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# **Prabuddha Bharata**

*OR*

**AWAKENED INDIA**



**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS**





# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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## Cover :

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

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.



# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

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No. 8

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'Oh, what a state God kept me in at that time! One experience would hardly be over before another overcame me. It was like the movement of the husking-machine: no sooner is one end down than the other goes up.

'I would see God in meditation, in the state of samadhi, and I would see the same God when my mind came back to the outer world. When looking at this side of the mirror I would see Him alone, and when looking on the reverse side I saw the same God.'

\*

'Then a change came over me. The mind left the plane of the Lila and ascended to the Nitya.<sup>1</sup> I found no distinction between the sacred tulsi and the ordinary sajina plant. I no longer enjoyed seeing the forms of God; I said to myself, "They come and go." I lifted my mind above them. I removed all the pictures of gods and goddesses from my room and began to meditate on the Primal Purusha, the Indivisible Satchidananda (Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute), regarding myself as His handmaid.'

\*

'But Lila is by no means the last word. Passing through all these states, I said to the Divine Mother: "Mother, in these states there is separation. Give me a state where there is no separation." Then I remained for some time absorbed in the Indivisible Satchidananda. I removed the pictures of the gods and goddesses from my room. I began to perceive God in all beings. Formal worship dropped away. You see that bel-tree. I used to go there to pluck its leaves. One day, as I plucked a leaf, a bit of the bark came off. I found the tree full of Consciousness. I felt grieved because I had hurt the tree. One day I tried to pluck some durva-grass,<sup>2</sup> but I found I couldn't do it very well. Then I forced myself to pluck it.

'I cannot cut a lemon. The other day I managed to cut one only with great difficulty; I chanted the name of Kali and cut the fruit as they slaughter an animal before the Goddess. One day I was about to gather some flowers.

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<sup>1</sup> Lila: the divine play; the Relative. Nitya: The Absolute (correlative of Lila).

<sup>2</sup> Durva grass: common grass, used in worship.



They were everywhere on the trees. At once I had a vision of Virat;<sup>3</sup> it appeared that His worship was just over. The flowers looked like a bouquet placed on the head of the Deity. I could not pluck them.'

'The paramahansa is like a <sup>\*</sup>five-year-old child. He sees everything filled with Consciousness. At one time I was staying at Kamarpukur when Shivaram (a nephew of The Master) was four or five years old. One day he was trying to catch grasshoppers near the pond. The leaves were moving. To stop their rustling he said to the leaves: "Hush! Hush! I want to catch a grasshopper." Another day it was stormy. It rained hard. Shivaram was with me inside the house. There were flashes of lightning. He wanted to open the door and go out. I scolded him and stopped him, but still he peeped out now and then. When he saw the lightning he exclaimed, "There, uncle! They are striking matches again!"

'The paramahansa is like a child. He cannot distinguish between a stranger and a relative. He isn't particular about worldly relationships. One day Shivaram said to me, "Uncle, are you my father's brother or his brother-in-law?"

'The paramahansa is like a child. He doesn't keep any track of his whereabouts. He sees everything as Brahman. He is indifferent to his own movements. Shivaram went to Hriday's house to see the Durga Puja. He slipped out of the house and wandered away. A passer-by saw the child, who was then only four years old, and asked, "Where do you come from?" He couldn't say much. He only said the word "hut". He was speaking of the big hut in which the image of the Divine Mother was being worshipped. The stranger asked him further, "Whom are you living with?" He only said the word "brother".'

'Ah, what a state of mind I passed through! One day something bit me while I was sitting in the grass. I was afraid it might have been a snake, and I didn't know what to do. I had heard that if a snake bites you again immediately after its first bite, it takes back its own venom. At once I set out to discover the hole so that I might let the snake bite me again. While I was searching, a man said to me, "What are you doing?" After listening to my story, he said, "But the snake must bite in the very same place it has bitten before." Thereupon I went away. Perhaps I had been bitten by a scorpion or some other insect.'




---

<sup>3</sup> Virat: the all-pervading Spirit, in the form of the universe.

## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*We all struggle for happiness and as soon as we get a little happiness on one side, on the other side there comes unhappiness.*

*Shall we not work to do good then? Yes, with more zest than ever, but what this knowledge will do for us is to break down our fanaticism.... There will be less of fanaticism and more of real work. Fanatics cannot work, they waste three-fourths of their energy. It is the level-headed, calm, practical man who works. So, the power to work will increase from this idea. Knowing that this is the state of things, there will be more patience. The sight of misery or of evil will not be able to throw us off our balance and make us run after shadows. Therefore, patience will come to us, knowing that the world will have to go on in its own way.... But only one thing is certain; the mighty river is rushing towards the ocean, and all the drops that constitute the stream will in time be drawn into that boundless ocean. So, in this life, with all its miseries and sorrows, its joys and smiles and tears, one thing is certain, that all things are rushing towards their goal, and it is only a question of time when you and I, and plants and animals, and every particle of life that exists must reach the Infinite Ocean of perfection, must attain to Freedom, to God.*

*Vivekananda*

## TO THE SUPREME GOAL ON 'TWO WINGS'

EDITORIAL

I

Situated in the Lesser, or Lower Himalayas, at an altitude of 6,300 feet above mean sea-level, and receiving heavy monsoon and winter rains (and snows), Mayavati is surrounded by dense temperate forests. Evergreen trees of Himalayan oak, rhododendrons, and pine conserve moisture and support many kinds of small plants and underbrush. Again, pine is widespread, but Deodar-cedar is rather sparse, depending more on human agency for propagation. Though at one time, the animal life was rich, the number of animals has greatly dwindled owing possibly to steady deforestation over much of this region, for purposes of cultivation and human settlement, as well as unchecked shooting for food. But the number and variety of avifauna have continued, it seems, undiminished. Bird food such as worms, insects, grubs, wild berries and seeds are in plenty, and the people are friendly. Even when the birds ravage fruit or grain crops, they generally are not shot or trapped or otherwise harmed. Mayavati and its neighbouring areas have thus tended to become a natural bird sanctuary, and ornithologists and birdwatchers may well find them to be a paradise.

Birds of several species are permanent residents of this region; others, like the swallows, are residents a part of each year. Many more come on their migratory routes, especially in early spring and late autumn. Most are passerine birds, and their calls and plumage are of a rich variety. The dawn chorus in spring and autumn is a feast for the ears; and likewise the bright, variegated hues of bird-feathers, a feast for the eyes.

However, our interest here is more in the flight of birds than in their colouration or



songs. In flight a bird does not simply flap its wings up and down. If it did, it would promptly turn a somersault. On the other hand, it moves its wings in a 'screw-like' manner: forwards, downwards, backwards, upwards. For the bird in flight tends to fall forwards as well as downwards, and the mechanism of flight has to counteract this. Steering is effected mainly by the differential action of the wings but also by the tilt and pose of the body and by the tail-feathers. The bird's tail also helps it in balancing, and serves as a brake.

*Sādhanā* or spiritual practice and struggle, is compared by some saints and sages to a bird's flight. As the bird needs its two wings to fly and cannot dispense with either of them, so also does a spiritual aspirant need certain essential disciplines without which his 'flight' towards the sublime 'perch of God' becomes an impossibility.

Let us here reflect on this truth for a while, in the light of the sayings of the illumined souls.

## II

Human personality, according to the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, is constituted of five 'sheaths' (*kośas*)—interiorly each becoming more subtle than the one preceding it—, beginning with the (outer) sheath of food and ending with that of bliss. Each one of these sheaths, again, is compared to a bird with its various parts—head, wings, trunk, and tail. This symbological representation helps us in the discrimination of the Self from the non-self, and in the transcending of the latter. Of the five sheaths, the one of pivotal importance is the *vijñānamayakośa*, the 'sheath of intelligence', which is next in subtleness to that of bliss. It is in this that our ego is centred. Furthermore, the deeper aspect of meditation and spiritual communion are concerned entirely with this sheath.

The Upanisad says that *sraddhā*, reveren-

tial faith, is the head of the *vijñānamayakośa*. *Rta*<sup>1</sup> (right conduct) is its right wing, and *satya* (truthfulness) is the left wing, *yoga* (concentration of thought) its trunk, and *mahat*<sup>2</sup> its tail (foundation). Right conduct and truthfulness are here represented as the two wings of the *vijñānamayakośa*, thereby implying that an aspirant established in them can easily attain to the realization of the inmost Self, as a bird with powerful wings can fly to any desired place.

Śaṅkara, the great seer-philosopher of eighth-century India, conceives of a struggling seeker as a bird endowed with the wings of dispassion and discrimination. He says:

'Know, O wise man, dispassion and discrimination to be like the two wings of a bird in the case of an aspirant. Unless both are there, none can, with the help of either one, reach the topmost floor of the mansion of Liberation.'<sup>3</sup>

Dispassion means a determined turning away from all cravings, enjoyments, achievements, and possessions, knowing their transitory and pain-bearing nature. This, again, depends on the sharp power of discrimination which seeks out the imperishable eternal, infinite Reality from the perishable, ephemeral, finite phenomena. Thus, like the two wings of a bird in flight, dispassion and discrimination must operate simultaneously in an aspirant to propel him onward to the goal of liberation. They are an inseparable pair which cherish and nourish each other. Discrimination points the aspirant's gaze always to the Divine Reality, and dispassion helps that gaze to remain

<sup>1</sup> *Rta* is what is right and proper as fixed by scriptural rules and one's own reflection.

<sup>2</sup> *Mahat* stands for Cosmic Intelligence or Hiranyagarbha, the source of all individual egos. He is the Universal Ego. Hence *mahat* is the support or foundation of *Vijñānamayakośa*.

<sup>3</sup> *Viveka-cūdāmani*, 374.



there unwavering. Dispassion is twofold: externally it is with respect to objects of enjoyment and internally with respect to all ego-based volition and ambition. Moreover, if this turning away from all enjoyments, gross and subtle, is one face of dispassion, its opposite face is love and attachment to the Divine within. The physical and psychological energies and attractions, which in our ordinary worldly state are directed outward, must be restrained and channeled, in spiritual life, to the divine Goal. Such restraint and channellization, again, are not possible without a well-developed power of discrimination.

The saintly author of the *Imitation of Christ*, speaking to the above effect, compares simplicity and purity to the two wings, with whose help a spiritual aspirant overcomes what we may call the gravitational pull of the world, and progresses towards divine communion—communion with the Divine Lord. He says:

'By two wings, a man is lifted up from things earthly, namely, by Simplicity and Purity.

'Simplicity ought to be in our intention, Purity in our affection. Simplicity doth tend toward God; Purity doth apprehend and [as it were] taste Him.'<sup>4</sup>

Simplicity is dispassion, internal and external. And purity, resulting from discrimination pursued with one-pointed devotion, when perfected reveals the Divine Lord who is ever present in one's heart.

