.

³ *Prāṇāyāma* consists of three processes: inhalation, retention, and exhalation. The numbers here refer to the numbers of seconds to be devoted to each process.

⁴ *Kuṇḍalinī* (lit., serpent-power) is the spiritual energy dormant in all people, which, according to the Tantra, can be aroused by spiritual disciplines, so as to rise through the dynamic centres, or *cakras*, from the *mūlādhāra* upwards. These *cakras* are described as 'lotuses', the *sahasrāra* being the highest, with a thousand petals. The *ājñā* just below it at level of the eyebrows, is generally said to have two petals.

spinal column), and is uniting it with the luminous Paramātman in the *sahasrāra* centre in the head. Whatever I have previously told you [at the time of initiation], go through all those steps first in proper sequence, and then perform *prāṇāyāma* and *japa*. If you practise in this manner for a few days, you yourself will be able to experience everything.

(3) Meditate on the holy form of the guru in the white lotus of twelve petals, situated above the eyebrows. At that time you should chant the meditation stanza on the guru... The Lord, taking a resplendent form resembling the person from whom one receives initiation, resides in that lotus as the guru. When you engage yourself in *japa*, meditation, worship, etc., then first uttering his meditation-stanza, thinking of him, and reciting 'Akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākāram, etc...' ⁵ you should offer your salutations. In this matter, do in their proper order, whatever steps I have been telling you for so long.

(4) Face to face: that is to say, if you are sitting facing east, think in this way: the Iṣṭa or Guru is sitting facing west.

(5) The thousand-petalled lotus has many tints; it is not all of one colour... Know that all these 'lotuses' are located within the spinal column [and head]. All the spiritual disciplines are verily based on yoga. In this respect, don't create doubts in the mind by looking into books. You will understand by yourself what is to be done next.

(6) ...

(7) It is best to do *japa* mentally, that is, without moving the tongue, lips, or anything.

(8) During *japa*, the repetition should be accompanied by thinking on the Divine form...

Accept my blessings. Tell S—— that I have received his letter and will reply as per convenience. Give him my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher
SRI SARADANANDA

⁵ *Guru-stotram* (Hymn to the Guru), from the *Viśvasāra-tantra*. The stanza of which these words are the beginning, runs thus:

अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम् ।

तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

'Salutations to the Guru who has made it possible to realize Him, by whom this entire universe of movable and immovable objects is pervaded.'

A TEMPLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

[We bring our readers here-below the Benedictory Address delivered by Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, at the dedication celebrations of the newly-built Temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, on 3 February, 1976. The Address explains in clear phrases and in a brief compass the significance of a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, and incidentally dwells on two important aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings; namely, religious harmony and the unity of mankind.— *Ed.*]

Six years back I had the pleasure of laying the foundation stone of this temple. At that time it was a mere idea—a dream, you could say—but today it is an accomplished fact. Yesterday the temple which was constructed and finished was consecrated and the image of Sri Ramakrishna was also installed. And now he is seated there, blessing everyone, 'for the good of many, for the happiness of many'— *bahu-jana-hitāva bahu-jana-sukhāya*.

These temples seem to be a common feature in every civilization. Perhaps they come into existence as the result of a psychological need in man. Man wants to grasp God, who is infinite, in some concrete form and he wants some place where he can feel His presence. These are the ideas at the back of shrines in our families and of all the places of public worship, like temples, churches, and mosques. These have all come up to meet some psychological necessity or need of man. 'There are two types of temples', says Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, 'one dedicated to deities, [like Śiva, Durgā, Kālī] and others, and the other, dedicated to incarnations and saints.' Now this temple of Sri Ramakrishna comes under the second category—of those dedicated to incarnations and saints.

Perhaps there may be some hesitation in the minds of some persons, to accept

Sri Ramakrishna as an *avatāra*. Then I shall request to take him as a great saint of modern times. Śrī Kṛṣṇa further says to Uddhava, 'Those who worship the saints with a desire will attain that desire and those who worship them without any desire will attain salvation.' So here is a place for you all to worship Sri Ramakrishna, the great modern sage, if not *avatāra*, and you are sure to get whatever you desire. All your desires will be fulfilled. And if you pray without desires you are sure to attain salvation. So this is a place where anyone can come and realize the four *puruṣārthas* (values of life)—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* (righteousness, wealth, enjoyment, and emancipation). If anyone worships with desires, he will get *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*; and if he worships without desires he will attain *mokṣa*.

But Sri Ramakrishna was not merely a saint, he was something unique, a saint of a unique type. He had realized in his life through *sādhanās* (spiritual disciplines) as prescribed by the various religions, that all religions ultimately lead to the same truth. So he had come to know through his own realizations that all religions were true and that they ultimately led to the same goal. That made him declare, '*Jato mat tato path*'— 'As many faiths, so many paths (to God-realization).' Thus Sri Ramakrishna is the symbol of religious

unity. He is also the symbol of the unity of mankind. He had realized that the selfsame Ātman was in every human being, irrespective of the race or religion or nationality to which he belonged. The Ātman was there behind the apparent man. It was there in everyone—from the *brāhmaṇa* to the *caṇḍāla* (belonging to the lowest caste)—in the high and the low, in the learned and the ignorant, in the rich and the poor. Sri Ramakrishna realized that all the differences that we see—differences in the colour of the skin, differences in caste, differences in status—are all created by our ignorance; but in reality humanity is one. He realized the truth contained in the Hindi couplet, 'Rāma who was Daśaratha's son is the same Rāma who is immanent in all.'¹ Thus Sri Ramakrishna made no difference between man and man; and so I say that this temple is open for worship to everyone, to whatever nationality he or she may belong, to whatever

race, or country, to whatever caste—*brāhmaṇa* or *kṣatriya* or *caṇḍāla*. Be they rich or poor, learned or ignorant, this temple is open to all: even to the people professing other religions. Because they will find that Sri Ramakrishna is their very own, as he had realized the ultimate Reality by taking recourse to each of these religions. So this temple, I should say, is a universal temple where people are to be united as one human community. And particularly for our country this ideal of unity is very much needed today when we are passing through critical times. Swami Vivekananda used to say, 'India belongs to Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna is India.' So you will all be united under the flag of Sri Ramakrishna.

I pray to him that he may bless you all to realize these great ideals, so that these twin forms of unity—unity of religion and unity of mankind—may spread all over the country, and particularly in Madhya Pradesh, 'for one's own salvation and for the good of all'—'*ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*'.

Om! Peace, peace, peace!

¹ जो राम दशरथ का बेटा ।
वही राम घटघट में लेटा ॥

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

VIGILANCE IS THE PATH TO ETERNAL LIFE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

I

Human life is proverbially short. Śaṅkara, the great saint-philosopher of India, compares the unsteadiness of life to the trembling drops of water on a glossy lotus-leaf. And humanity has yet to see the man who will not die. Yet the religions of

the world speak of eternal life. And they mean it, too.

What, then, is eternal life? As understood in Hinduism, it is that life which is not affected by death. It is the actualization of the immortality of the soul here and hereafter. It is the life of the spirit and

in the spirit. It is the life of the *jīvan-mukta*, one who is spiritually liberated while living in this body. It is the life of attained Buddhahood.

Vedānta speaks of the apparent man and the real man. The apparent man is the one who is born, who grows, goes about, enjoys and suffers, and like animals and plants dies after a number of years, only to be reborn. He is limited and ruled by time, space and causality.

The real man is the eternal spiritual principle in man, which neither is born nor dies. It is not limited by time, space or causality. It is the uncaused cause of everything in the universe. In the individual context it is called the *Ātman*, and in the cosmic context, Brahman. It is *the* Reality. It is the Absolute. It is the ultimate Truth. It is the One which alone endures from everlasting to everlasting.

That life alone can be said to be eternal which is lived in the constant awareness of the ultimate fact that 'I am the *Ātman*', that I am not the body, senses, or mind, intellect or ego. I am not composed of elements, I am of the nature of pure Consciousness untainted by any materiality.

He who has entered this eternal life has become a very different person, though he may outwardly look like anyone else. He is not easily understood or followed. It is said in the Hindu epic the *Mahābhārata*:

'As the path of birds in the air or of fish in water is invisible, even so is the path of the possessor of illumination.'¹

Again, this idea finds a different expression in St. John's Gospel:

'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'²

But as by fins we can identify a fish, as by wings, a bird; as by seeing a straw afloat in the air we may know which way it is being borne by the wind, so by certain signs we may know a person born of the spirit, one who has crossed the bounds of mortality and entered into eternal life, though it is not easy to follow his course.

What are these signs? The world's scriptures—and the Hindus' in greatest detail—give many hints. Among these are:

Such an one is not perturbed by adversity. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*: 'Established in that state, one is not shaken even by the heaviest of afflictions.' Even proceed to kill him: he will not raise his little finger in self-defence.

He does not worry about anything—what to eat, what to wear, where to live. He has no problem: all his problems have been dissolved once and for all. He is always at peace. He is incapable of doing any selfish or sensuous action.

He is completely free from attachments, fears, passions, and delusions inherent in the life of the apparent man. He does not cling to, long for, or desire anything. So-called temptations never sway his serenity. Sense-objects have no appeal for his senses.

Put a garland around his neck, he is not elated. Insult him, he is not vexed. There is nothing agreeable or disagreeable to him. He does not seek or shun anything. In his eyes there is no good or evil, high or low, acceptable or unacceptable. He is same-sighted. A piece of gold or clod of earth, a friend or a foe—none of these makes any difference to him.

We cannot add anything unto him or take away anything from him, for he is simply unconcerned like the sky. He does not accumulate anything. He does not emulate anybody. He has freed himself on all sides. He has shaken off all fetters.

He is tolerant like the earth, patient like a tree, and humble like a blade of grass.

¹ *Mahābhārata*, 'Śanti parvan'. Chap. 239, 24

² John: III. 8

He is limpid like a lake without mud, whose bottom we can see. His thoughts, words, and deeds are not in conflict with one another; he is always tranquil.

He may be our neighbour. We may call him by his first name. Yet in his simple majesty he will appear to us—if our vision be a little clarified—like the distant peak of a mountain. The farther we move towards the peak, the farther it seems to recede. To all apparent men, the real man—the enlightened man—appears very distant, though indeed *he* knows he is our own true Self.

Therefore he is really a wonder of wonders.