### III

Although there are innumerable approaches to the goal of God-realization, all of them may be broadly classified under one or other of the four Yogas (paths of spiritual realization), of knowledge, divine love, psychic control, and selfless action. Depending on his mental make-up, an aspirant may

choose any one of these Yogas and proceed towards the divine goal. But in taking up exclusively any *one* Yoga, there is the danger of the aspirant's becoming one-sided or fanatical on the one hand, and, on the other, of starving or neglecting the other faculties or aspects of his personality. One can circumvent this twofold danger by suitable blending of two or more of the Yogas. Swami Vivekananda generally recommended a harmonious blending of three or all the four Yogas. Following his Master's supreme exemplification of the harmony of Yogas, Swami Vivekananda also built up his own spiritual life according to that pattern. Recommending a combination of three Yogas—and giving the analogy of a bird—Swamiji once taught thus:

'It is not given to all of us to be harmonious in the building up of our characters in this life: yet we know that that character is of the noblest type in which all these three—knowledge and love and Yoga [i.e., raja-yoga]—are harmoniously fused. Three things are necessary for a bird to fly—two wings and the tail as a rudder for steering. Jnana (knowledge) is the one wing, Bhakti (love) is the other, and Yoga is the tail that keeps up the balance.'<sup>5</sup>

A human being has the three important faculties of thinking, feeling, and willing. A spiritual aspirant should pattern his inner life in such a way that none of these invaluable faculties is neglected or starved. Rather, he should see to it that each one of them is turned to his best advantage in progressing towards God. *Jñāna* corresponds to thinking. Without the exercise of the rational faculty, an aspirant may fall into many errors and superstitions. *Bhakti* or love, springs from the faculty of feeling. If an aspirant starves or neglects this

<sup>4</sup> *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II, Ch. IV.

<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. III (1960), p. 33.

faculty while cultivating *jñāna* or psychic control exclusively, he runs into the danger of intellectual sterility and spiritual aridity. Not having cultivated the heart, he may turn out to be a self-centred misanthrope. Yoga, comprising the practical aspects of spiritual life such as concentration and self-control, contemplation and meditation, parallels the faculty of willing. By incorporating the methods and practices of Yoga in his life, an aspirant can not only coordinate *jñāna* and *bhakti*, but also guide their

powerful currents into spiritually creative channels. *Rāja-yoga*, as Swamiji very rightly points out, helps the aspirant to steer clear of obstacles, which would otherwise arise, by adopting the proper elements from the other yogas and keeping a balance among them. Like the smooth and quick progression of a flying or gliding bird which uses its two wings, as well as tail, will be the inner journey of an aspirant who combines harmoniously wisdom, love, and Yoga.

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## LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

2 Agrahāyaṇ, 1326<sup>1</sup>

Sriman —,

I have your letter of 30 Kārttik.<sup>1</sup> Now that your health is all right and the malaria season is coming to an end, your duty is to listen to the words of K—— Maharaj and stay at the monastery. I am writing to him so that he will entrust to you the responsibility of some work after knowing the condition of your body and health. You are a youngster: if you do not remain under somebody and act with responsibility, great harm will befall you in future. Nowhere is anyone going to feed you, keeping you in idle comfort, without putting you to some strain of work. By living according to one's whims and fancies no one comes to any good. Therefore act according to what K—— says; and just as you used previously to spend your days in doing the work of Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna) and the monastery, do now likewise. Your mother has grown old: in earning as much as is possible to you and in serving her lies your good. You have heard how much service Thakur himself rendered to his mother. Therefore, steadying your mind, do as I am saying. Of course, if your health deteriorates you will, after taking K——'s permission, write to me or make him write. In that case, I shall make the necessary arrangements. Accept my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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<sup>1</sup> Agrahāyaṇ: eighth month of the Bengali year, falling within November-December, 1326 (B.E.) here falls in 1919, A.D. Kārttik is the month preceding Agrahāyaṇ.



## SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Sasiniketan, Puri  
14 Jyais̥tha, 1320<sup>2</sup>

Sriyukta ———,

I have duly received both of your letters. But I am now out of Bengal; as I am very much run down in body and mind, I am thinking of taking a few days' leave from all duties and activities...

Regarding the sale of land and so on, whatever opinion has already been given by me, the same I give now. In respect of the money got by the sale, too, the same opinion holds good—knowing the suitability of place, time, and person, act in that way by which you will get the maximum return, and the service of Sri Sri Thakur and Nārāyaṇa in the form of the poor etc., will be enhanced. There is great need for you to take this counsel from me. Because, if you act that way, the local people will not be able to blame you. Supposing you suffer losses in some business—may Thakur forbid it—, even then people will not be able to blame you easily. But before accepting such counsel and putting it into practice, it is right to examine ourselves intensely within, to see whether or not we are truly free from selfishness, in thus going forward to do the work of Sri Sri Thakur. For if there is any stain of selfishness within, then one will not be doing the service of Sri Thakur but that of one's own body and mind. That is to say, it will prove to have been done only to secure one's own carefree happiness: it will amount to this much only.

Not to speak of the householders, even many among the sadhus and monks, instigated by that selfishness, go forth to do the service of Sri Thakur but accomplish only their own. That this may not happen, you always must have concern towards your own mind and keep a watchful eye on the work and its purpose... Carefully examine your mind always; but at the same time, if you do not see any selfishness within, then remain firm even if the people hurl a thousand reproaches at you... The purpose of writing you thus is that you may take your stand on the faith you have in Sri Sri Thakur after examining your mind, and that you may depend on Him—entirely depending on Him, remain unshaken at the revilings of the people... If your soul is really attracted to the service of Sri Sri Thakur and of Nārāyaṇa in the form of poor and sick people, then there is no reason for you to be frightened, worried, or shaken by any such vilifications. Go on doing your work fearlessly; you will see that He whose work it is, has protected both that work and you, is doing so now, and will always do so in the future.

If in the meanwhile it is not going to be convenient to get affiliated with the Mission [Ramakrishna Mission], then after my return, I shall as far as possible do what I can. My love and blessings to you and others.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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<sup>2</sup> Jyais̥tha : second month of the Bengali year, falling within May-June. 1320 (B.E.) here falls in 1913 A.D.



## SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

29/6/26

Dear Srimati —,

I am glad to receive your letter. My health is very much better nowadays. Accept my constant blessings.

If despondency comes, then drive it away by thinking thus: I am His handmaid, His daughter, His part and parcel; my guru and my chosen Deity are always holding me by the hand and they are doing that which is for my good. Bring courage to your mind by thus thinking; and thinking of Sri Sri Thakur, daily perform the *japa* of that mantra about the repetition of which I have already told you. If the mind does not become steadily fixed at the feet of Sri Sri Thakur, then pray to Him with yearning— 'O Thakur, please make my mind steady'. Know definitely that Sri Sri Thakur is hearing all your words and is able to know all your thoughts and moods. Whatever you ask from Him with yearning, that indeed you will get.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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 AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA —XIII

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

16. 12. 1936. After the evening *ārati*,<sup>1</sup> nearly all the inmates of the Ashrama gathered at the feet of Swami Akhandananda and he spoke at length about Ashrama life and principles.

The first point is, not to waste anything, especially food. If anybody here would waste a morsel of his breakfast, I would withhold his share at lunch (midday meal). We are beggars after all. How can we waste? People are giving to us with a great idea. Remember—their renunciation is quite immense.

You have not yet become *paramahamsas* (persons with the highest knowledge) so that you can do without food or depend on chance food. As long as you

do not reach that state, you have to take care of all such things.

Those who build up an Ashrama by their life-blood, are men of a different calibre. It is very difficult to build up anything. So much of manly effort is necessary. Now you have some cash in hand—that also sent by devotees from distant places—and you are to go on spending only! In this rural Ashrama, you are purchasing coal and burning it. Do you know how I formerly had to carry on single-handed here? I would gather and arrange into a heap little bits of faggots in the fields, and in the afternoon would go with all the boys and bring the fuel to the Ashrama.

I was away for two years for reasons of health. When I came back, I found the Ashramites had purchased cart-loads of

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<sup>1</sup>Worship of the Deity accompanied by waving of lights.



coal—no problem of fuel anymore! There are cows in the Ashrama; still they are buying cow-dung cakes for fuel, while the dung from our cows is left scattered over our fields and nobody cares even to pick it up. They are all sadhus and *brahmacārins* (monks and novices)—how can you expect their minds to come down so low as to such trifling matters!

Swamiji (Vivekananda) preferred cooking by wood-fire. When cooking by coal, the food is quickly but not fully cooked, and the result is indigestion. So here the principle was not to take food cooked by coal. But to carry on according to a principle, you require manly effort—no namby-pamby nature will do.

You have to make much sacrifice for a principle. You cry 'Swamiji', 'Swamiji'. But Swamiji is the embodiment of certain principles. He was not of flesh and blood. He was made up of ideas. Principle is the ideal. You have to sacrifice everything for it.

Just look at Swarupananda!<sup>2</sup> Following the ideal of Swamiji, he made it a principle that there would be no ritual worship in Mayavati. He had to face tremendous opposition for it. At least in this case, the disciple was more strict than the Guru. He has gone, but his principle is still working.

17. 12. 36. In the heart of Swami Akhandananda there was a very soft corner for Dhangopal Mukherji.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes his feeling came out and expressed

itself in words. A few months back, on hearing the news of his death, the Swami was moved to the core. A few days thereafter, Mukherji's last letter came to him, in which he had written, 'Very soon I will be going back and will attempt a biography of the Holy Mother in English and present it to the world.' Every week his letters would come, scribbled in a childish handwriting. Even in seven or eight pages a letter would not be completed: at the end would be written, 'continued'. The letter would come to an end only after two or three instalments.

Suddenly today Dhangopal became the topic of discussion. Bābā<sup>4</sup> was speaking:

They call his style 'sparkling'. They very much appreciate him there. They read his books, heard his lectures. This is not a matter of joke. How he went to America and how he became a widely-known man! How much faith he had in our Master! When it came to the Holy Mother, he would write that he was '*śaraṇāgata, śaraṇāgata*' (lit., a seeker of refuge).

A whole letter would be filled up with '*śaraṇāgata*'. It was at my instance that he started writing in Bengali. When he met me at the time of Dādā's<sup>5</sup> illness, he expressed his desire to write to me. I replied, 'but it must be in Bengali'. Thus it started.

The talk veered round to *principle*—the topic of the previous day. Bābā began:

They want cows for milk, but will not look after them. They want a dog for night-watch, but will not feed it in time. Sometimes they do it by turns. I have not

<sup>2</sup> Disciple of Swami Vivekananda and first President of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. His brilliant work was cut short by death in 1906.

<sup>3</sup> A celebrated Indian writer (mainly in English) who flourished in America during the twenties and thirties. His biography of Sri Ramakrishna, *The Face of Silence*, inspired many westerners among whom was the noted French biographer, Romain Rolland.

<sup>4</sup> The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by most of his disciples and devotees.

<sup>5</sup> lit., elder brother. Here refers to Swami Sivananda, a brother-disciple who was older by about twelve years than Swami Akhandananda.



yet found one who can boldly say, 'I will do it alone and regularly.' Such strength of mind is lacking.

Some of them have lived with me for eight or ten years. Still they cease to follow my principle when I am not here for some time. You can easily understand what will happen when I am no more. The same story everywhere. Is it so easy to hold on to a principle? That requires a lot of suffering and sacrifice. It is not for the idle and the pleasure-seekers.

They call Swamiji the Patriot-Saint of India. Is it easy to be a patriot? A patriot feels for the country as if it were his own *self*. I have not found anyone else to feel like this, and to transmit this feeling to others. We are the workers built by him. We learnt by obeying.

Is it easy to assimilate a great idea? Even those that are born with that idea, get puzzled: the lure of name and fame is a dangerous obstacle. We are *sannyāsins*: for us name and fame is like the filth of a crow.

Is it easy to work in the true spirit? A mistake committed is not very often admitted by the worker, even if it is pointed out by another.

Is it easy to become a real *sannyāsini*? How much we have struggled to become such! We had to face the extremes of summer and winter, of hunger and thirst; and over and above that, to maintain the feeling of sameness when praised or blamed. Are all these so easy?

Once I was deeply thinking, sitting quietly alone, as if in meditation, thus: Someone is praising me, another comes and blames me. Someone is putting a garland on me, another is insulting me. Someone is putting sandal paste on my face, another, filth. Someone is welcoming me—another driving me out. Yet I am unperturbed in the midst of all these. Now I am going through the desert, next moment I start climbing a

snowy peak. These were the subjects of our meditation. But, to whom am I speaking? And who is there to hear all this? Everybody wants to finish his job without doing anything. As much as one does himself, so much alone is his. What you get by doing nothing is, practically, nil.

Every day when you go to bed, you should think: What exactly have I done today, how much? Have I called on God? Have I inflicted any wound on anybody's heart? Did I return a harsh word for sweet ones from superiors? Raise other such questions in the mind, and try to answer them.

You have to be very prayerful. Prayer along with repetition of the name of the Lord. Meditation is a long way off! 'Those who sit down to meditate just to avoid work, they should be yoked to the plough'—said Swamiji. But I give them a spade and ask them to dig the earth!

Always resort to prayer and repetition of the Name—this is *sādhana* (spiritual practice). Pray: Give me devotion, give me faith, appear before me. Mere repetition of God's name—how far can it lead? Well has it been said: 'He who moves the rosary only, is worthless. Next higher is the man who counts the Name with the hand. The highest is he who repeats the Name in the mind.'

18. 12. 36. A *brahmacārin* of the Ashrama has expressed his difficulties in this manner: He has too much work to do—no leisure, no time to come to Bābā, no helping hand in the shrine work. So Bābā is talking to him:

Work, work! If someone of you cannot come to me or cannot sit by me on account of some Ashrama work, I am rather pleased with him. If one works too much, or has taken the trouble of going a long distance for some work, my mind stays with him. Work, work! This (youth) is the age for

doing something. When I was young, I would work incessantly. Now I have to depend on others. Even then, you see how much work I am still continuing to do!

Worshipping in the shrine is not a very time-consuming work unless you make it so. Do the worship as if you were attending to a dear and venerable person. Offer him flowers, then food and water as quickly as you can; no delaying. Worship includes everything—beginning from cleaning the temple and washing utensils, to picking flowers, cutting fruits, arranging them in trays. Everything should be done with a spirit of worship. If you are uttering the *iṣṭa-mantra*<sup>6</sup> always, and thinking on the Deity, then you are worshipping.

Actual worship? Offer handfuls of flowers and say, 'Take, O Lord, please take these flowers.' Apply the sandal paste, offer a garland if you have one. Decorate the photo (or image) with a few beautiful flowers. Lastly offer him the tray of fruits and sweets and say, 'O Lord, take this food

<sup>6</sup>The sacred formula, received from one's guru (teacher), containing the name of one's Chosen Deity (Iṣṭa).

offered by me. I offer whatever I could procure today.' Then come out and close the door of the shrine. Repeat the mantra and think that He is taking the food. This is simple *pūjā* (worship). Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) taught me this.

19. 12. 36. An old Magic Lantern had been repaired and slides were shown, mostly of Swamiji and his sayings. Bābā sat straight, listening to the message of Swamiji as it was read out. At the end he commented: 'Swamiji's words! Do you feel these sincerely? He has taught us this highest prayer: "O Mother, remove my cowardice and weakness. O Mother, make me a *man!*"'

26. 12. 36. Bābā talked of his coming in contact with many sadhus in his early days: Kamraj Tantrik, Mayaram Avadhut, Yogi Gambhirnath, Swami Bhaskarananda, and Trailanga Swami. He said.

Kamraj asked me, 'What do you want?' I replied, 'I want the state where I want nothing, repent for nothing.' Pathetically he looked at me and said, 'You do not want my Mother?' Swamiji was very much moved when he heard this from me.

## SWAMI VIJNANANANDA : REMINISCENCES

### SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

[Swami Prabhavananda's reminiscences of Swami Vijnanananda, which are translated from Bengali by our staff, originally appeared in the *Udbodhan* (Bengali Era: Vaiśākh, 1382), the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Vijnananandaji—Vijnan Maharaj for short—was a great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and later became the fourth President of the Ramakrishna Order. A small portion, concerning Swami Akhandananda, at the beginning of the original article, has been omitted here. Swami Prabhavananda, a very senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, was the founder-leader of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, at Hollywood. —Ed.]

After my ordination into Brahmacharya (monastic novitiate) Raja Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) said to me one day: 'It is

my wish that you stay for a few days with Swami Vijnanananda at the Allahabad Ashrama. It is good to stay in the shade



of a big tree for a few days.' Maharaj had told me, further, 'Vijnanananda is a hidden knower of Brahman (*gupta brahmajñānī*) and, after Swami Ramakrishnananda, the best devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.' In this regard, Maharaj narrated the following incident:

'I was staying then at the Allahabad Ashrama. One day a college student came to me asking for spiritual instruction. I told him, "Well, I have come here as a guest. You go to Swami Vijnanananda, the head of this Ashrama." But Vijnanananda sent the boy back to me! I sent him again to Vijnanananda, saying that he alone could give spiritual instruction or initiation in this (Allahabad) monastery. But he sent the poor boy back again to me! When I sent him for the third time to Vijnanananda, he said to the boy at last: "Well, Maharaj wants me to give you spiritual instruction. Wait a minute." Saying this he opened his box and took out a photograph of mine and giving it to the boy, told him: "You shall pray before this picture every day and ask for help. If you can do this, then surely you will reach the Goal. I don't know any greater instruction than this." ' Narrating this incident, Maharaj commented, 'See, how great a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna is Vijnanananda!'

Maharaj knew nothing but Ramakrishna; his very existence depended on the reality of Sri Ramakrishna: he had totally become one with him. His brother disciples used to look upon him as the living representative of the Master.

Later however, Maharaj changed his decision to send me to Allahabad and instead sent me to the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. But later on, Maharaj's wish was realised in a wonderful manner. When I returned to India after thirteen years in the U.S.A., I had the good fortune of spending a few days in the blessed company of Revered Vijnananandaji.

At that time, Vijnan Maharaj was the Vice-President of the Order and was staying at the Belur Math. I had decided to go to Vishnupur [about 20 miles from Jayrambati] to see my aged mother and also to visit Jayrambati and Kamarpukur *en route*.

Before starting, I went to Vijnan Maharaj to ask his permission [and blessings]. As soon as I presented myself before him, he exclaimed. 'Wherefrom has this form appeared here?' Though at that time I was wearing ochre robes, I had also long and wellcombed hair. Swami Omkarananda was present there, and he introduced me, saying that I had recently arrived from the U.S.A. and was a disciple of Sri Maharaj. I prostrated myself before Vijnan Maharaj and told him of my desire to go to see my mother and also visit Jayrambati and Kamarpukur. At once he said, 'There, my boy! I have never seen those places. Will you take me with you?' I replied, 'Certainly, Maharaj, that will be my great good fortune.' But after an hour or so he called me and said: 'I am sorry, Abani. I can't accompany you. Bharat [Swami Abhayananda] says that devotees will be arriving at that time from a distant place, to take initiation from me.'

But I talked to Bharat Maharaj and got the date of initiation changed, requesting him to send a telegram to the devotees. Vijnan Maharaj, having heard everything, was delighted and said: 'Oh, I see, you are a very brainy man! You made the arrangement so easily.'

On the scheduled day, along with Vijnan Maharaj, we started on our journey—Swami Apurvananda, Sister Lalita,<sup>1</sup> and I. Before starting, I had requested my younger brother

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Carrie Mead Wyckoff, of Pasadena, California, a disciple of Swami Turiyananda, and who had also been closely associated with Swami Vivekananda during his stay in California, 1899-1900.



(at Vishnupur) to make arrangements for a proper and cordial reception for Swami Vijnananandaji. My brother was the headmaster of the local school. So three hundred students and their teachers were at the station to receive us. Girls on both sides began to shower flowers on us. The roads of Vishnupur were very dusty, but the Municipality had made beautiful arrangements by sprinkling water on our path. Two horse-carriages had been kept ready for us. Vijnan Maharaj sat in one, and I at his feet. And in spite of our objections, the boys unharnessed the horses and drew the carriage themselves.

A separate house had been fixed up for our stay, and my sister had taken the onus of the cooking arrangements. Sitting in the shrine-room of our ancestral home, Vijnan Maharaj initiated several devotees.

To be brief, arrangements were soon made for our going to Jayarambati and Kamarpukur. After our meal [shortly before departure], in course of conversation my mother told Vijnan Maharaj, 'I shall go with you to Jayrambati.' Vijnan Maharaj said there would be no room in the vehicle. But my mother said insistently, 'Maharaj, you shall have to take me with you.' In reply he said, 'Well, you will sit on my head and go.' Then my mother wound an end of her cloth around her neck [as a gesture of humility], and holding his feet humbly said, 'Maharaj, I will go sitting at your feet.' Vijnan Maharaj laughed and said, 'Indeed, you win!'

We hired a car and a bus. In the back seat of the car, Vijnan Maharaj and Sister Lalita sat, and in front sat Bibhuti Ghosh, myself, and the driver. Other sādhus and brahmacārins of the Bankura Ashrama, my mother, brother, and her other family members travelled by the bus.