He is like the glowing fire, without noise or smoke, after the fuel is burnt low. He is ever blissful and ever at ease, whether sitting, eating, lying, or walking. He is never surprised. He never misses anything. His wisdom encompasses everything. In the words of Lao-tzu:

[He is] self-effacing, like ice beginning to melt,

Genuine, like a piece of undressed wood,
Open-minded, like a valley,

And mixing freely, like murky water.’³

His love flows everywhere. His peace is contagious. His presence is all-pervasive. Such a person sees everything in the Self (the Reality) and the Self in everything. This is what is known as life in the spirit, which transcends both birth and death. This is eternal life.

Not that such a person’s body will not be overtaken by death. But having experientially known that he is not body but immortal Spirit, he, passing through the portals of death, becomes freed forever from the necessity of birth and death, and mingles with the vastness of life eternal, which is beyond all relativity.

³ Lin Yutang: *The Wisdom of China and India* (The Modern Library—Random House, New York, 1942), p. 590

II

We ordinary men and women obviously do not live our lives in the Spirit or Ātman. For example, most of us have heard about our great-great-grandfathers but have never seen them. And we have no chance of seeing them, either. Likewise many of us have heard about the Ātman, called the Ancient One, but have not seen It. But, unlike our ancestral fathers, the Ātman is not dead. It is our innermost Self, closer to us than even our hearts. We do not know It yet. But one day we must inevitably realize this Ātman—for it is our very own Reality.

We ordinarily live our lives at the levels of body and mind. The Spirit or Ātman in us is a prisoner of matter, manifesting itself as senses, sense-objects, and the mind.

The psycho-physical life, the life of body and mind, is one of birth and death, characterized by pairs of opposites such as good and evil, happiness and misery, oneself and others. It is a temporal, nay a momentary life limited by time and space, ignorance and delusion. It is the life of the apparent man.

The eternal life of the real man, however, is never barred from us. In fact, the imprisoned Ātman always is goading us from within, as it were, to seek It out. But in what way do we do that?

In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha says, ‘Vigilance is the path to eternal life.’⁴

III

Vigilance thus being such an important thing as may lead us to eternal life, we need to understand the concept as clearly as possible. The word vigilance has many shades of meaning and implication.

Vigilance as a spiritual discipline can be practised in a variety of ways. A person

⁴ *Dhammapada*; verse 21

practising vigilance will be more and more surprised to notice the inadequacy of his understanding of it. For until one enters into life eternal, the life of the real man, vigilance can and must always be improved. Vigilance over one's own self is by its very nature self-improving.

As the Buddha further says, '...the wise man guards his vigilance as his best treasure.' Indeed vigilance, which is the reflective power of the mind, is the root of all other virtues. We may have personal charm, many qualities of head and heart, and also plenty of the good things of life. But if we have no vigilance, every single item of our good fortune may well turn out a means to our undoing.

Vigilance is introspection, perseverance, and mindfulness. One who is really vigilant always puts forth strenuous effort to reach the ideal. He rouses himself by himself, by sternly driving away sloth. And he guides his energies through proper restraint and control. His deeds are pure. He acts with consideration. He lives according to the ethical code of conduct. He looks with great fear on thoughtlessness. He does not indulge in lust or other sensual pleasures.

As the *Dhammapada* beautifully puts it: 'Earnest among the slothful, awake among the sleepy, the wise (vigilant) man advances even as a race horse does, leaving behind the hack.'⁵

Such a person 'advances like a fire, consuming every bond, both small and big'.

IV

If such be the characteristics of the vigilant, the most notable mark of the spiritually ignorant person is that his soul is under the mastery of matter. None ever escapes therefrom without great struggle. In fact most of us do not even see any wrong in this state of affairs. Not only

so—we have learned 'reasons' why slavery to the senses and dancing attendance on sense objects are quite in order: they are even honoured with the fine name of 'duties of life'.

Bankim Chandra Chatterji was a literary giant of nineteenth-century Bengal. Once Sri Ramakrishna asked him, 'What is the duty of man?' 'Eating, sleeping and sex gratification', he replied. Sri Ramakrishna was of course utterly disgusted and did not hesitate to say so. For although such activities doubtless have a place in life for most people, they can never be the true duties of man—what to speak of ultimate objectives in life.

Those who have not yet heard the call of eternal life will thus not find much need for vigilance. The need arises only when we have heard the call, and our soul has declared revolt against the mastery of matter over ourselves. This revolt is not against anything outside. It expresses itself in our life as a continuous personal encounter with our lower self, as a hard inner struggle.

Where the senses have ruled all the time, there, in our mind, we want God to rule. But the senses will not so easily give up their age-old sovereignty. Therefore as we all know very well, in the initial stages of spiritual life, the moment we try to bring God into our heart, He is thrown out by the nearest window—if indeed He finds entrance at all!

What is the meaning of the fact that we cannot concentrate our mind on God? It is just this: the senses, as agents of the lower self, refuse to brook any limitation on their mastery. The lower self will not accept the rule of the higher self.

When we honestly give our lower self to understand that no prejudice is meant to its welfare by bringing God in gradually, it may offer some accommodation to the in-

⁵ *ibid.*, verse 29

truder. Yet often enough, after doing so, the lower self turns even religion into an instrument of its own fulfilment and gratification. Religion is thus seen to be espoused in most cases, not for enlightenment, not for liberation or love of God, but for being better able to eat, sleep, and enjoy the sense-life.

Expressed in this way, this may appear offensive. But go out and see — it is a fact. Go within and see: we shall find it to be a greater fact. Where is the yearning for God within our heart? As Sri Ramakrishna says, people shed jugfuls of tears for wife, children and money, but who weeps for God?

There are of course millions of religious people in this world. Well, the vast majority of them are religious for reasons that are comfortably worldly. As the Spanish mystic, Juan d'Ávila, says:

'How many think they love Him who only love themselves; how many think they seek Him, while they only seek themselves! How many do we call spiritual who are purely carnal!'

Srī Kṛṣṇa, however, very generously says in the *Gītā* that even such self-seeking devotees are also to be considered high-minded people. For they have at least turned towards God on some pretext. They have given an opening to God in their lives, for which God would appear to be pleased.

But those heroic souls who really and deliberately seek entry into eternal life, have addressed themselves to a task than which there is none in the universe more staggering. They aim at the complete subjugation of their lower self. The immensity of their task is well expressed in another saying of the *Dhammapada*:

'If one man conquers in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquers himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.'⁶

⁶ verse 103

And this self-conquest in psychological terms is nothing but the attainment of perfect purity of heart characterized by desirelessness. There is no way of attaining purity of heart which does not demand vigilance. Only oneself can *watch* for one's own impurities. Says the *Dhammapada*:

'By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone; by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself; no one can purify another.'⁷

How do we work to purify ourself? First we have to know what we *want*, what we value. As the *Dhammapada* says, we have to hold ourself dear. Our 'self' here means our real Self, the Ātman, not our apparent self, or ego, which is the seed-bed of all sensuality, all desire, which cause all the impurities of the mind. Says the *Dhammapada*:

'If a man holds himself dear, let him watch himself carefully.'⁸

'As rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, passion will break through an unreflecting mind. As rain does not break through a well-thatched house, passion will not break through a well-reflecting mind.'⁹

This clarion call, therefore, comes from the heart of Vedānta:

'Arise, awake, approach the great and learn. Like the sharp edge of a razor is the path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross.'¹⁰

There is no more urgent work to be done in life than this. True religion is not intellectual assent or dissent. It is not theorizing about God or moralizing about society. It is not in donning a particular kind of robe. It is in vigilance. It is in arising and awaking. It is in learning about

⁷ verse 165

⁸ verse 157

⁹ vss. 13, 14

¹⁰ *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, I, iii, 14

the truth from the spiritual masters and bringing about transformation within ourselves, in the light of the truth thus learned.

In his commentary on the above verse of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara says:

'The word "arise" here means to be intent upon realizing the Self or Ātman, renouncing all other vain pursuits. The word "awake" here means, to get up from the slumber of ignorance which conjures up the many illusions of life, running after which we suffer no end of misery.'

But in order to be able to arise and awake and *stay* awake, we basically need what in Sanskrit is called *śiva-saṅkalpa*, or good intent. There is a particularly fervent prayer for this good intent in the Vedas,¹¹ for without a mind full of auspicious intentions, we cannot really arise and awake. If the mind is perverse, we just cannot do

anything properly in regard to our spiritual life. There is a popular saying in India, which Sri Ramakrishna used often to quote: 'One may have the grace of God, the spiritual teacher and the holy men, but if one does not have the grace of one's own mind, everything will go to rack and ruin.' Therefore we should constantly pray for *śiva-saṅkalpa*, not only for ourselves but for all. One of the religious songs very dear to Mahatma Gandhi contains the significant supplication, 'O Lord, give everybody good intentions.'

Whether or not we do have good intentions, we can infer from certain signs. Without good intentions the mind rushes after and delights in ease and luxury, idleness and indulgence and the like. When we have good intentions, the mind is inclined towards practice of spiritual disciplines and takes delight in the hardships of such living. It then abhors idleness, and the frivolities of life.

But this flame of good intent is subject to the inclemencies of inner weather. Today's intent may not last tomorrow. Today's intensity may become tomorrow's indifference. Therefore, we must take great care to guard this flame of good intent and perpetually increase its strength. Otherwise it is very likely that we may fall asleep shrouded in self-hypnosis or delusion, even after once arising and awaking.

V

There are many cases of 'fallen angels' in spiritual history. They may be said to have been the victims of non-vigilance. Whether we are monks or householders it does not matter, for each of these stages of life is an *āśrama*, whence one strives to attain perfection. But if we do not hold firmly, watchfully to the ideal with all our might, no one will be able to save us from

¹¹ 'Hymn of Good Intent (*śiva-saṅkalpa*) in *Śukla-Yajur-veda* (XXXIV. 1—6:— translation by Dr. V. Raghavan; *The Indian Heritage*—Publ. by Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, 1956, pp. 27-8). It runs thus:

'That mind, the divine, which when one is wakeful or asleep, reaches far, which is the far-reaching light of all lights (sense of all senses), may that Mind of mine be of good intent. By which the active and the wise perform the duties in sacrifice and intellectual activities, that which is the wonder-being inside the beings, may that Mind of mine be of beautiful intent. That which is knowledge and fortitude, that which is the immortal light within all beings, without which no act is done, may that Mind of mine be of auspicious resolve. That immortal by which all is to be comprehended, by which the sacrifice with its seven priests grows, may that Mind of mine be of good intent. In whom Ṛks, Sāman, and Yajus are established, like spokes in the hub of the wheel, in whom all the thought of beings is woven, may that Mind of mine be of good intent. That which directs men like a good charioteer directing his horses with reins, that which is established in the heart, is immortal and swiftest, may that Mind of mine be of good intent.'

falling away. The pull of our lower self is great indeed!