This was a wonderful pilgrimage indeed. We were going to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati with a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna! In both these places, Vijnan Maharaj was

absorbed in meditation, with eyes closed—the memory of these unique incidents is indelibly impressed on the canvas of my mind. Be that as it may, there was then no accommodation for so many of us to stay at Kamarpukur or Jayarambati. So we had to return to Vishnupur the same day.

After we reached Vishnupur Vijnan Maharaj said: 'Sister Lalita is really a rare lady. During our journey to and from Kamarpukur, she sat by my side for many hours, but did not speak a word. How quiet!'

Before this, the American ladies with whom Vijnan Maharaj had had occasion to associate, were fond of talking. It was their nature to show courtesy and please people through talking. But Sister Lalita was different. She had been closely associated with Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) and Swami Turiyanandaji. With lips closed, she had served them to their satisfaction. One day Swamiji had told her, 'Sister, you will do the Lord's work silently.' And she truly carried out that command of his. It was in her cottage that the Vedanta Society of Southern California took its birth. This is witness to her silent devotion to Swamiji.

One day I told Swami Vijnananandaji, 'Maharaj, I have heard many things about your greatness from Sri Maharaj.' He replied: 'No, Abani, don't pay any attention to all that. Maharaj used to see an ocean in a drop of water.'

Meanwhile Swami Maheshwaranandaji, head of the Bankura centre (of the Ramakrishna Mission) came to Vishnupur and requested Vijnan Maharaj to visit Bankura, since many devotees there were eager for initiation. Vijnan Maharaj said in reply to this pressing invitation, 'I can't go to Bankura unless Abani tells me.' Two or three days passed in this manner.

Finally Maheshwaranandaji came and told me what Vijnan Maharaj had said. I was



in a fix. I said, 'How can I ask Vijnan Maharaj to go? We are brimming with joy here in his divine company. Moreover, he is a guest in our house.' But Maheshwaranandaji would not give up his intention. He held me tight and wept, and said that somehow or other it would have to be arranged. 'Well, let me see what can be done'—saying so, I went to Vijnan Maharaj and stood before him with joined palms [in reverential supplication]. He turned to me and said, 'Then, are you asking me to go?'

I replied, 'No, Maharaj; my only appeal is that you kindly give liberation to the devotees of Bankura who are anxiously awaiting you.'

So then and there a vehicle was arranged. He went with the head of the Bankura Ashrama. I felt that he was a *jīvanmukta* (free while living), and was capable of giving freedom to others.

Only rarely did Vijnan Maharaj talk about his spiritual experiences. Once he told me:

'I had been to see Sarnath.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly I lost my body-consciousness and my mind, too, was about to be completely dissolved. I became merged in an ocean of light, and from that light waves of peace, bliss, and knowledge began to flow out. I became filled with the spirit of the living Buddha. I don't remember how long I was in that state. The guide who accompanied me thought that I had fallen asleep. Finding that it was getting late, he tried to wake me up, and as a result I regained my external consciousness. Later, at Varanasi I once went to have the *darśan* (sight) of Viswanatha (lit., Lord of the universe, here refers to Śiva). There it occurred to my mind, "Why have I come here? Is it just to see a piece of stone?" Then again, the same divine vision began to appear. It was as if Lord Viswanatha was telling me, "The light of this place and of that is the same—Truth is one."'

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Buddhist place of pilgrimage, very near Varanasi, where the Buddha gave his noted first Sermon.

## THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

[Here below we bring our readers the slightly condensed and edited transcript of Swami Ranganathananda's address delivered last February at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, M.P., India, during the Temple-dedication celebrations there. It deals with the philosophy of temple-worship—especially in a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna—against the background of Sri Ramakrishna's realizations and teachings and in the light of devotional scriptures, mainly the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the words of Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna no doubt began his spiritual quest as an image worshipper, but soon outgrew the preliminary need of holy symbols and the precincts of a temple. He began to perceive God dwelling in every living being and pervading the whole cosmos. His teachings, which are in accord with the Hindu scriptures, emanated from his personal realizations. He was a living embodiment of the ideal of religious harmony and practical spirituality which he transmitted to his disciples. Swami Vivekananda, the foremost of this group, broadcast his message to the world and gave it a practical shape in the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission.— *Ed.*]

### THE UNIQUENESS OF RAMAKRISHNA TEMPLES

There is a uniqueness about a temple to Sri Ramakrishna. We are not lacking in temples in India. We have had plenty of them; we are having plenty of them even today. But a temple bearing Sri Ramakrishna's name has a special significance. I should like to expound this here. Take, for instance, this Raipur Ramakrishna temple. Behind it are years of work in the service of the people of this area—work not merely spiritual or cultural, but also humanitarian. Two years ago, in fact, the work on this temple was suspended while the time and energies of the monks and devotees was diverted to urgent drought relief work in this State. Thousands and thousands of poor people were fed, were employed in test relief works, and were rendered many other types of service, including house-building. Earlier, too, similar services had been given to other suffering people. During the large-scale influx of migrants from East Pakistan in the sixties, much effective relief was rendered by the Ramakrishna Mission with this Raipur Ashrama as the base of operations.

So, a Ramakrishna Ashrama and a Ramakrishna Temple have a unique message to the people of our country today. And it is this: this Ashrama and this temple are meant to be a source of inspiration to make people love other human beings and serve them, without distinction of caste, creed, or sex. To see God in man is a great teaching of our *sanātana-dharma* (eternal religion). Sri Ramakrishna puts it in a beautiful formula: 'Every *jīva* (soul) is Śiva (God). Service of the *jīva* is the worship of Śiva.' This is an extraordinary teaching. We have not practised it much in our country in the past, though it has been there all along in our holy books—in the Upanisads, in

the *Gītā*, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. We did not apply it effectively till now. We constructed temples; but these temples did not have, **and still mostly do not have**, any vital relation with the rest of the world, with the rest of our life and work in the world. That was the wrong direction we took in the past. But now we shall correct it. We shall go to a temple, we shall worship the image there—it is a living presence of the Divine; it is what we call in our *bhakti-śāstras* (devotional scriptures) an *arcāvatāra*—God incarnated as an *arcā*, which means an image. But we shall also not neglect God in His incarnation as living human beings. He who is there in the temple as the *arcā*, is also present in your heart as the *antaryāmin*, inner Self. So, when we see the image and worship it, our worship should not stop there; we should also, on coming out of the temple, worship God residing in all living beings. That makes our worship whole, and our life and character integrated.

### INTEGRATION OF LIFE AND RELIGION

But, unfortunately, till the coming of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we had been keeping this whole idea of temple worship away from the practical life of man. We thought we could have any type of life here—we could be selfish, we could be quarrelsome and litigious, we could be exploitative of other human beings, we could even cheat the state about our tax dues—and yet things would be all right with us if we only went to a temple, just worshipped an image there and put some money in its offering box. But with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, we are taught again, for the first time after a lapse of ages, the true meaning of temple worship. We are taught that this temple worship—this image worship in a temple—is mainly to inspire us to see God in



ourselves and in every living being. We should derive that inspiration from our temples. This has been said in many passages in our great spiritual literature. But now, to help awaken you to this truth, you will find in the background of this temple project, the great record of human service by this Ashrama, and by our Ashramas in various parts of India—service rendered through hospitals and schools, and special services to people in distress during famine, flood, earthquake, and other calamities. All these constitute an integral part of this temple worship in a Ramakrishna Centre. The two—service of the people outside and worship of God inside a temple—are not different things standing apart, but they form one integral whole, in a comprehensive philosophy of life. It is, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna, to see God with eyes closed in meditation and to see Him with eyes open in daily life. Go to the temple and worship Him; and then pour out what you gain therefrom in loving dedicated service outside.

Now this is a teaching which our people had for ages entirely failed to grasp and live by. We need therefore to understand and implement this great teaching today. We do want more temples; but we want temples which will give us strength, which will make us *grow spiritually*, which will make us manifest the Divine that is within us. That is the purpose of these temples. And the sooner we convert all our temples, all our churches, all our mosques, into that kind of worship-places, the better for us, the better for all religions. Indeed it seems for this purpose especially, that India produced Sri Ramakrishna in the modern age.

#### THE TWIN MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Most of us know about the various *sādhanās* (spiritual disciplines) that Sri Ramakrishna performed, crossing the

barriers of individual Hindu sects and even of our whole Hindu religion, and creating thereby a benign pattern for unity and harmony among the world's religions. That is one of the greatest contributions of Sri Ramakrishna. No doubt the teaching of such an ideal appears from the very beginnings of our culture, in our philosophy, in our Vedas of over five thousand years ago; but this is the first time the world has seen a person teaching and *living* the harmony of all religions.

Two great ideas especially shine in Sri Ramakrishna's life and message: one, the deepening of man's spiritual life, and the other, the harmony among the religions of the world. Swami Vivekananda, closing his famous lecture, 'My Master', summed up Sri Ramakrishna's message in these words:

"This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

"The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore, my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself." He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has



come for renunciation, for realization; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel. And then only will you be ready to help humanity. To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master. Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE VISION OF HARMONY BEHIND INDIAN CULTURE

So, we who seek to follow Sri Ramakrishna must realize the spiritual dimension of our personality, the Ātman that is the immortal and inalienable birthright of one and all; and show respect to every other path that men and women follow to realize this truth. Depth of spirituality, and breadth of understanding and sympathy, must go side by side. That is the only way to make religion a creative and dynamic force in human life. We in India need both these teachings today. To take up the subject of harmony first, and only briefly here, I would particularly stress that in this Bhārata-bhūmi—this vast land of India—, it has been an integral feature of our religious and state policy from ancient times, to respect one's neighbour's religion and enhance the spirit of harmony among different religions. Our great teachers, from the Vedic times and through to Sri Ramakrishna, have taught us this lesson. Our saints and devotees have also exemplified it in their lives; and our political states have further upheld the same great policy of harmony, the spirit

of active toleration, of acceptance, in their dealings with the world of religions. The great Mauryan Emperor Asoka, in the third century B.C., upheld this as an article of political faith, and in his vast empire from Afghanistan in the northwest to Karnataka in the south, we find his edicts on rocks and pillars proclaiming far and wide this great idea: *samavāya eva sādhuḥ*—*samavāya*, that is, concord, alone is just and fair—in the world of religions. That is an article of faith still, so far as the people of India and the state policy of India are concerned. The famous historian, the late Dr. Toynbee, said that unlike all Semitic religions and cultures, the Hindu religion has been distinctive for its great idea of harmony between different religions and cultures. One goes to a church, another goes to a temple, and a third goes to a mosque; what does it matter? The same God is being worshipped everywhere, says Hinduism.

This capacity to sense the underlying unity behind the different religions is natural and easy to the Hindu from ancient times. Now you have to give it to the Christians; you have to give it to the Muslims. They have never had it. Their Semitic tradition has been exclusive, and not inclusive like that of the Hindus, as shown especially well by Toynbee in his book: *A Historian's Approach to Religion*. But slowly they are coming to understand this truth today. We find now that a Catholic and a Protestant are able to come closer to each other in friendship. How? Is it not because of the Hindu influence, the Vedāntic influence which says that the truth behind all the different religions is the same? So, why hate each other? Why not come together in friendship? Instead of mutual confrontation, practise what they call today mutual dialogue; try to understand each other, and pool all the spiritual resources to serve

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. IV (1962), p. 187



man, instead of dissipating them in mutual suspicion and hatred, which only bring religion itself into contempt.

#### THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF HARMONY

This is the message of Vedānta to all the religions of the world. Therefore we, in India, must all the more cherish and protect this ideal and practice of harmony as our special heritage. In our country, we find our six hundred million people, belonging to various cults and various religions, living in harmony, living in peace—except the groups that come occasionally under the grip of narrow political frenzies in the garb of religion. Why? Because our sages have taught this lesson to receptive minds, our great and far-seeing political leaders of past and present also have taught us this lesson. And in order to help us retain this great ideal in the modern age, and diffuse it all over the world, Sri Ramakrishna came, experimented with the whole range of man's religions, lived a luminous life, and became as it were a parliament of religions in himself, years before the meeting of the World Parliament in Chicago in 1893.

Here is a beautiful and inspiring verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Such verses are also found in the *Rg-veda*, in the *Gītā*, and others of our scriptures:

'That one and the same non-dual Jñāna (Pure Consciousness) is variously called by the knowers of Truth as Brahman (The Absolute, in philosophy), as Paramātman (the Supreme Self, in mysticism), and as Bhagavān (the Blessed Lord, in the religion of *bhakti* or devotion).'<sup>2</sup>

This teaching that the same God is approached by various people through

various ways, must become dynamic again in India today, so that India may continue to grow in her spiritual strength as a centre of harmony, of understanding, and of cooperation among her diverse religions and between her believers and her non-believers. For a contrast, look at Ireland: just now how much fighting is going on between the Catholics and the Protestants, in spite of the fact that both belong to the same great Christian religion! Again, currently we find this type of fighting erupting in Lebanon also, between its two sections of the same Arab race and common Semitic traditions, namely, Muslims and Christians. We too had, till recent years, a lot of suffering here—our Hindus and our Muslims fighting with one another. We had of course a foreign government till lately, which did much to divide us and make us fight with and weaken one another. But today, we are realizing that we can become true to ourselves only by assimilating the teachings of the broad and deep, positive and creative elements of our philosophical and spiritual tradition, as exemplified for us in the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna.

This then is the first part of the twofold message of Sri Ramakrishna.

#### WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION?

The second part of that message of Sri Ramakrishna relates to what is spiritual life—or, true religion. For centuries we had thought that going to temples, to churches, or to other holy places, or taking baths in holy rivers, or performing some rituals, constituted spiritual life. But Sri Ramakrishna taught us that these were not the essentials of religion: they were only acts of piety, means for the culture of true religion—means which certainly help some in the cultivating of true religion, but which if made ends in themselves, may also injure true religion. This is ritualism,

<sup>2</sup> वदन्ति तत्तत्त्वविदः तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।

ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दते ॥



in the harmful sense. For religion means spiritual growth; it is that which makes you grow spiritually; it is *ādhyātmika vikāsa* (spiritual expansion). Have your acts of piety achieved for you that spiritual growth? If they have, or are beginning to do so, then they are fine; they are welcome. But if they have not, then that piety has become reduced to a static religiosity, a piety-fringed worldliness. Our history shows what a fund of piety we have always had; how many temples, how much of worship, have been there; and yet for centuries now, we have failed to develop national health and strength, character and public spirit, and the elevation of our millions to the levels of human dignity and equality. Static piety, increasingly noisy and showy, on the one side, and widespread human exploitation and degradation on the other, have made for poverty and suffering and continual foreign invasions and oppressions. These brought our country down and down, century after century. If true religion were there, how could these things have happened? So, we need to understand and to practise true religion.

What is true religion? *The essence of religion is spirituality*, inner growth or realization, says Sri Ramakrishna. Achieve spiritual growth; that is the message of true religion. Merely being pious won't do. Piety is easy; you can get external piety cheaply. But what is needed is your inner growth. Sūrdās, Mīrābāī, Guru Nānak, Tulsīdās, all these and other saints have taught us to be spiritual, to manifest the Divine that is within man. To grow spiritually is the real purpose of religion: it is the science of religion. Go to the temple, spend even five minutes there, and when you come out from there you should feel that you are one step nearer to God, one step nearer

to your own infinite Self, that you have manifested the Divine in yourself at least a little. That is a sign of spiritual growth. Every act of religion, every act of piety—in fact every action in life must be directed to make you grow spiritually. That is the true test of religion. If this growth is not there, all this going about in piety becomes absolutely meaningless.

What does the Hindu religion teach? It teaches, first, that God is present in every human being: *aham ātmā Gudākeśa*—‘I am present in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna’, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, if God is in the hearts of all, should we not manifest Him in our life, conduct, and action? Should we not become aware of Him, and also see His presence in every other human being? Let me try to *realize* God who is always within me—that is the mood in which to face the first challenge of the Hindu religion. Then, let me see the same God in the hearts of all people, and thus love other people, serve other people, and not exploit them or fight with them, or be jealous of them—this is the mood in which to face the second challenge. With our slave type of minds, all these centuries, we have not responded to these two challenges. But today, forsaking that static way, and freeing our minds, we must see that mutual love and concern, spirit of service and of dedication, great efficiency and strong character, come out of our religion. Character is the test, the fruit, of true religion; it alone is the true measure of the spiritual growth of man. Sri Ramakrishna emphasizes this again and again.

#### STATIC PIETY v. DYNAMIC SPIRITUALITY

Sri Ramakrishna never liked showy religion; and much of religion today is

<sup>3</sup> अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूतालयस्थितः । X. 20



showy. That is why Swami Vivekananda wrote in a letter: 'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character.'<sup>4</sup> The more character you have, the more religion you have. Showy religion is no religion at all. Sri Ramakrishna warns us against such a religion. We read this saying of his in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 'Beware of the man who wears *tulasi* leaves in his ears.' Some people, you see, pose as being very pious by wearing holy *tulasi* leaves in their ears, and the next moment they go out and cheat somebody, or do other evil acts: both these can go and have gone together in India. But the truly spiritual man will never do such things. Show that you are spiritual by your love, by your human concern, by your spirit of service. That is a central teaching of Sri Ramakrishna; and it is also a central teaching of all our *śāstras*, or holy books. They exhort us to *live* religion and thus manifest the Divine that is within. Swami Vivekananda therefore defines religion thus, 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.' When that Divinity manifests even a little, concern for other individuals will come, a spirit of service will come, efficiency will come. And exploitation, litigiousness, weakness, fear, and inefficiency—these things will disappear. The Hindus have been and still are among the most litigious people in the world. We are very fond of quarrelling, fighting and going to the courts—formerly even up to the British Privy Council, but now to our own Supreme Court—for flimsy causes. Why? Because we have had only piety-fringed worldliness, or in other words, religiosity

only, but very little true religion. That piety of ours did not reveal any spiritual growth. Now that Hindu must change and a new Hindu must emerge, who will sense the presence of God in himself or herself and in every other human being, and will make his or her love of God flow into the channels of love and service of man. Temples are meant to inspire you with this vision. *What you take in by worship and contemplation, that you must pour out in love and service.* When that vision, and conduct in the light of that vision, are not there, then temples and worship and rituals which in our Sanātana Dharma are aesthetically and spiritually beautiful, become increasingly reduced to static pietistic forms bereft of all spiritual meaning and fruits. This is the glowing theme of a passage in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which our people will do well to understand and assimilate today, so that our temples and all other forms of worship may become fruitful in terms of character and dynamic spirituality for which they were meant. Contrasting static piety with dynamic spirituality, the Lord in his incarnation as Kapila, addressing His mother Devahūti, says:

'I am present always, in every being, as the very Self of all; but mortal man, by insulting Me in man, makes his worship of Me in images a mere farce.' 'He who worships Me in images, foolishly ignoring My presence in all beings as their Self and Lord, his worship is in vain, like pouring oblations of ghee (clarified butter) in ashes (instead of in the fire).

'That man can never attain peace of mind who, out of pride and a (wrong) sense of separateness, and practising inveterate enmity to other beings, really practises enmity towards Me existing in other bodies.

'O sinless one, I am not at all pleased with the worship, accompanied (though it be) with big and small offerings and rituals, offered to Me, in images, by

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 489



him who insults the dignity of all beings.

'Let worship be offered to Me, the Lord, in images, accompanied with meticulous discharge of one's duties (to society), till one learns to see Me in one's own heart.

'He who makes the slightest difference between himself and others—he who thus dwells on this (false) sense of separateness—death shall be his terrible reward.'<sup>5</sup>

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE

The verse coming immediately after the above six, can be considered as the scriptural inspiration behind Swami Vivekananda's great message of 'Renunciation and Service'; and he quite likely had it in his mind when he uttered these following words in course of his famous address to the vast gathering in Madras in 1897 on 'The Future of India':

'So give up being a slave! For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race, everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything... What vain gods shall

<sup>5</sup> अहं सर्वेषु भूतेषु भूतात्मावस्थितः सदा ।  
तमवज्ञाय मां मर्त्यः कुरुतेऽर्चाविडम्बनम् ॥  
यो मां सर्वेषु भूतेषु सन्तमात्मानमीश्वरम् ।  
हित्वाऽर्चा भजते मौढ्यात् भस्मन्येव जुहोति सः ॥  
द्विषतः परकाये मां मानिनो भिन्नदर्शिनः ।  
भूतेषु बद्धवैरस्य न मनः शान्तिमृच्छति ॥  
अहमुच्चावचैर्द्रव्यैः क्रिययात्पन्नयानघे ।  
नैव तुष्येऽर्चितोऽर्चायां भूतग्रामावमानिनः ॥  
अर्चादौ अर्चयेत्तावदीश्वरं मां स्वकर्मकृत् ।  
यावन्न वेद स्वहृदि सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितम् ॥  
आत्मनश्च परस्यापि यः करोत्यन्तरोदरम् ।  
तस्य भिन्नदृशोमृत्युविदधे भयमुल्बणम् ॥

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, III. xxix. 21-6

we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all around us, the Virat? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. Before we can crawl half a mile, we want to cross the ocean, like Hanuman! It cannot be. Everyone going to be a Yogi, everyone going to meditate! It cannot be. The whole day mixing with the world, with Karma Kanda, and in the evening sitting down and blowing through your nose! Is it so easy? Should Rishis come flying through the air, because you have blown three times through the nose? Is it a joke? It is all nonsense. What is needed is Chittashuddhi, purification of the heart. And how does that come? The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us. Worship it. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do. These are all our gods—men and animals, and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other. It is the most terrible Karma for which we are suffering, and yet it does not open our eyes!'<sup>6</sup>

Now listen to that next verse of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

'Therefore, worship Me, who am the Self of all beings and who have already built a temple (for Myself in them), by giving gifts and showing respect (removing the felt privations of all beings and protecting their dignity and self-respect while so doing); (and do all this) in a spirit of friendliness and attitude of non-separateness.'<sup>7</sup>

The whole of the above teaching of Swami Vivekananda may be said to be a commentary on this *śloka*.