There is this very significant exhortation in the Old Testament:

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.'¹²

One may be a worshipper of the personal God or a seeker of impersonal Reality. In either case, the worshipping or the seeking will have to be done 'with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might'. And this is called vigilance. Without this, the goal will never be reached, no matter how clever one is.

The Lord is said to be the Pūrṇa, the full, the whole, the complete One. How then can one attain Him without giving oneself fully? We cannot have all the pleasures of the senses, material enjoyments, what are called 'the good things of life'—and also God: that simply does not happen. We have to give all our heart, soul, and might. Is it a joke to seek to enter eternal life? Sporadic awakemng may come and does come in many a life. Whimsical good intentions crop up in many. But what is needed in spiritual life is a genuine awakening, a continuing awakening. It is not easy to keep the once-got awakening undimmed all the while. It requires heroic efforts based on deliberate, seasoned, steady good intent which grows stronger day by day.

In her Dakshineswar days, the Holy Mother used to get up at 3 a.m. and, after a bath in the Ganga, immerse herself in devotions. One day, due to indisposition, she was a bit late to rise and sit for meditation. But then to her surprise she noticed that for some days following, she had been rising later and later for meditation, though

she was not particularly ill. Then she realized that, through that one day's little indisposition as a pretext and a plea, the mind was playing tricks on her, by making her disposed to idleness. Knowing full well that in any auspicious work one requires sincere dedication and firm resolve, she became alert for the future. Now Holy Mother was purity itself. If even her mind could play tricks on her in such fashion for a few days, how much more trickery must we expect from our minds!

The yet-unpurified mind indeed appears as a great confuser. It functions as agent of the lower self, of the apparent man, which constantly tries to subvert the efforts of the higher self. And as such it knows innumerable varieties of trickery. It may ambush us even by feigning piety. Sometimes it will cajole us, sometimes flatter, sometimes it will threaten us in order to fulfil its subversive purpose. It may even go a long way with the higher self, nodding consent all the time; then in a moment of unawareness, it will have us trapped in some design of its own. And when we waken to this, we find it too late to escape without great harm.

It is one of the most difficult tasks of vigilance, to foil the efforts of this enemy within—this impure mind. Therefore we always have to keep watch over our mind, even as it always watches us to take us unawares. We have to keep watch over our mind even in sleep. One great mystic says, 'I sleep but my heart waketh.' This is what is called *yoga-nidrā* in Hindu terminology, the sleep of a Yogī, which is so different from the ordinary man's *tāmasic* or abject, langourous sleep.

Watching the mind will have to be done with a view to educating it to become the willing and devoted friend and servant of our higher self. Because whatever we intend to achieve in spiritual life will have

¹² Deuteronomy: VI. 4, 5

to be done through the help of the purified mind. In fact the purification of mind itself is the main task of spiritual life. When the mind is perfectly purified, entry into eternal life happens automatically.

Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic, says that the tendency to sin is not sin, but the consent to sin is the sin. Because of this universal problem, Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there must not be any theft in the chamber of attitude. What the mouth says, the mind must not belie. According to Sri Ramakrishna, without perfect accord of thought and deed, there is no defeating the sinful tendencies in man. Now, both this tendency and consent to sin come from the mind. Then how do we save ourselves from committing sin, without stopping the very tendency to consent to sin?

Here comes the question of strategy in vigilance. Vigilance is not only a watchtower above. It is also an operational base on the ground. The lower part of the mind knows many tricks to trouble us. We need superior dexterity and strength to subdue it. That part of our mind with which we have cultivated good intent has to be made completely our own through continuous indoctrination by the higher self. Then that part of the mind will refuse to consent to sin, even if our throat is about to be cut.

Thus, when the mind stands divided and weakened, we may through earnest spiritual practices gradually subdue the lower part—by deprivation of sense impressions. Then the whole mind will refuse to give consent to sin. In other words, being purified, it has become wholly the friend of the higher self.

This accomplished, we are on the threshold of eternal life, which as we shall see, can be reached through the practice of any

of the four yogas known in Hinduism.

As we quoted from the *Kāṭha-upaniṣad*, 'Like the sharp edge of a razor is the path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross.' The path leading to eternal life is no more comfortable than the razor's edge. But given perfect vigilance, even this most difficult journey can be successfully completed. Men have done this in different lands down the centuries. There is no reason why we, also, cannot do it.

VI

It is important to know that vigilance, except in its preliminaries, is not practised in the same way in all the yogas.

The deluded traveller in the desert runs after the mirage in a vain effort to quench his thirst. A man walking in insufficient light mistakes a rope for a snake. Such are the false expectations and false fears from which people suffer. But these sufferings can also be removed. When the true nature of the desert, and of the rope, is revealed to them by a wise man they no longer have to suffer from false hopes and fears. They can then begin to regain their peace of mind.

What are we doing all our life? We are either *running after* or *running away* from things, out of false hopes or false fears. And this causes all the worries and miseries of life. The root cause of these miseries is in the non-perception of the true nature of the Ātman. Through delusion we associate the Self or Ātman with what is not-Self, such as name, form, or action. Through ignorance we consider It as the doer, the instrument, the enjoyer of the fruits of action. From such false knowledge of the Self—which is eternally free, complete in Itself, beyond all wants and miseries—arise all our sufferings. Therefore, the task is to watchfully separate the Self from not-Self, and to stay in the Self.

It is however not easy to break this long habit of ignorance. It must be done through vigilant discrimination between Self and not-Self, and meditation on the Self. This then is the way in which vigilance is practised in the disciplines of *jñāna-yoga*, or path of knowledge.

There is the mythical bird called *cātaka*, which does not drink ordinary water. It may be dying of thirst, though all rivers and lakes are full of water, but it will not drink that water. It drinks only rain-water—but not the water of all rains. It drinks only that which falls when the star Svāti is in the ascendant. So it watches for the rise of Svāti. This is the mood of the devotee who really loves God.

One of the greatest medieval mystics of India, a queen named Mīrā, considered Kṛṣṇa as her Beloved, and worshipped Him through a constant flow of most moving songs. Expressing the anguish of her soul in one of these songs Mīrā says:

‘My eyes pine for the sight of you;
Since you left me, my Lord, I find no
rest,
My bosom heaves at your name, sweet
name!
With gaze fixed on your path I await
your return.
The night seems long as half a year.
Oh, to whom shall I recount the pangs
of my separation?
Friends, I feel as if a knife is gouging
my eyes,
When will you meet me, O Lord of
Mira,
You who bestow joy and allay pain?
For you night after night I keep vigil
And make the same lament.’

From this song we have an idea how those who deeply love a personal God pant for Him. This love may be of different types: it need not necessarily be that of a bride for the bridegroom. It can be the love of the child for the parents, or of friend for friend. It can also be the love of the servant for the master.

It is the nature of love to make us want to be near the beloved person. We want to see him, hear him, embrace him. The devotee seeks to be united with the Lord in a variety of ways. He wants to see Him not only without but also within his heart. Therefore he meditates on Him. He does not like to tire his eyes seeing the varied things of the world. He wants to make them blessed with the vision of the Lord alone. But where is the Lord? He prays and weeps for Him, calls Him by His name ceaselessly, or sings, feeling sure He is hearing; he offers in His name the best things he can gather, thinking He is waiting to accept them all.

This is how vigilance is practised in *bhakti-yoga* or the path of devotion, through *japa* or repetition of the Lord’s name with one-pointed yearning, prayer, and worship, which eventually lead to the vision of the Lord.

Every work we do produces an effect. In (Sanskrit) terminology the latter is called *karma-phala*, or fruit of action, which we shall have to reap. According to the law of karma, if we do not in this life finish reaping these fruits, we shall be born again to work out our karma. And naturally, when born again we create fresh karma for ourself through good and bad actions, for reaping the results of which again we shall have to be born. And this has to go on seemingly *ad infinitum*. This is the way *karma-yoga* describes the bondage of the soul. Unless we break this chain of karma somewhere, the soul cannot be liberated.

There are basically two ways of breaking these fetters. One is for the *karma-yogin* who believes in the personal God; the other, for the one who seeks the knowledge of Brahman. The former does every work as worship, as the instrument in the Lord’s hands, and wholeheartedly offers all the fruits of his action to the Lord. Thus, the scriptures say, he becomes free from

the necessity of reaping these fruits, and breaks the chain of karma. The *karma-yogin* who seeks the knowledge of Brahman has constantly to remember the fact that the Ātman never works. It is the detached Witness of all work. The work is actually done by the *guṇas*, which constitute our body, mind, ego, and everything else in the universe. When, through great struggle, the aspirant gets established in this right knowledge and actually perceives his Atman as the detached witness, he is freed from the bondage of actions.

Whichever may be our approach—offering all the fruits of our action to the Lord, or knowing the Ātman as the detached witness—, in each of these, ever-wakeful attention is needed so that there may not be the slightest delinquency in the attitude nor any fraud in the heart.

This is the way vigilance is practised in *karma-yoga*.

If the Ātman is within us, how is it that we do not see It? We do not see the Ātman because of the modifications of the mind. Consider a lake whose surface is disturbed by waves. When there are no waves, through its placid water we can see the bottom of the lake. Likewise, if only we could succeed in quelling the waves of the mind, we could see the Ātman, its substratum. According to Patañjali, the great teacher of Yoga, these 'waves' are due to the endless desires—attraction of sense-objects for the senses—to which the mind provides the connecting link. He therefore defines Yoga as perfect restraint of the modifications of the mind.

But how can we quell these ever-agitating modifications of the mind—that mind which is compared to a monkey, drunken, stung by scorpions, and possessed by a ghost?

The only way to quell the waves of the mind is to stop it from serving as connect-

ing-link between the senses and their objects. And this we can never do unless we renounce all desires for enjoyment. Please also remember that even if we succeed temporarily in restraining the desires of our conscious mind, still the mysterious and elusive subconscious—which is the seed-bed of those desires—remains to be tackled. How much harder must be this task!

And yet, this is where and how the *rāja-yogin* practises vigilance.

Vigilance is *the* secret of all *sādhanā* or spiritual disciplines, the successful practice of which leads one to eternal life. As one continues to practise vigilance, the time comes when the habit becomes so strong that one becomes the personification of vigilance, as it were.