Worship Me in all beings—says the Lord. But how?—asks the devotee. The Lord replies: *dānamānābhyām*—by *dāna*

<sup>6</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. III (1960), pp. 300-1

<sup>7</sup> अथ मां सर्वेषु भूतेषु भूतात्मानं कृतालयम् ।  
अर्हयेद्दानमानाभ्यां मैत्र्याभिन्नेन चक्षुषा ॥



and *māna*. *Māna* means respect. Show respect to the other individual. He may be poor; he may be ignorant; he may be of a lower social or economic status; but show respect to him, for 'I am present in him', says the Lord. *Dāna* means giving, or gift. If the other is hungry and is in want, provide him with food and employment. If he is ignorant, provide him with education. If he is down with frustration, give him peace and consolation; and, removing the felt needs of humanity and all beings thus, 'worship Me'—*mām arhayet*. What should be my attitude? *Maitryā*—with intense friendliness. What a beautiful idea! But the next and last phrase is still more wonderful: *abhinnena cakṣuṣā*—with the eye (or vision) of non-separateness. We are essentially one. You may be rich; the other person may be poor; you may be highly educated while the other may be ignorant. Still, do not see merely these variable externals, but focus your attention on the invariable and inalienable truth within all beings, namely, the Lord; for 'I, the one Lord, am present in all as their very Self.' This is the meaning of *abhinnena cakṣuṣā*—looking upon all with the same eye of equality. This *abhinnacakṣu*, or *abhinna-drṣṭi*, is highly praised in the Vedānta; and its opposite, *bhinna-drṣṭi*, is always condemned as unethical and harmful, because it is untrue. But, unfortunately, what we have had all these centuries in our Indian society, was the devil's play of *bhinna-drṣṭi*—you are separate; I am separate; I get a hundred rupees more salary than you; I am a Brahmin and you are a Harijan, and so on *ad infinitum*. But today, with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we are re-taught this great message of our Vedānta philosophy, of equality and human dignity. This is what India needs; it is also what the world needs—this teach-

ing of how to see the self-same Ātman in every being. When we implement this great philosophy, then alone will we be able to build a united integrated nation in our country—strong and creative, progressive and human. Then and then alone, will the full development of India become an accomplished fact.

So, as I said in the beginning, behind this Ashrama and Temple is this great philosophy of healthy inter-human relationship—service in place of exploitation, worship in place of even service. Through service of God in man, we can realize God that is ever within us, and stimulate the same creative process in the recipient of our service also. Through this process of service itself, the *kācā āmi*, or 'unripe I', will become the *pākā āmi*, or 'ripe I', says Sri Ramakrishna. He gives the description of the 'unripe I' as being that which says: I am a brāhmaṇa or I am a *cāṇḍāla* (a man of the lowest caste); I am a Hindu or I am a Muslim; I am a man of wealth, a man of power, a man of position. Transform this *kācā* 'I' into the *pākā* 'I', exhorts Sri Ramakrishna. The *pākā* 'I' says: I am the servant of all; I am the friend of all; I am a child of God, a devotee of God. Till now, though we have had plenty of piety, our 'I' has been of the 'unripe' variety; therefore we could not do much good, and did much harm instead. Sri Ramakrishna now exhorts us to convert this 'unripe I' into the 'ripe I'. That is the meaning of being spiritual—the manifestation of a little of the inherent divine dimension of man. That is spiritual growth, spiritual expansion—*ātma-vikāsa*: the spiritual growth of individuality (*vyaktitva*) into personality (*vikasitavyaktitva*). It is only with the onset of this unique type of growth that men and women become capable of working with other men and women, in a cooperative



spirit—without fighting and quarrelling with each other and pulling down, not only each other, but also the institutions concerned and the nation.

LIVING IN THE WORLD v. BEING WORLDLY

Sri Ramakrishna gives another illustration to illumine this subject of man's spiritual growth: Live in the world: there is no harm in that; but don't allow the world to live *in you*. A boat will be *on* the water; that is the right place for the boat; but the water should not be *in* the boat. If water enters a boat, it will either sink or gradually decay and stagnate. Similarly, when the world—that is, worldliness—enters into a man, he becomes stagnant. *Samsāra* (relative existence) in its evil sense, means this stagnation. Living *in samsāra*, or in the world, is not the same thing as being a *samsārī*, a worldly individual. We are all in *samsāra*: Srī Kṛṣṇa and Sri Ramakrishna were also in *samsāra*. The teaching is not against *samsāra* or the world, but against the *samsāric* attitude, against worldliness. We Hindus really have had too much *samsāra* within us. That was why we quarrelled and fought, lost our political freedom, and made our society a den of exploitation, corruption, human distortions of the worst type. And now, with the inspiration of these great teachers, a new India is emerging, with creative ideas and progressive humanistic attitudes increasingly influencing our thought, action, and behaviour. Swami Vivekananda wanted us to develop *character*, 'life...deep as the ocean...wide as the sky'; he wanted us to combine in our character the intensity of the fanatic and the extensity of the materialist.<sup>8</sup>

This is a far-reaching message of Sri Ramakrishna and of the institutions bearing his name.

### LIFE IS ITSELF RELIGION

These Ramakrishna institutions, again, are not like the usual type of religious organisations where there is a gulf between life and religion. Sri Ramakrishna came to bridge that gulf and to teach us that life is itself religion. He exhorts us to see life in its unity and wholeness. This is the *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ* (one-pointed intelligence) spoken of in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where there is a unity of vision and unity of purpose and endeavour, external and internal.<sup>9</sup> This is the basis of all character development. Young people today want to see character coming out of religion; if they do not see this, they are not going to be inspired by religion or religious people. If you profess religion and show no character, they will respect neither religion nor you; and they will grow cynical as a result. But when you show character along with your religious belief, they respect it. This is true here; it is also true abroad—in America, in Europe, everywhere. So, this is the challenge before all religion: can it and does it show character? Just as the food that you take in must show its effect in the strength of your body, so also the religion that you profess must show its effect in your inner riches, in your character, your spirit of service, your practical life.

### THE FASCINATION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

So, this is the message to spread which Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came. And in this context, I must mention also a third personality, that of Sri Ramakrishna's life companion, Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, who was simple and unassuming and yet an embodiment of purity, love, and compassion. These three spiritual giants are at the back

<sup>8</sup> vide *The Complete Works*, Vol. V (1959), p. 227; Vol. III, p. 174

<sup>9</sup> vide : II. 41



of this Ramakrishna Movement, the mission of which is to spiritually illumine and energize not only India, but also the rest of the world. There is a remarkable spiritual and human fascination about Sri Ramakrishna. I have seen how people all over India, and abroad, listen with the greatest interest and reverence to talks about him. Wherever the name of Sri Ramakrishna is uttered, that place becomes holy and elevating. These experiences help me to understand the truth of what the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has said about Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Here are two beautiful verses from that great book:

‘We are not satiated listening to words relating to the heroic deeds of the supremely famous (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). The more we listen, the more becomes the appetite in us to hear more and more of the same.’

‘Your [i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s] words are a divine elixir, bringing life to scorched souls, highly praised by poet-saints, auspicious to listen to, and productive of expanding Śrī (wealth and welfare). Those who spread them wide on earth are the most generous of persons.’<sup>10</sup>

What a beautiful sentiment! The words of, and/or relating to, Śrī Kṛṣṇa are nectar to parched souls, says the text. The same can be said of Sri Ramakrishna. The story of his life is nectar; his words are nectar. Thousands and thousands of people, in all parts of the world, read at least a few pages daily from that great book, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA : EMBODIMENT OF THE WORLD’S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

I cannot do anything better in closing, than to recall a simple beautiful verse on Sri Ramakrishna composed by Swami Vivekananda. The time and occasion when this verse first came from his lips, are reminiscent of the event we are now celebrating. Yesterday we installed an image of Sri Ramakrishna in the temple here. There was a somewhat similar occasion about a year after Swami Vivekananda’s return in 1897 from the West. A householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Navagopal Ghosh, had constructed a small shrine in his new house in Howrah. He had approached Swamiji and asked him: ‘Naren, you please come and establish Sri Ramakrishna’s image in my shrine...’ Swamiji agreed. He took his bath in the Ganga and reached the house at the appointed time. He entered the shrine: it was a small room but it had marble flooring. He reverentially placed the image of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar, and, taking flowers in his hand, offered them at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna and prayed: ‘Be Thou present in this home, and bless this family.’ His installation worship was very simple and informal, for to him Sri Ramakrishna was a living presence. Then, while saluting the Master at the close of the worship, this *śloka* (or verse) burst forth from his mouth—a verse which is now recited during the *ārati* (waving of lights etc.) in all our centres in East and West:

‘Salutation to Thee, Sri Ramakrishna, who came (into the world) to establish dharma (religion), the embodiment of all the dharmas (of the world), and the best of the divine incarnations.’<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> वयं तु न वितृप्याम उत्तमश्लोकविक्रमे ।  
यच्छृण्वतां रसज्ञानां स्वादु स्वादु पदे पदे ॥  
तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं  
कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।

श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदातत

भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः ॥

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* I. i. 19; X. 31. 9

<sup>11</sup> स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।

अवतारस्वरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

## CONCLUSION

This verse portrays the real character of Sri Ramakrishna as a spiritual teacher, and conveys the infinite scope of his mission in the world. He came to establish dharma—religion or spirituality. But not any new religion bearing his own name, not a Ramakrishna religion or sect: no, nothing of the sort; but he is *sarva-*

*dharma-svarūpin*—‘the embodiment of all religions’. Through him each and all religions will thrive as true spiritual forces; a Christian will become a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Hindu a better Hindu, through the influence of his all-embracing spirituality. And therefore, *avatāra-variṣṭhāya*—‘to the best of divine incarnations’, *Rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ*—‘to that Ramakrishna be my salutations.’

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

## HOW TO WORK FOR UNITY, HARMONY AND PEACE ANYWHERE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

### III

For one who has earnestly practised the state of consciousness characterized by such thoughts, cultivation of the other five states taught by the Buddha (and quoted at the start of this Essay) becomes easier.

When thoughts of goodwill are sincerely harboured, easily enough are words of goodwill sincerely spoken. Further, without sincerely having such thoughts, however clever one may be, he cannot sincerely speak words of goodwill. Our words thus tend to reflect our states of consciousness. What is more, they help create the same state of consciousness in the listener.

If one utters friendly words, at the back of which is the power of sincere thoughts of goodwill, he will evoke in a listener the response of friendliness, with at least some sincere thoughts of goodwill. On the other hand if he utters angry words, at the back

of which is the power of ill will, he raises a storm of anger in the mind of others.

Words constitute a power which many of us do not know how to handle, because we have not controlled our thoughts and emotions. How many tragedies have happened in the world because of wrong use of words!

In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha says:

‘Do not speak harshly to anybody; those who are spoken to will answer thee in the same way. Angry speech breeds trouble, thou wilt receive blows for blows.’<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes, even, it may appear that neither sincerity nor goodwill is lacking and that only proper discipline of words is needed. Sometimes self-righteously we feel: Why, I am so sincere and mean so well—why then should I not give him a piece of my mind, which is all for his own

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 133



good? I am so disinterested. I don't mince matters.

Yet this 'giving' of a piece of the mind is often an act neither of sincerity nor of goodwill, but sheer egotism—opinionated self-esteem. When the state of consciousness from which we give bits of our mind, is dominated by egotism, our words can never be conducive to unity, peace, or harmony. For the vibrations of our egotism, passing through our accents, will rouse the same responsive waves in other minds. When two egos clash there is little if any chance of harmony resulting.

Therefore, true goodwill can be expressed by the seekers only through auspicious, restrained, kindly and refreshing words.

The Buddha said once, 'That which is most needed is a loving heart.' If we have a loving heart, then alone we can have loving words. In that case moreover, words sometimes may even be superfluous. Suppose someone finds his mother weeping because he told a lie. If he is not a scoundrel, he will certainly try to give up lying. But if the mother's language is as harsh as a blow on the back, what chance is there that he will give it up?

Now in the world there are so many 'peace' efforts, official and non-official. But see what absurdity there is in these! People say they are working for peace. But do they harbour thoughts of goodwill at all sincerely? Could such thoughts ever result in so many words of ill will vehemently spoken and without decency?

There is so much hypocrisy, insincerity and make-believe associated with our peace-efforts, that it is impossible to expect any better state of affairs to result in the world. We criticize others, expose their faults, while hiding our own faults, and weaknesses. We declare loudly our (non-existent) virtues, minimize the obvious virtues of others—and yet expect to be regarded as working for peace!

What could be greater folly?

#### IV

The Buddha speaks of the state of consciousness from which are done 'acts of goodwill towards fellow beings'.

Some of us know the art of speaking the loveliest of words to express our 'goodwill'. But our words are not followed by good actions. In other words, we just do not mean what we say. This is perhaps called 'being polite'! In that case in the very heart of our 'goodwill' there must be a gap. The test is here. Unless words of goodwill are followed by acts of goodwill, they are all hypocrisy: neither were the words sincerely spoken nor thoughts sincerely harboured.

Again, when we are sincere, it is only through acts of goodwill that people will become convinced of our good intentions. This creates mutual trust, on the basis of which alone, enduring work for peace and harmony can be done.

Now these acts of goodwill should be extended toward all needy beings, irrespective of race, colour, religion or politics. Otherwise our partisan acts of 'goodwill', will themselves generate suspicion, envy, ill will, and hatred, and destroy chances for harmony and peace.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches the great doctrine of *samadarsana* or same-sightedness. It is said that the illumined person does not see any difference between a dog, an eater of dog-flesh, a learned man, a cow or an elephant. In other words, all receive his equally kindly and respectful treatment. With the illumined soul, same-sightedness is an outcome of a spiritual experience in which he has seen the homogeneity of the *Ātman*, or the soul.

With those who intend to work for unity, harmony and peace, same-sightedness has to be practised as a discipline. Then alone,

honest sincere acts of goodwill toward fellow beings are possible. Otherwise they will be at best acts of enlightened self-interest. And it is only selflessness that will make for harmony and peace, not a clever type of selfishness, known by some other name.

## V

In the fourth place, the Buddha speaks of that state of consciousness wherein one becomes anxious to share with others all that he has, down to the last crumb of bread.

Between X who suffers from surfeit and Y who suffers from starvation, can there be any peace or harmony?

Whatever we hold as our property, we do it as a trust. In God's world everything equally belongs to all for their sustenance and fulfilment. Man's selfishness has intervened in this plan, and created all sorts of complications. Only when we come out of these complexities and share with others whatever we have, may we work for peace and harmony.

Just think how many centuries it has been since the Buddha gave this solution to a problem which only in this century has necessitated the explosive political movements!

Even today, thus, our so-called advanced society is far from realizing the fact that whatever we possess we hold only as a trust of God's property, which should be shared with all.

Over and above the natural animosity roused in others by our selfish acts, the very disposition towards possessiveness cuts into own power of thinking and feeling and acting for others.

## VI

Next comes: 'Sharing with others your higher life of flawless virtue.'

The prophets and the great spiritual leaders who really worked for peace and harmony—how did they do so? Most of them had no property to share with others. But what they had, they shared: especially their own higher lives of flawless virtue. Now the very name of the Buddha still inspires us with the thought of friendliness compassion, peace, and harmony. To look at his portrait is to imbibe the stillness of the mind. The Buddha indeed is the personification of peace and harmony.

Throughout his forty and more years after attainment of illumination, his life was open to all. Living on alms, this mighty man of absolute serenity—who knew no anger, no hate, no violence, no crookedness, but was simplicity itself, truthfulness itself, same-sighted and equally compassionate to all—, the Buddha shared his peerless life with one and all. Through sharing with others this higher life of flawless virtues, the Buddha worked 'miracles' simply by his presence. Through a few words, he could transform war-like efforts into peaceful reconciliation.

Once, two kingdoms were on the verge of war, over the possession of a certain embankment.

'And Buddha, seeing the Kings with their armies ready to fight, requested them to tell him the cause of their quarrels. Having heard the complaints on both sides, he said:

'“I understand that the embankment has value for some of your people. Has it any intrinsic value aside from its service to your men?”

'“It has no intrinsic value whatever,” was the reply.

'“Now, when you go to battle is it not sure that many of your men will be slain and you yourselves, O Kings, are liable to lose your lives?”

'“To be sure, many will be slain, and our lives also will be in danger.”

'“The blood of men, however, has it less



intrinsic value than a mound of earth?"  
 "No, the lives of men, and above all the lives of Kings, are priceless."

Then the Tathagata concluded: 'Are you going to stake that which is priceless against that which has no intrinsic value whatsoever?'

The wrath of the two monarchs abated and they came to a peaceable agreement.<sup>4</sup>

Of 'sharing with others your higher life...', we find the greatest examples in modern times in Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother. We do not know, from any period of history, greater examples of attained perfection shared with people at large.

Sri Ramakrishna's door was always open to all who cared to come. And he himself often went about looking for people who were seeking God or trying to lead a good life. People could see him again and again communing with God, going into ecstasy. His radiant face, his streams of inspired words, the vibrations of his intense spiritual joy—all were before all persons to see and feel. It was difficult to remain a sceptic in the presence of Sri Ramakrishna. It was impossible for any but the hardest heart not to love God and men.

Similar was the case of the Holy Mother. She shared the flawless life, which became manifested in her as ideal motherhood, with all and sundry for thirty years and more. Her supreme perfection blossomed in the midst of strikingly uncongenial commonplace surroundings, accessible to the meanest in society.

The humblest of men and women, the forlorn, the outcast, the unloved, the hated—all received her restoring ministrations, because hers was not a distant life of holi-

ness but the perfect life lived as the ever-solicitous mother of all.

## VII

Finally the Buddha speaks of that state of consciousness wherein one spontaneously strives for removing all evil with the noble, saving creed of love.

Working for peace and harmony necessarily makes us face the problem of evil around us. There are obvious evils around us. Most people are persuaded that it is not to their convenience or self-interest to try to fight evil. It involves them in avoidable risks. So they think the best attitude to evil is indifference.

This is clearly a worldly attitude, dominated by fear and selfishness. Such an attitude cannot be conducive to peace and harmony, for it will encourage evil forces. It is in fact an utterly futile attitude to the problem of evil.

On the other hand there are those who are convinced that it is their business—and probably everybody's—to fight evil. Hence they go headlong to fight it, without even stopping to think whether or not they have acquired the necessary strength of character for doing so, or what is the best way to do it, with the usual result that in process of fighting 'evil', they actually worsen the situation.

In the Yoga-sutras (1.33.), Patanjali prescribes 'indifference to evil' as a discipline, for an aspirant who has yet to get a firm footing in the spiritual life. Until a person has attained spiritual maturity, it is not safe for him to meddle with evil with a reformist zeal; his time is not yet for doing so. If he tries to do so prematurely he will be causing increase of evil, beside hurting himself.

How then can a person be sure that his time for doing the noble work has come?

The answer to this question is implied

<sup>4</sup> vide Paul Carus: *The Gospel of Buddha* (Open Court Publishing Company, Illinois), Chapt. LXXVII ('Peacemaker'), p. 157

in the Buddha's teachings. It is significant that the Buddha speaks of 'the state of consciousness wherein one spontaneously strives for reforming all evil with the noble saving creed of love.' The sovereign test of preparedness for removing evil will be the uncalculating and spontaneous outflow of love from one's heart to the evil doers. This can happen only to persons who have attained not only purity of heart but also the resultant unselfishness and fearlessness. The absolute sweep and abandon of this love are so powerful that it not only ennobles the giver but also the receiver.

Here, then, the Buddha teaches that the only and the infallible method of removing evil around us, is through the noble, saving creed of love. Therefore he said, 'That which is most needed is a loving heart.' All attempts at removing evil without a loving heart have always failed, and will always fail.

We cannot remove evil by bullets or bulldozers, by satire or criticism, by lecture or sermon. It is possible only through the saving creed of love. Why should it be so? Because without love we just cannot understand people. Without understanding, how can we help anyone?

How could saints transform sinners? It was only by giving them an assured feeling that they had their love and understanding, no matter what sins they had committed. If we have attempted to correct anybody and have failed, we may try this other method. Let us stop criticizing him. Instead, let us in secret say sincere tearful prayers for him. Let us give him our faith

and love, assure him that in spite of his misguided conduct we respect his inherent divinity. This will work sooner than we may think, provided our love be not vitiated by selfishness, and our prayers by self-righteousness.

Our ordinary attempts at removing evil anywhere are invariably attended by our habit of finding fault with others. No good, as the Holy Mother says, is ever done by anybody's finding fault with others. But if we can make people our own through unselfish love, they can be transformed.

According to the Buddha, therefore, there are six states of consciousness which are particularly conducive to unity, and harmony—and thus to peace—; and being in themselves friendly and respectful, lead to accord, amity and love. Proceeding further, the Buddha pointed out that these six states, when cultivated properly, lead finally to supreme knowledge.