First we must hold a torch in our hand. But if we become the very torch itself, what need has this torch of another? This is going beyond the need of vigilance.

The mood of such a person, who has gone beyond the need of the conscious practice of vigilance, is vividly expressed by Rāmprasād, the great Indian mystic, in a song:

'A man has come to me from a country
where there is no night,
And now I cannot distinguish day from
night any longer;
Rituals and devotions have all grown
profitless for me.
My sleep is broken; how can I slumber
any more?
For now I am wide awake in the sleep-
lessness of yoga.
O Divine Mother, made one with Thee
in yoga-sleep at last,
My slumber I have lulled asleep for
evermore.
I bow my head, says Prasad, before
desire and liberation;
Knowing the secret that Kali is one
with the highest Brahman,

(Contd. on page 274)

EDUCATION, SCIENCE, AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE LIGHT OF VEDĀNTA

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

[We bring our readers here the Convocation Address delivered by Swami Ranganathananda at the University of Burdwan, West Bengal, on 20 February this year. Presenting a profound analysis of the ideals and approaches of education, Eastern and Western, the Address also offers a brilliant synthesis of both in the light of Vedānta. Swami Ranganathananda is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

We are thankful to the authorities of the University of Burdwan for permission to reprint this Address in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The second and concluding part of the Address will be published in our next issue.—*Ed.*]

INTRODUCTION

This university is one of the hundred or so centres of what is called 'higher education' in our country. These are termed higher in relation to the institutions of secondary education called high schools. As the whole concept of the nature and role of this high and higher education is facing serious challenges from the contemporary human situation in all parts of the world, as much as in our own country, it is but relevant that our people, especially our students and teachers, subject it to a critical and searching scrutiny; and I propose to do this, briefly, in this address, in the light of what I have gathered out of the finest heritage of the East and the West, namely, spirituality and science.

UNESCO EDUCATION REPORT:

LEARNING TO BE

Already, the UNESCO has done useful work in this field through its International Commission for the Development of Education under the Chairmanship of M. Edgar Faure, former Prime Minister and Education Minister of France. That Commission has issued a preliminary report under the significant title: *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*. In the letter dated 18 May 1972 addressed

to the Director-General of the UNESCO, while presenting the Report, the Chairman writes :

'Four basic assumptions underlay our work from the start. The first, which was indeed the justification for the task we undertook, is that of the existence of an international community which, amidst the variety of nations and cultures, of political options and degrees of development, is reflected in common aspirations, problems, and trends, and in its movement towards one and the same destiny. The corollary to this is the fundamental solidarity of governments and peoples, despite transitory differences and conflicts.

'The second is belief in democracy, conceived of as implying each man's right to realize his own potential and to share in the building of his own future. The keystone of democracy, so conceived, is education—not only education that is accessible to all, but education whose aims and methods have been thought out afresh.

'The third assumption is that the aim of development is the complete development of man, in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments—as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer.

'Our last assumption is that only an over-all, life-long education can pro-

duce the kind of complete man the need for whom is increasing with the continually more stringent constraints tearing the individual asunder. We should no longer assiduously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life—"learn to be".¹

LEARNING TO BE: AN INDIAN EVALUATION

A brief review of the Report, from the Indian point of view, will be instructive in this context; I deal with it here on the lines of my communication on the Report submitted to the Indian National UNESCO Commission in April 1973.

The authors of the Report have assessed the world's educational problems in a thorough manner. It must be pointed out, however, that they have not given sufficient attention to, and a deep probe into, the 'Goals' of education and into the developing of modern 'Scientific Humanism' into a more comprehensive scientific frame for all aspects of human life, by incorporating into it the rational insights arising from a depth-study of human nature which ancient India's Upaniṣads, to name only one of such sources, have bequeathed to all humanity. The Upaniṣads 'have given me much new knowledge of human nature' says the late Sir Julian Huxley, British biologist, in a personal communication.

The authors' treatment of the important subjects of educational 'Goals' and 'Scientific Humanism', does not take into account the nature and technique of that dimension of human growth which makes the human ego expand, from its subjection to organic limitations, into the freedom of the unlimited dimension of his true self, from man's *individuality* centred in his ego into his *personality* centred in his true self. Individuality centred in the

ego is compared by the late Bertrand Russell to a billiard ball, which can have only one relation to other billiard balls, namely, collision. But man as personality can enter into other people, *communicate* with them, 'dig' affections in others. As defined by Sir Julian Huxley, 'Persons are individuals who transcend their merely organic individuality in conscious participation.'

This evolution of the *individual* into the *person* is what Vedānta calls *the spiritual growth of man* and what twentieth-century biology calls *the psycho-social evolution of man*. This subject constitutes the science of man in depth, the science of the true self of man, what the Upaniṣads call *adhyātma-vidyā*, and what Sir Julian desired modern Western thought to develop into, namely, '*a Science of Human Possibilities*'. This is the science and technique which enable man to direct his evolution from the organic to the specifically human psycho-social dimension. The physical sciences can never, by themselves, achieve this evolution for man; but they can provide him with the necessary external conditions for it. 'Science can denature plutonium, but it cannot denature evil in the heart of man', says Einstein. To this can be added the assessment made by several scientists, especially in the post-Second World War period, that physical sciences can only create *conditions* for man's happiness, but cannot ensure that *he is happy*.

The statement on page 154 of *Learning to Be* that 'never until now has he [man] stretched to such limits his attempts to elucidate the mystery of the inner world', I am sorry to point out, totally ignores and overlooks the vital contributions to human knowledge in this great field made by the sages of the Upaniṣads from their scientific and penetrating investigations into the profound mystery of the inner

¹ *Learning to Be...*, pp. v-vi

nature of man, compared with which modern Western contributions are mere *scratches on the surface*, as remarked by Sir Julian Huxley.

The stress of the authors on page 148 on '*the need for self-control, scientific method, and ethical training*', and their statement on page 153 that 'in educational activities, anything designed to help man live at peace with himself, anything which draws him out of unhappy isolation and loneliness, also helps towards harmony among the peoples', and on page 154 that 'his knowledge of his own powers spreads to knowledge of his own consciousness', and their emphasis on page 157 that 'the truer he is to himself, the more closely he follows the laws of his nature and his own calling, the nearer he comes to humanity's common calling and, in addition, the better able he is to communicate with other people'—these are all admirable sentiments and statements which, however, *cannot be derived from, and sustained by, any of the data on human nature furnished by the current physical sciences or Scientific Humanism*. But all these desirable developments in man can be derived from, and sustained fully by, the depth-data furnished by the Vedāntic study of man. These developments are the *by-products* of what Vedānta calls *the spiritual growth of man*, over and above his physical and mental growths, and what twentieth-century biology calls the evolution of man rising from the *organic* to the *psycho-social* levels.

It has become clear that man, in the modern age, has no knowledge of the profound mystery of his inner nature, and has failed to raise—has not been taught to raise—his psychic energies, enormously augmented by modern developments, from the organic to the psycho-social level of evolution, in spite of his being in the best of circumstances to do so in view of

his mastery, through his physical sciences and technology, of his external environment, and has, consequently, become stagnant at his organic level. It is precisely for this reason that he plays the contemporary tragic role of inner poverty and weakness in the context of external affluence and power, of a lonely individual in an envying crowd, of increasing boredom and uncreativity within, in the context of mechanical efficiency, inventiveness, and excitements without.

The remedy for this individual and social distortion obviously lies in the continuation of man's evolution beyond the organic level, or the continuation of his growth, beyond the physical and the mental, into the spiritual level. There is a science and technique of this spiritual growth, of this higher evolution. *And this forms, or ought to form, according to Vedānta, the central core of any meaningful education in the case of a being so high in the scale of evolution as man.*

It is only then that the very meaningful concepts of *Life-long Education*, of *Education for a Complete Man*, of *Education to Be* and not merely *Education to Do*, will become fruitful. Otherwise, these very beautiful and significant concepts, which find powerful endorsement in the following utterance of Sri Ramakrishna: *As long as I live, so long do I learn*, may become reduced, in spite of the sincere protestations of the authors of *Learning to Be*, to the mere acquisition of newer and newer information and talents throughout life. This *Learning to Be* will shine better in the light of the depth study of man given in Vedānta.

EDUCATION AS LEARNING TO DO AND LEARNING TO BE

Learning to be and learning to do have to become two inseparable aspects of any education designed to help the human

child to achieve life fulfilment. Modern education all over the world has so far concentrated only on the *learning to do* aspect. The high efficiency achieved by modern Western man and the Japanese in this field is the product of the discipline of physical science and its technological fruits. Our own country, though backward in this field at the beginning of the modern period, is steadily catching up since our political independence. When all our children, from the primary to the school final levels, apart from the few that go up to the university levels, will receive the blessings of education in modern science, reinforced by a wide range of technical training courses, we can expect to see a high level of practical efficiency in our nation. That will mark a tremendous augmentation of the human energy resources in our country unprecedented in our long history. We have to take all steps to orient our current educational processes in the direction of motivating and guiding our students to acquire the energy resources available from knowledge, organization, and self-discipline. 'The nation must acquire scientific pluck and genius', said Swami Vivekananda even at the close of the last century. Our philosophy assures us that vast energy resources are present in every child; education is the *tapas*, discipline, that helps in making them manifest, like the striking that manifests the 'fire' already present in a matchstick.

EDUCATION TO FOSTER IMAGINATION

But, *learning to do*, if carried too far without a corresponding stress on *learning to be*, will result in distortions in the human psyche and in the human social situation. These distortions, and the consequent human unfulfilments, constitute the dismal shadow on the otherwise bright human horizon of the modern scientific

age. Practical efficiency, resulting from the training of the intellect and the will, in a context of physical health and vitality and yoked to an endless pursuit of organic satisfactions, may lead to the stifling of the imagination and of the spirit of creativity, and a general sagging of spirit. This is already afflicting modern civilization, including the stifling of the roots of pure science by the charms of the fruits of applied science. It reveals the age-old truth that the pursuit of profit, power, and pleasure can be only counter-productive, can only lead man to alienation, sorrow, and unfulfilment, if carried too far and without the guidance of a deeper philosophy of man. Training of the *imagination* is necessary to foster creativity; it is the energy behind pure science, art, ethics, and religion. Referring to the importance of this faculty, Lenin said:

'This is an extremely precious faculty. To think that it is only indispensable to poets is a mistake and a foolish prejudice. It is even needed in mathematics, for without imagination neither differential nor integral calculus would have been invented'.²

The scope of current higher education in India and the world outside is thus severely restricted due to its undue stress on *learning to do*; it has to be widened to include also *learning to be*. This is the only way by which the current situation of 'human *skill* as to *means*' accompanied by 'human *folly* as to *ends*', as remarked by the late Bertrand Russell, can be transformed into human *wisdom* as to ends; and 'it follows that', he concluded by warning, 'unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow'.³

² V. I. Lenin: *Complete Works*, Vol. 45, fifth edition

³ *Impact of Science on Society*, pp. 120-1

'LEARNING TO BE' V. ADHYATMAVIDYA

The nature and content of all education for *learning to be*, as much as for *learning to do*, depends upon human insights into the nature of man and his possibilities. All education derives its scope and direction from the philosophy of man lying behind it. If that philosophy sees man only as a product of material forces, and as a seeker of organic satisfactions, without any spiritual dimension beyond, education under its guidance must manifest, at some stage, qualitative privations in man and society. This is the state of man in modern Western civilization; it views him only in terms of physics and chemistry, biology and behaviouristic psychology. Such a materialistic philosophy touches man only on the surface, touches only 'man, the known', and fails to comprehend 'man, the unknown', in the striking terminology of the American scientist, the late Alexis Carrel. It may produce striking results in the short run, but prove disastrous in the long run. There is need to view man in depth; there is need for a new science, 'a science of human possibilities', as demanded by Sir Julian Huxley.

The world outside, as much as most people in India itself, do not yet know that it was such a science of human possibilities that India developed ages ago in her Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, and has continued to foster up to our own times, as Vedānta and Yoga, as the *adhyātma-vidyā*, the *vidyā* or science of man in depth, the science and technique of a comprehensive spirituality encompassing action as well as contemplation, learning to do as well as learning to be. Indian philosophy sees no conflict between 'man, the known' and 'man, the unknown', between the physical man and the spiritual man.

It is high time that our people today, particularly our teachers and students, turn their critical interest and inquiry, and

direct their searchlight of research, into this fascinating and rewarding constituent of their hoary national tradition. As we advance into this inquiry and research, we shall get an increasing grip on the human situation in our country, through the reformulation and implementation of educational goals and processes in the light of our own philosophy of man, whereby a happy synthesis of physical sciences with the science of spirituality will be achieved, resulting in total human enrichment, internal, as well as external, qualitative as well as quantitative. Vedānta as the philosophy of man's material and spiritual welfare finds a beautiful statement in Śaṅkarācārya's brief introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, which has been highly eulogized by Swami Vivekananda in our time, 'The Vedic *dharma* is verily twofold, of the nature of action and of the nature of contemplation, meant to ensure the material welfare and the spiritual liberation of all beings, and conducive to the maintenance (in steady health) of the world order'.⁴

THE INDIAN VISION OF THE SPIRITUAL
UNITY OF ALL EXISTENCE

The *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad* opens with a question, in its third verse, put by a seeker by name Śaunaka to Aṅgīrasa, a householder and spiritual teacher, 'What is that (Truth), O blessed one, by knowing which all this manifested universe becomes known?'⁵ To this, the teacher gives a

⁴ द्विविधो हि वेदोक्तो धर्मः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो निवृत्तिलक्षणश्च । जगतः स्थितिकारणं प्राणिनां साक्षाद् अभ्युदय निःश्रेयसहेतुः . . . ।

vide *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. III (1960), p. 328. for Swamiji's eulogy of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā*.

⁵ कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवति ।

reply in which all *vidyā* or science is classified into two: *parā vidyā*, higher science or knowledge, and *aparā vidyā*, lower knowledge; and the teacher defines *aparā vidyā* as all physical sciences, all positivistic knowledge, including all the second-hand spiritual knowledge contained in the sacred Vedas and other sacred books of religions. And he defines *parā vidyā* as *yayā tat akṣaram adhigamyate*—‘that by which the imperishable Reality, Brahman or God, is realized’. The sages of the Upaniṣads, after a critical and penetrating search into the depth of man—‘by means of subtle *buddhi* or reason that had been trained by the sages in the search and discovery of subtle truths’,⁶ as one of the Upaniṣads puts it—had discovered that imperishable Reality as the one and non-dual Self, the *Ātman*. The opening verse of the *Īsā-upaniṣad* proclaims this sublime truth in a verse which has inspired the philosophy of the *Gītā* and innumerable spiritual seekers thereafter, ‘All this universe, in all its changing forms, is enveloped by the Lord’.⁷ The second verse of chapter five of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, which Śaṅkarācārya introduces in his commentary in the words, ‘The *Ātman* is not a dweller in the “city” of one (the human) body only; what else? He is the dweller in all bodies’,⁸ says:

‘He is the swan dwelling in the heaven (in the form of the sun), the air filling the atmosphere, the fire dwelling on the altar, the holy guest in the house; (He is) in man, in gods, in the sacrifice, in the immensity of space; (He is) born in water (as the aquatic creatures), on the earth (as

insects, reptiles, and mammals); (He is) born as (the fruit of) sacrifice, born of the mountains (as rivers flowing from the mountains to the ocean); (He is) the True and the Great’.⁹

This great verse, conveying a great vision, occurs also in the *Rg-veda* (4.40.5), with the last word omitted. This is the vision that determined the Indian attitude to nature, to the physical, botanical, zoological, and human environments, not as an enemy to be conquered, as in the West, but as a friend to be understood and respected and used. As an enemy, man plunders and ravages nature; that attitude inevitably passes on to other human beings also, resulting in wars and colonial exploitations and slave trade; it produces serious ecological imbalances, until violated nature begins to violate and mutilate the perpetrator himself. This is the backlash that is being experienced by modern man, and that is posing a serious challenge to human wisdom today.

SIR J. C. BOSE AND THE SCIENTIFIC VISION OF UNITY

The Indian vision of the spiritual unity of all existence is, accordingly, receiving responsive echoes from increasing numbers of thinkers and scientists in the post-war West; criticisms of economics of affluence, of GNP as the false god of economic growth, of the unbridled pursuit of organic satisfactions, etc., are increasing in volume and intensity; and books about nature, upholding the Indian vision and quoting Upaniṣadic passages, are coming out in the West more and more. One such recent book is *The Secret Life of Plants* by Peter

⁶ अग्र्या बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूदनदर्शिभिः । *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, III. 12

⁷ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

⁸ स तु नैकशरीरपुरवर्त्येव आत्मा, किं तर्हि, सर्वपुरवर्ती ।

⁹ हंसः शुचिषदसुरन्तरिक्षद होता
वेदिषदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।

नृषद्वरसदृतसद् व्योमसदब्रजा गोब्रा
ऋतवाद्रिजा ऋतं बृहत् ॥

Tompkins and Christopher Bird, the subtitle of which reads: Astounding discoveries about the physical, emotional, and spiritual relations between plants and man. It is a fascinating account of the researches on the subject conducted in the United States, Soviet Russia, and other countries. Concluding their 'Introduction' to the book, the authors say:

'Evidence now supports the vision of the poet and the philosopher that plants are living, breathing, communicating creatures, endowed with personality and the attributes of soul. It is only we, in our blindness, who have insisted on considering them automata...'

What is of special interest to us in India, and to us in West Bengal, is its chapter 6, entitled 'Plant Life Magnified a Hundred Million Times', containing a moving and vivid account of the pioneering work of the late Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose in this vital field over five decades ago. The authors present, in the opening paragraph, the Bose Institute in Calcutta as the 'Indian Temple of Science' bearing the inscription: 'This temple is dedicated to the feet of God for bringing honour to India and happiness to the world'.

Starting his work of scientific research, in the field of physics, in a small twenty-foot square room for a laboratory, and creating his own tools and instruments, Bose demonstrated the existence and propagation of wireless waves in 1895 in Calcutta. His work in physics led him imperceptibly to physiology and to botany, which convinced him of the tenuous nature of the boundary line between the 'non-living' metals and 'living' plants, and of the truth of the 'fundamental unity among the apparent diversity of nature'. And on 10 May 1901, he addressed the Royal Institution in London, ending his lecture and experimental demonstration before a mixed appreciative, sceptical, scientific audience with these words:

'I have shown you this evening autographic records of the history of stress and strain in the living and non-living. How similar are the writings! So similar indeed that you cannot tell one apart from the other. Among such phenomena, how can we draw a line of demarcation and say, here the physical ends, and there the physiological begins? Such absolute barriers do not exist.

'It was when I came upon the mute witness of these self-made records, and perceived in them one phase of a pervading unity that bears within it all things—the mote that quivers in ripples of light, the teeming life upon our earth, and the radiant suns that shine above us—it was then that I understood, for the first time, a little of that message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago: "They who see but one, in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs Eternal Truth—unto none else, unto none else".'¹⁰

Giving a sample of the Western reactions to these revolutionary scientific revelations presented by Bose during his trips to Europe in 1919 and 1920, the authors quote, what they term, the 'usually reserved' *Times*:

'While we in England were still steeped in the rude empiricism of barbaric life, the subtle Easterner had swept the universe into a synthesis and had seen the *one* in all its changing manifestations'.¹¹

The authors conclude the book in these words:

'The attraction of the seer's supersensible world, or worlds within worlds, is too great to forgo, and the stakes are too high, for they may include survival for the planet. Where the modern scientist is baffled by the secrets of the life of plants, the seer offers solutions which, however incredible, make more sense than the dusty mouthings of aca-

¹⁰ Peter Tompkins & Christopher Bird: *The Secret Life of Plants*, pp. 86-7

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 94

demicians; what is more, they give philosophic meaning to the totality of life.....'

THE WITHIN AND THE WITHOUT OF NATURE

The Upaniṣads, which saw all knowledge as one, presented education as man's search for knowledge in both the fields of *aparā vidyā* and *parā vidyā*. The first gives knowledge, while the second matures that knowledge into wisdom. Without this maturity into wisdom, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow, as said by Bertrand Russell, and as illustrated by Nārada in our ancient *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*. Without this maturity through *parā vidyā*, in some form or other, all *aparā vidyā*, as history has demonstrated in the past and the modern West is demonstrating tragically in our own time, reduces itself into 'human skill as to means and human folly as to ends'.

Man masters *the means* through the physical sciences, which study the *without* of nature; and he gets the capacity to wisely direct these means to *worthy creative ends* through the science of spirituality, which studies the *within* of nature. As evolution proceeds from the cosmic to the organic dimension, through *the first evolutionary breakthrough* of matter developing the capacity to duplicate itself in the living cell, it discloses, in the fact of *awareness* or *incipient mentality* first disclosed by nature in the cell, a *within* dimension to nature which, getting clarified, defined, and becoming the identifying feature of organic systems as evolution proceeds, becomes striking and unique, through *a second breakthrough*, as *self-awareness* and *self-knowledge*, when it rises to the level of man. 'Up to now has science ever troubled to look at the world other than from *without*?',¹² asks palaeon-

tologist Teilhard de Chardin, and proceeds:

'In the eyes of the physicist, nothing exists legitimately, at least up to now, except the *without* of things. The same intellectual attitude is still permissible in the bacteriologist, whose cultures (apart from substantial difficulties) are treated as laboratory reagents. But it is still more difficult in the realm of plants. It tends to become a gamble in the case of a biologist studying the behaviour of insects or coelenterates. It seems merely futile with regard to the vertebrates. Finally, it breaks down completely with man, in whom the existence of a *within* can no longer be evaded, because it is the object of a direct intuition and the substance of all knowledge.'¹³

And de Chardin continues:

'It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an "interior" appears at the heart of beings, as it were seen through a rent. This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this "interior" should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a *double aspect to its structure*, that is to say, in every region of space and time—in the same way, for instance, as it is granular: *Co-extensive with their without, there is a within to things.*'

Vedānta refers to this 'within' as *pratyak-rūpa*, and to the 'without' as *parāk-rūpa*, of the *tattva* or truth of the universe of experience which it calls Brahman or Ātman. One without a second—*ekameva advitīyam brahma*, the spiritual unity of the 'within' and the 'without'.

PARA VIDYA: INDIA'S GREATEST GIFT TO HUMANITY

Thus *brahmavidyā* becomes also *adhyātma-vidyā*. The *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad* des-

¹² *ibid.*, p. 55

¹³ I. i. 1

¹² *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 52

cribes it also as *sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhā*—‘the basis and support of every other science’.¹⁴ Its pre-eminence among all sciences has been acknowledged uniformly by India’s secular and spiritual tradition. Śrī Kṛṣṇa affirms it in the *Gītā, adhyātma-vidyā vidyānām*—‘I am *adhyātma-vidyā* among all *vidyās*.’ This pre-eminence has been reiterated in our own time by Swami Vivekananda. Speaking on ‘The Common Bases of Hinduism’ in 1897 in Lahore, he said:

‘The great contribution to the sum total of the world’s progress from India is the greatest, the noblest, the sublimest theme that can occupy the mind of man—it is philosophy and spirituality. Our ancestors tried many other things; they, like other nations, first went to bring out the secrets of external nature, as we all know; and, with their gigantic brains, that marvellous race could have done miracles in that line, of which the world could have been proud for ever. But they gave it up for something higher; something better rings out from the pages of the Vedas, “That science is the greatest which makes us know Him who never changes!” The science of nature, changeful, evanescent, the world of death, of woe, of misery, may be great, great indeed; but the science of Him who changes not, the Blissful One, where alone is peace, where alone is life eternal, where alone is perfection, where alone all misery ceases—that, according to our ancestors, was the sublimest science of all. After all, sciences that can give us only bread and clothes and power over our fellow-men, sciences that can teach us only how to conquer our fellow-beings, to rule over them, which teach the strong to domineer over the weak—those they could have discovered if they

willed. But praise be unto the Lord they caught at once the other side, which was grander, infinitely higher, infinitely more blissful, till it has become the national characteristic...’¹⁵

And, referring to the need for our people’s laying hold of, and assimilating, this invaluable heritage of their nation in the modern age, for our own well-being and for the good of the rest of humanity, Swami Vivekananda said, in his reply to the Calcutta Address earlier the same year:

‘For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race which, through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast. The world is waiting for that treasure; little do you know how much of hunger and of thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers. We talk here, we quarrel with each other, we laugh at and we ridicule everything sacred, till it has become almost a national vice to ridicule everything holy. Little do we understand the heart-pangs of millions waiting outside the walls, stretching forth their hands for a little sip of that nectar which our forefathers have preserved in this land of India. Therefore we must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they have to give us; for the marvels of the region of spirit we will exchange the marvels of the region of matter. We will not be students always, but teachers also. There cannot be friendship without equality’.¹⁶

(To be concluded)

¹⁵ *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 370

¹⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 317-8

EDUCATION FOR CHARACTER-BUILDING

SRI B. N. CHAKRAVARTY

We need education to help us find out the purpose for which we have come into this world—to know the goal of our life. It is not merely to grow rich or learned, or even to achieve fulfilment for our little selves. All these are no doubt desirable ends; but they are not enough to fully satisfy man. Ultimately he can be satisfied only by developing the quality of detachment and the spirit of renunciation, and by making himself the instrument of a higher will. It should be the main aim of education to develop these qualities in man. Moreover, one of the objectives of education is to emancipate the individual, to free him from prejudices, from superstitions, from all superficial distinctions of caste and community. One has to be a human being, first and foremost. A truly educated man should be ready to extend his sympathy to all living beings, and go to the help of any human being who is suffering or in trouble. Education must make one humble and considerate in one's behaviour with others. Such a person sets up a high standard for himself yet is charitable to others: he will forgive others' faults and never bear malice to anyone.

The present-day education however, though perhaps paying lip-service to these ideals, seems having no real influence on the students' life and character. Those who have studied law often behave lawlessly. They who study civics are lacking in any social sense, and students of science seldom develop a scientific outlook. All this, thus, cannot be real education, since it does not result in formation of character, which is the essence of all education. Indeed, development of character should be

the great if not the sole object of education. This must always be linked with the improvement of our minds. The education, though modest, that teaches self-denial and self-control, is better than the 'best' one that does not. Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, help-mate of Sri Ramakrishna, had no regular schooling; yet she worked for and got the spiritual wisdom denied to most intellectuals. There is a saying which runs thus, 'No woman who is not equal to the successful management of a family, is educated.' Holy Mother had no family of her own; but all who came in close contact with her became members of her vast family. She loved and cared for them all. Judged by this standard, she was indeed very well educated—enough to teach even great intellectuals like Vivekananda.

Our ideal of knowledge, again, is well expressed by the Sanskrit adage, *vidyā dadāti vinayam, vinayād yāti pātratām*—meaning that knowledge bestows humility, and through humility one becomes a worthy person. Sri Ramakrishna illustrated this idea by an example, saying, 'When the corn is ripe, it bends down; when it is not ripe it stands erect. When a person acquires adequate knowledge and wisdom, he becomes humble. It is only when he is not so well educated that he remains vain and proud.' Our experience shows how true this is. A person not educated in the real sense, shows his contempt for others whom he thinks to be not educated in his way. Sri Ramakrishna was the model of humility, because he had real education—spiritual education—and character. To quote Swami Vivekananda:

'He always said, "If any good comes

from my lips, it is the Mother who speaks; what have I to do with it?" ... His principle was, first form character, first earn spirituality and results will come of themselves. His favourite illustration was, "When the lotus opens, the bees come of their own accord to seek the honey; so let the lotus of your character be full-blown and the results will follow." ¹

This, as Vivekananda continues, was a great lesson to learn. He says, like his Master :

'First have something to give. He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting doctrines, it is communicating. Spirituality can be communicated just as really as I can give you a flower, This is true in the most literal sense... Know Truth for yourself, and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards; they will all come. This was the attitude of my Master. He criticized no one. For years I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of condemnation for any sect. He had the same sympathy for all sects; he had found the harmony between them. A man may be intellectual or devotional or mystic, or active;... Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.' ²

Sri Ramakrishna liked people to develop in many directions—not in one direction only. That is why he so much appreciated the many-sided personality of his young disciple Swami Vivekananda and held him up as example for others to follow. Vivekananda was at once an intellectual, an athlete, a musician, a devotee,

a fine organizer, and above all a man with a great heart. Later on he was to become an outstanding scholar, religious teacher, nationalist and patriot. True education, then, is one in which science and religion, humanism and idealism, combine. Vivekananda himself defined real education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man'.

Swami Vivekananda was convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others. He wrote to friends in Calcutta :

'...the one great cause of the downfall and degeneration of India was the building of a wall of custom—whose foundation was hatred of others—round the nation...none can hate others without degenerating himself...' ³

He declared more than once, "The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself." With a feeling of great distress, Vivekananda once wrote to a disciple,

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.' ⁴

He said that the reason for this inconsistency was the lack of will power to carry ideas into practice :

'An idea which does not find expression in practice tends to become sterile. It then becomes an enemy and not a friend, however lofty it may be.'

Or again,

'If one millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say, "You are all God, O ye men and O ye animals and living beings, you are all

¹ Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. IV (1962), p. 177

² *ibid.*, pp. 177-8

³ *ibid.*, p. 365

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. V (1959), p. 15

manifestations of the one living deity!" the whole world will be changed in half an hour.'⁵

He knew that darkness would disappear, injustice, sorrows and sufferings would all be past history, and the country would rise again—if Vedic ideals were to inspire us and be practised by individuals and the society as a whole.

Vivekanda taught us many years ago the great lesson :

'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library... "The ass carrying its load of sandalwood knows only the weight and not the value of the sandalwood." If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopedias are the Rishis.'⁶

The concluding verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā* says:

'The side that has Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of yoga, and the side that has Arjuna, the wielder of the Gāṇḍīva [bow]—there surely will be fortune, victory, prosperity, and right conduct. Such is my conviction.'

Kṛṣṇa, the master of yoga, represents the height of spiritual vision; Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, represents the man of action who is intensely practical. Thus, according to the *Gītā*, when these two factors combine in an individual or a society, there shall be the full manifestation of *śrī* (fortune), *vijaya* (victory), *bhūti* (general welfare) and *dhruvānīti* (unwavering justice

and morality). Man therefore needs to combine in himself the vision of Kṛṣṇa and the heroic action of Arjuna. This combination is what we find in the personalities of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda. They all had the spiritual vision, yet at the same time they worked intensely for the salvation of others. They did not deprive mankind of the benefits of their action or their spiritual vision.

As a distinguished monk of the Ramakrishna Order has said :

'Strength is the product of man's knowing himself. A man with little self-knowledge can use it to control and exploit others, but the self-knowledge proceeding from the Atman confers universality of outlook and sympathy. It is through proper education that we can achieve this self-knowledge. A well developed character manifests more of this innate strength and energy. Character is therefore the most dependable source of strength. External possessions on the other hand confer only limited strength and limited fearlessness. A spiritual character provides the greatest strength because that alone can overcome death itself.'

Moral and spiritual training should therefore be an essential part of education. The tragedy of the world is that knowledge is so often divorced from wisdom. Education cannot be complete unless the students are endowed with a purpose. Education commences at the mother's knee, and every word spoken in the hearing of little children tends towards formation of character. If the child hears evil, sees evil, he will tend to be evil; but if he sees and hears of good things, he is likely to be good. Children like to imitate grown-ups. Character building thus begins in our infancy. Great responsibility therefore lies on parents and teachers to direct children on the right path.

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 287

⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960), p. 302

Reading about the lives of saints and knowing how they developed their character, may help us in improving our own spiritual vision. A man's character is the reality of himself. His reputation is the opinion others have formed of him. Reputation can be destroyed by slander while character can only be harmed by the man himself.

Our character, again, is the sum total of our habits. Swami Vivekananda used to say:

'If good prevails, one becomes good; if wickedness, one becomes wicked; if joyfulness, one becomes happy. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions.'⁷

On another occasion Swami Vivekananda spoke thus, urging all to cultivate goodness, purity, strength and a positive approach:

'If I teach you, therefore, that your nature is evil, that you should go home and sit in sackcloth and ashes and weep your lives out because you took certain false steps, it will not help you, but will weaken you all the more, and I shall be showing you the road to more evil than good. If this room is full of darkness

for thousands of years, and you come in and begin to weep and wail, "Oh the darkness", will the darkness vanish? Strike a match and light comes in a moment. What good will it do you to think all your lives, "Oh, I have done evil, I have made many mistakes"? ... Bring in the light and the evil goes in a moment. Build up your character, and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure...'⁸

To sum up, the essential factors in character-building are religion, morality, and knowledge. Not many find solace nowadays in religion, which seems to be at a discount. To be sure, our society is framing many laws in the attempt to 'enforce' some of our moral values; but these can have little value unless our education provides the basis for them. Whether or not one professes any religion, all can see the universal, non-denominational ideals essential to any healthy society—truthfulness, self-realization, self-sacrifice, courage, love, tolerance, service, patriotism, and the sense of responsibility. These our education must constantly try to inculcate, for the building of character, the making of good citizens.

⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. I (1962), p. 208

⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 357

(Contd. from page 261)

I have discarded once for all both righteousness and sin.'¹³

Slumber will have to be lulled asleep—that is what vigilance can do.

¹³ "M": *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), p. 428.

That blessed state in which we no longer see dualities and distinctions, in which we perceive the Absolute and the relative in an integral experience, is open to every aspiring and striving soul.

What leads to that experience of eternal life is vigilance, and yet more vigilance.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XIII

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

The ultimate aim of spiritual striving is the conscious control of all our mental processes. A conscious life is an interesting life. Most of us are half awake and half dreaming. Unconscious cerebration must give way to clear and conscious thinking. Then alone is life worth living. Better to strive for it right from now.

*

You must always try to regain the mental freshness of a child. Depression and lethargy should be avoided at all cost. Cultivate freshness of mind by living in tune with Reality. The waters of perennial life are flowing. Open up your channels! Remove all that is dead and dried up within you. Let a new life flow into you. Be filled with vigour and freshness. Otherwise spiritual life will become only a burden.

Make the needed adjustments in life to keep yourself pure and joyful. Always try to remember we are spiritual beings dwelling in physical bodies. Look upon the body as an instrument or a sanctuary, a temple. Use the body in a better way. Keep it fresh and clean. Then it will not be a burden to you.

*

Vedānta looks upon the various religions of the world as different approaches to the one Supreme Truth. It recognizes all Prophets and Divine Personalities as special embodiments of the same Divine who is immanent in all beings and yet transcends them. Vedānta believes that the symbols, rituals, customs, and traditions of the various religions are all helpful to their respective followers during the early stages of spiritual life. But it also holds that man should outgrow them and discover his real nature and the relation between his soul and the Divine. This is the law of spiritual

growth. Every one, after making wise use of the help given him during the early stages by the religious institutions, should outgrow them and learn to stand on his own legs, drawing sustenance more and more from the Divine within himself. This is the law of growth in spiritual life. Those who follow this law, evolve. Those who refuse to follow it, but go on clinging to outer forms and customs, remain stunted.

*

Expand your consciousness. First see the Divine in yourself and then see Him in all. Don't be self-centred. Expansion of heart is the test of spiritual progress. Spiritual experience must broaden our outlook. Our attitude towards others must undergo a radical change. When we help others we should not call it kindness but service of the Divine in all.

*

If at any time you feel a moral weakness is about to overwhelm you, retire and intensify your meditation and prayer. Rouse the higher spiritual mood through reading and deep reflection. Practise *japa* (repetition of the divine name) and meditation intensely until the weakness passes and you feel strong once again. Your strength should be tested by the strength of the weakest link in the chain of your character. Don't be overconfident or careless.

*

Every day in the course of our daily activities we collect dirt in our minds. Every day through spiritual practice we should wash away that dirt. Not only that. We should intensify our daily practice in such a way as to leave a surplus of purity to counteract the effects of past impressions

Our daily meditation is not deep enough. We should direct the stream of spiritual thoughts down into the subconscious and cleanse the hidden thought-impressions. It is like cleaning the Augean stables. But it has to be done.

*

One very often hears the complaint, 'I have no time for spiritual practice.' Well,

stop some of your useless activities, thinking, and gossip; and you will get ample time for meditation.

We should learn to improve the quality of our meditation. If we don't get time enough to increase its quantity, at least let us improve its quality. What little meditation we do should be done with sincerity, alertness, and concentration.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), and 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Madras Math, 1947). References: *Great Master*: No. 1, pp. 531-2; No. 3, pp. 443-4. *Gospel*: No. 2, p. 493.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VII (1958), pp. 212-3.

Śankara's non-dualistic school of Vedānta makes very great appeal to truth-seekers with a rational bent of mind, all over the world. The keystone of the arch of this philosophical school is the concept of māyā. Though this concept has spread so far as to earn the admiration of some of the Western philosophers and even modern philosophically-minded physicists, still it has been heavily attacked on all sides, both at home and abroad, and greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted. The Editorial this month is an attempt to clear up some of the misconceptions about māyā in the light of the scriptural texts and the utterances of the seers.

Success in spiritual life depends on the amount of vigilance an aspirant possesses. In the case of those who lack this virtue, stumblings and failures are inevitable: the goal remains inaccessible. On the contrary, the vigilant aspirants, being able to see with a clear eye the pitfalls on the inner path, avoid them and progress steadily towards the goal. That is why Śaṅkara warns in his *Viveka-cūdāmaṇi* that an aspirant after the highest knowledge must never give room to inadvertence, which ultimately spells his total ruin. In 'Vigilance is the Path to Eternal Life', Swami Budhananda discusses various aspects of this invaluable virtue and points out its indispensable role in all the four Yogas (paths of realization).

'Education for Character-Building', by Sri B. N. Chakravarty, the former Governor of Harayana, is the slightly edited text of the speech which Sri Chakravarty intended to deliver on 29 March this year, at the combined Birthday Celebrations at the Ramakrishna Mission, Chandigarh. But most unfortunately, Sri Chakravarty—a great friend and admirer of the Mission—suddenly passed away, at Calcutta on 26 March. His speech, which he had prepar-

ed before leaving for Calcutta, was found among his papers, and was read at the Celebration by Swami Sastrananda, Secretary of the Chandigarh Centre. The article, which succinctly recapitulates the main as-

pects of the educational ideal, as lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, was thus the last 'speech' of this noble son of our country.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

PLATO ON MAN: BY ATHENAGORAS N. ZAKOPOULOS, published by Philosophical Library, Inc., New York City, 1975, pp. 142, Price \$ 7.50.

The title *Plato On Man* seems to be an outcome of the author's intensive research in Platonic literature. He presents a short but substantive account of Greek reflection on the concept of the soul and its immortality. Before coming actually to Plato, the writer traces the idea of soul in pre-Platonic thinkers like Homer, the Orphics, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Socrates—and comes to the conclusion that most of the forerunners of Plato did not consider the nature of the soul as a separate issue, but dealt with it in connection with the universe, or in a mythical and quite incomplete way.

In contrast, then, with the early Greek thinkers dealt with in the first part of the book, the second part outlines the views of Plato with regard to the nature of the soul. In the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo* and other dialogues, Plato develops a theory of the soul and its immortality. The individual soul, for Plato, is created by God (Demiurge), or it is the first-born one, and remains in the prison-house of the body till death, after which it survives in full consciousness and self-identity. The author examines the Dialogues of Plato and the judgments of modern Platonic scholars regarding the thorny problem of the tripartite soul and comes to the conclusion that Plato believed in a simple and uncompounded soul. It would have been interesting if the author could have touched on the Upanishadic ideas, as well—where the Atman, though uncreated and immutable, associates itself with the body and undergoes births and deaths due to previous karmas.

Plato's concept of the soul led him to form the idea of man as a rational and spiritual being destined for eternity. Man, for him, is not a helpless product of his own impulses, as

in Freud, or a stimulus-response organism, as for behaviourist psychologists. If properly educated and developed in morality, religion, and philosophy, the man of Plato becomes like God. He is, in the words of the Indian seers, *amritasya putra*—'child of immortality'.

Dr. Zakopoulos' attempt to present the Platonic view of the soul in such a compact form is commendable. His emphasis on the concept of soul, throughout the book, rather forces the reader to take liberty in choosing his own title for the work; and I feel that the majority of readers would like to think of it as *Plato on Soul*.

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THE REALM OF BETWEEN: BY K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY, Published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1973, pp. xv+221, Price Rs. 25/-.

This well-produced book contains four lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The title seems intended to indicate the point of mediation between the transcendent real and the mundane order of existence. Clearly, these lectures do not cover the entire field of religion, as did the works of the old masters such as Hocking or Radhakrishnan. The principal points of discussion, here, are three. They are: human suffering and salvation, man's modes of worship, and the transcendental philosophy concerning the Divine Reality. The author traverses his ground—not focusing on the problems as such, but through a wide range of references to writers and thinkers, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western. Naturally at the end, the reader finds no philosophical commitment on the part of the author. He has given a series of explanatory notes on representative positions, and makes no constructive

venture. This is a learned work and is symptomatic of a current type of philosophizing.

Its bibliographical value is great.

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DIALOGUES ON THE FUTURE OF MAN:
BY FREDERICK PATKA, Published by Philosophical Library, New York, 1975, pp. 331, Price \$ 10.00.

Brilliantly written, this book, purporting to be a report on a discussion between two beings from outer space and two typical citizens of the satiated West, covers a large ground; e.g., education, science, politics, religion, ethics, economics, society, love, marriage, and eugenics. It sums up the highest achievements of modern man in the diverse fields of life and underlines their limitations. What is the likely course of evolution hereafter? Is man doomed to failure? Or is he capable of surpassing himself and creating a super-man civilization? And in that case what will happen to the existing institutions like family, marriage, Church, and so on? The author, originally from Rumania but now a naturalized American, lays stress on the hidden potential of man and envisages a future in which the soul-values of love, harmony, unity and mutuality will play a greater role. An absorbing book capable of giving a positive direction to the questing mind.

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YOGA FOR BEGINNERS: BY SWAMI GNANESWARANANDA, Edited and compiled by Mallika Clare Gupta, Published by Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago, U.S.A., 1975, pp. 200, Price \$ 4.95.

Yoga is a much talked-of subject these days, both in India and abroad. Generally it is taken in the restricted sense of a system of *asanas* (postures) and *pranayamas* (control of the vital air through breathing exercises). Popularly it is understood as a body of recipes for speedy acquisition of health and beauty. There is no dearth of teachers at the present time, who—as the author pithily remarks—‘...learn a couple of postures and a few peculiar ways of breathing and right away they become Aladdins of the twentieth century, even without a lamp!’ (p. 184)

But happily, in the book under review, Yoga

is explained in its comprehensive spiritual meaning, as union with the Supreme Spirit and the cardinal methods for its realization. Hinduism has always recognized a variety of paths to the Goal, suited to different types of individuals; and Swami Vivekananda classified all the principal methods of realization under these four main heads: Jnana-yoga or the Path of knowledge, Raja-yoga or the Path of psychological control, Bhakti-yoga or the Path of love, and Karma-yoga or the Path of selfless work. Each of these paths is suited to particular individuals according as the element of reason, emotion, introspection, or outgoing activity predominates in their personality. Intercrossing or interlacing of the paths is not denied.

The book under review is a detailed treatment of these diverse paths in simple and lucid language. Swami Gnaneswarananda was the founder of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, and though death took him early, his work there was very fruitful. The present book is a compilation from his discourses by his disciple, Mallika Clare Gupta. Of its five chapters, the first four relate to the four paths outlined above, and the fifth is headed, ‘A Summing Up’.

We have no doubt that the book will prove useful to all earnest spiritual seekers.

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BENGALI

SRI MA DARSAN—VOL. XV: BY SWAMI NITYATMANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna—Sri Ma Prakashan Trust, 579 Sector 18-B, Chandigarh, 1381 B.E., pp. 471, Price Rs. 15/-.

The book under review is the last of the series of fifteen, which the author just completed before his death. He has left behind this valuable contribution for the devotees of God, having brought out the volumes one after another over many years past. And this last may be considered the best of the series. The religious-minded reader will find himself attracted to the subject, right through to the end of the book.

The present volume describes the inspiring close of the life of Sri Ma (Mahendranath Gupta), a noted disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Further, Swami Nityatmananda had the rare opportunity of close contact with Swami Sivanda Maharaj, a great monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and thus was able to note in detail how a *shhitaprajna* (man of steady wisdom)

passed his days in the midst of multiform activities. His diary on Swami Sivananda proved a great source of joy to Sri Ma also: when it was read out to him by the author, he was delighted. Sri Ma even went so far as to assure the author that its contents would in due course have a place in history. Accordingly, we find extensive portions of the diary quoted throughout the present volume.

I trust that this book will be helpful to seekers of God, and hope it will be well and widely received.

SWAMI JYOTIRUPANANDA

BOOKS RECEIVED

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—MEDITATION AND ITS METHODS: EDITED BY SWAMI CHETANA-

NANDA, Published by Vedanta Press, 1946 Vedanta Place, Hollywood, Calif, 90068, 1976, pp. 127, Price \$ 3.50.

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

RAMANA MAHARSHI: BY K. SWAMINATHAN, Published by National Book Trust, India—A-5 Green Park, New Delhi 110016, 1975, pp. 156, Price Rs. 6/-.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, PURI

REPORT: APRIL 1972 TO MARCH 1974

This Centre has completed three decades of services, having been founded on a modest scale in 1944. Its cultural and spiritual aims find most tangible expression through the following:

(1) LIBRARY: Started in 1925 by a group of devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the library was taken into the Ashrama in 1944, and since has grown till it now includes over 10,000 books, plus eight dailies and 48 periodicals. In the year 1973-74, the total number of reader-visits totalled approximately 40,000—well over 100 daily—and 18,373 book-loans were made. There is a text-book library for the boarders of the Students' Home, with 1,432 books.

(2) STUDENTS' HOME: This was founded in 1956 with twenty students, and has grown to accommodate 63 deserving students, of whom all but two are supported free. Eleven, this year, came from Scheduled Castes and 44 from Scheduled Tribes. The Ashrama provides the students with free board, lodging, stationery, textbooks, etc. Under the guidance of the monastics of the Ashrama, a disciplined routine is maintained, with daily prayers morning and evening, as well as special observance of the holy days. For sub-standard or 'slow learners', private coaching is given on the premises; outdoor games are stressed for all, and educational tours have become a feature in recent years. A kitchen garden run by the students produced vegetables worth over Rs. 2,000/- during the two years under review. Results in the H. S. C.

Examinations have been notable: in 1973, all the students passed, and 65% of them in first division. In 1974 seven out of eight candidates passed, three in first division.

(3) CULTURAL AND PREACHING ACTIVITIES: Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other great disciples of the Master, were appropriately celebrated, as well as those of Lord Buddha, Sri Krishna and Sankaracharya, and the Ganesh Puja and Saraswati Puja. During the first year under review, the Holy Mother's birthday became occasion of Opening of the new Guest House of the Ashrama. Vivekananda's birthday was celebrated on a grand scale through a five-day programme, beginning with Puja, Homa, and distribution of *prasada*, and continuing with appropriate lectures and Symposia on each day. In the second year, Vivekananda's birthday again was a major event, this time festivities covering a whole week, with notable speakers from outside, and a new feature in the form of a 'Students' Parliament' on Vivekananda as Nation-Builder.

The Ashrama Secretary began a series of Sunday classes on the *Bhagavad-gita* from 1972. Held in the Ashrama premises these are open to the public; average attendance has been about seventy. He further gave talks and lectures in several outside schools and societies.

The Ashrama regularly conducts a Saturday evening spiritual Class, attended usually by more than 70 people. Sunday afternoons a class for school and college students on subjects connected with the teachings and life of

Vivekananda, is attended by an average of forty.

(4) RELIEF WORK: In keeping with its tradition of help in times of disasters, the Ashrama in January 1974 distributed winter clothing valued at Rs. 5,000/- to poor and needy villagers in the Mayurbhanj district, after survey of damage from cyclone.

(5) SALES CENTRE: This is making good progress in recent years, in selling Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, photos and badges. Total sales proceeds during the two years under review were Rs. 20,176.13.

Financial support for the Ashrama work from the local community has notably increased lately, resulting from effective public contacts by Ashrama personnel. Public contributions during the years under review totalled Rs. 4,792.80 and Rs. 7,908.14, respectively. During the same years, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, granted Rs. 56,300/- and 48,650/-, respectively.

Immediate needs are: For extension of Library building, Rs. 50,000/-; For extension and renovation of Students' Home, Rs. 1,00,000/-; For extension and renovation of Temple and Prayer-Hall, Rs. 50,000/-. Contributions may kindly be sent to: Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri. 752-001, Orissa.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—VIVEKANANDA SMRITI MANDIR: KHETRI

REPORT: APRIL 1973 TO MARCH 1975

Beginning from 1958, this is still the only regular Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission in Rajasthan. As its name implies, it has many holy associations with the memory of Swami Vivekananda, who visited Khetri thrice (the second visit being his 'farewell' stop on the way to the Parliament of Religions in 1893). Its Raja Ajit Singh was one of the earliest and most noted of Swamiji's disciples; and his great-grandson donated the palace, where Swamiji had stayed for considerable periods, to house the Smriti Mandir. The latter has thus become among other things, a place of pilgrimage for devotees world-wide. Its public activities may be listed as follows:

Medical: The Centre runs a well-equipped Maternity Home and Child Welfare Centre in the town. This handles all delivery cases, indoor or outdoor, except where surgery is needed; and cares for expectant mothers, as well as mother and child after delivery. All these services are free, as well as milk and medicines

for indoor cases. With its staff of one trained midwife and two *dais*, it handled during the years under review, 112 and 137 delivery cases respectively, and antenatal and postnatal visits totalling 3730 and 3678, respectively.

Educational: Since 1965, the Centre has conducted the Sharada Shishu Vihar—a Balwadi on kindergarten lines, for children aged three to ten years. Its nursery school with two classes, is a subsidiary to the above-named Child Welfare Centre; its primary section consists of five classes. During the years under review there were 252 and 278 children, respectively, enrolled, of which somewhat over a third were girls. Almost 20% of the children were given full freeship. The school's Library had 862 children's books; and the Children's Park (shared with Child Welfare Centre) was well equipped as a play-ground, even including a merry-go-round. Outings and picnics were included in the programme, and poor children were provided with clothing, books, and stationery. The children took active part in celebrations of major religious and cultural festivals, including putting on quite successful dramas on several occasions.

The Centre's Free Library and Reading-Room had, by the end of the period under review, 5409 books, from which 4075 were issued in the first, and 2843 in the second year under review. The Reading-Room had five daily papers and 26 periodicals; daily average attendance was 50.

Religious and Cultural: Regular classes in Hindi were conducted for inmates as well as outsiders. The Swami-in-charge gave occasional discourses, both in and outside of the Centre. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda were duly celebrated, with public meetings and lectures, and feeding of the school children. Further, appropriate festivities were conducted for Jan-mashtami, Ram-navami and other holy days.

Immediate Needs: (1) Repair and maintenance of the Smriti Mandir: Rs. 80,000/-. (2) For the School—(a) Children's Park equipment: Rs. 5,000/-; (b) Teaching aids: Rs. 5,000/-; (c) Running expenses (deficit): Rs. 5,000/-. (3) Library & Reading Room: (a) Books: Rs. 3,000/-; (b) Furniture and equipment: Rs. 2,000/-. (4) Permanent Funds: Rs. 2,00,000/-.

Contributions may kindly be sent to: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Khetri (Rajasthan) 333-503.