"Each of these leads successively a step further, and when there is something further to be done let there be no falling back in your steps," said the Buddha.

The locus of our activity, aspiration or need may be small or big, according to varying circumstances of life. Yet under any situation, peace and harmony are fundamental requirements of sane and meaningful living.

If we practise these six states of consciousness as taught by the Buddha, our lives will surely change for the better, and our homes, society, country, and world will all be better to live in.

*(Concluded)*



# SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND VISWANATH UPADHYAYA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

One day Viswanath Upadhyaya dreamt that a holy man, sitting encircled by a mass of light, was beckoning to him with a view to granting him divine knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter he became very restless. Sometimes he would pray that his dream should become a reality. Sometimes he would eagerly wish that the holy man who had visited him in the dream would be kind enough to appear before him in flesh and blood. At least he restlessly wished to have the dream repeated.

Soon thereafter Viswanath heard of a Saint of Dakshineswar who lived deeply merged in God-consciousness. His was a life of devout simplicity, of austere sanctity, of catholic spirit which embraced all religions and sects. A direct experience of God was his only desire, his only value. Mere external forms of religion had hardly any appeal for him. He had a unique power of expressing deep spiritual truths in homely and heart-touching sayings. He was popularly known as Paramahansa Ramakrishna.

Though then only about thirty-six years old, Sri Ramakrishna had not only perfected himself in the art of superconscious experience but, being led by an irrepressible urge, he had sought earnestly to experience God through various ways,—even ways beyond the boundaries of the Hindu heritage. Here too he had proved successful: as Arnold Toynbee has very appropriately

said, 'His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.' Yet all this had happened practically unnoticed, although Sri Ramakrishna was living in a suburb of the capital of India. In those days few had come to know him, and fewer still could appreciate his high spiritual attainments.

Captain Viswanath Upadhyaya was the officer-in-charge of a large timber yard belonging to the State of Nepal. It was situated at Ghusuri, Howrah, on the bank of the Ganga opposite to Calcutta. Courageous and a firm believer in God, Viswanath had inherited many noble traits from his forefathers. So devotedly did he daily worship God that his eyes would turn reddish, and he would, as it were, get lost in himself. Naturally then, he wanted to see for himself the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar.

Eager as he was, Viswanath hurried to Dakshineswar to see the holy man. But what he found struck him dumb: the person sitting in front of him was very similar to the holy man of his dream! Overwhelmed, he repeatedly prostrated himself at his feet.<sup>2</sup> His feelings were stirred to the very depths. Tears of joy flowed down his cheeks. In fact he was lost in joy.

Strangely enough, Sri Ramakrishna from the first treated him as one of long familiarity. Thus he completely won the heart of Viswanath. The latter was charmed to hear from him that a childlike, implicit and uncomplaining faith in God and resignation to His will were the essentials in the life of a religious person, and that in their absence all theological ideas, however grand they

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<sup>1</sup> This story is according to Gurudas Barman: *Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-carit*, Vol. I, pp. 143-4, and also Akshay Kumar Sen's *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-punthi*, 5th edn., p. 255. Although the accounts in Ramachandra Datta's *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Paramahamser Jīvanvrttānta* and Sureshchandra Datta's *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Līla* are somewhat different they seem less probable.

<sup>2</sup> Akshay Kumar Sen, op. cit., p. 255.



may appear, were of no avail. He was surprised to find a close accord between the words of this saint and the holy texts he himself had studied. Viswanath indeed was so much impressed that he did not at all go home that day, but spent the night in the temple garden of Dakshineswar.<sup>3</sup> The impression left by that first day's visit was indelible, and thenceforward he developed a growing reverence for Sri Ramakrishna. From the very first meeting, Viswanath took him to be a *siddha mahā-puruṣa* (perfected great soul).<sup>4</sup>

This meeting must have taken place some time in 1872 or possibly a little earlier. It was certainly before Sri Ramakrishna met Dayananda Saraswati in Calcutta in January, 1873<sup>5</sup> for Sri Ramakrishna had gone there in the company of Viswanath. Sri Ramakrishna began calling Viswanath 'Captain' as a term of endearment.

Viswanath came from a distinguished brāhmaṇa family of Nepal. His father, a staunch devotee of Lord Śiva, used to re-

peat the name of Viswanath (a name of Śiva) constantly, and so he named his son also 'Viswanath'. Born in a family of devotees, Viswanath had developed all his father's virtues. About their devotion to God, Sri Ramakrishna later said:

'What a sweet nature Captain has! What devotion! He performs the *ārati* before the image. First he waves a lamp with three lights, then a lamp with one light, and last of all he waves burning camphor. When performing the worship he does not speak. Once he motioned to me to take my seat. During the worship his eyes become swollen from spiritual emotion. They look as if they have been stung by wasps. He cannot sing, but he chants hymns beautifully. In his mother's presence he sits on a lower level; she sits on a high stool. His father was a havildar in the English army. He would hold a gun with one hand and with the other worship Siva. His servant made a clay image of Siva for him. He wouldn't even touch water before performing the worship. He earned six thousand rupees a year.'<sup>6</sup>

Himself a scholar in the Vedānta philosophy, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata*, Viswanath as an orthodox brāhmaṇa used to worship his chosen deity (*iṣṭa*) daily with great devotion. While worshipping, his mind would become absorbed in spiritual thoughts. Viswanath was a great ritualist. He performed his daily devotions, such as worship, *japa* (repetition of Lord's name), *ārati* (waving of lights etc. before the deity), reciting of scriptures, and chanting of hymns. Praising him, Sri Ramakrishna later said: 'There is another big man: Captain. Though a man of the world, he is a great lover of God... He knows the Vedas, the Vedānta, the *Bhāgavata*, the *Gīta*, the *Adhyatma Ramayana*, and other

<sup>3</sup> vide 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), p. 448.

<sup>4</sup> Śashibhūṣan Ghosh: *Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇadeva* (Udbodhan Karyalaya, Calcutta, B. E. 1332), p. 340 f. n.

<sup>5</sup> It is clear that Dayananda visited Calcutta from December 1872—April 1873 [cf. Romain Rolland: *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1947), p. 145.] And the *Gospel* (p. 573) describes Captain's presence during that visit. Further, the Master mentioned that Dayananda was eagerly awaiting Keshab Chandra Sen's visit, which almost certainly occurred in January 1873. One may note that Akshay Kumar Sen (op. cit.) indicated a much later date (1879) for Viswanath's first meeting the Master; but the above evidence makes this view untenable. 'M', in the introduction to the original Bengali "Gospel", also indicated a somewhat later date (some time preceding the Master's first visit to Keshav in 1875); but again this seems inaccurate.

<sup>6</sup> *Gospel*, p. 492

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 620



scriptures by heart.’<sup>7</sup> Viswanath’s wife too was a devotee of God: about her Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘His wife worships the Deity in another form—that of Gopala.’<sup>8</sup> They both showed great respect to holy men.

Viswanath’s first visit naturally led to others. In fact he began visiting Sri Ramakrishna weekly, and the latter in turn, visited him about once a month, taking food prepared by Captain’s devoted wife. They used to set up a temporary lavatory on the terraced roof of their house for the convenience of the revered guest.<sup>9</sup> And it was not long before Viswanath became convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was a spiritual giant—an Incarnation of God.

Soon thereafter, however, Viswanath was put into great difficulty. In spite of his sincere efforts, the timber business had failed to earn profits for several years. One reason was that the strong tides of the Ganga had carried away many logs each of the previous few years. So, Viswanath kept postponing submission of the accounts to the Nepal Government. Then some groundless charges of ‘embezzlement’ were sent to the Nepal authorities, and the Chief Minister sent for him to give account. Perplexed and apprehensive, Viswanath went to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar, fell at his feet, and wept bitterly. Sri Ramakrishna, moved by compassion, advised him to stick to truth only, and assured him, ‘By the grace of Kālī you will come back again.’<sup>10</sup> Thus cheered, Viswanath went to Kathmandu and submitted his accounts. So much was the Chief Minister impressed by his straightforwardness, that he not only pardoned him but proceeded to appoint him the Nepal Government’s representative at Calcutta! Thereafter his salary was increas-

ed four times.<sup>11</sup> He also was promoted to the rank of Colonel. Happy at this turn of events, Viswanath went to Sri Ramakrishna as soon as he reached Calcutta, and reported to him everything. When he told the Master that he was no more a Captain, and had become a Colonel, the Master laughed heartily and exclaimed, ‘What’s that?’ When Viswanath explained the term, Sri Ramakrishna remarked, ‘That’s all right; however I would rather call you “Captain”.’<sup>12</sup>

A frequent visitor to Dakshineswar and himself a sincere spiritual aspirant, Viswanath observed the different moods of Sri Ramakrishna in significant detail. Once he saw the Master absorbed in ecstasy continuously for three days. Applying his own experiences in Hathayoga he tried to help Sri Ramakrishna come down from *samādhi*. As he later described: ‘...on such occasions when deep Samadhi would continue for a long time, cow’s *ghee* (clarified butter) would be rubbed at intervals on the person of the Master from the neck to the lower end of the backbone and from the knees to the soles...in a downward direction. When this was done, the Master felt it convenient to come down to the realm of “I” and “mine”...’<sup>13</sup> Sri Ramakrishna himself remarked: ‘In his earlier years he practised hathayoga. That is why he strokes my head gently when I am in samadhi.’<sup>14</sup> Again: ‘About my own spirit-

<sup>11</sup> Akshay Kumar Sen, op. cit., p. 282

<sup>12</sup> Gurudas Barman, op. cit., pp. 234-5. As further illustration of the close relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and this devotee, one may note that when another devotee undertook to build a thatched cottage for the Holy Mother near the Dakshineswar temple, Viswanath arranged to supply all the timber needed for the work. [vide Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras Math, 1970), pp. 307-8]

<sup>13</sup> Swami Saradananda, op. cit., p. 360

<sup>14</sup> *Gospel*, p. 492

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 492

<sup>9</sup> Ramachandra Datta, op. cit., (7th ed.), p. 104

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 210



ual state Captain said, "Your soul, like a bird, is ready to fly." There are two entities: *jivatma*, the embodied soul, and *Paramatma*, the Supreme Soul. The embodied soul is the bird. The Supreme Soul is like the *akasa* (ether, or space); it is the *Chidakasa*, the *akasa* of Consciousness. Captain said: "Your embodied soul flies into *akasa* of Consciousness. Thus you go into *samadhi*." <sup>15</sup>

Viswanath was opposed to all non-Hindu religious traditions. As a strong upholder of orthodox conventions, he disliked the idea of Sri Ramakrishna's visiting Keshab Chandra Sen, who dined with the English, and had married his daughter into an alien caste.<sup>16</sup> He even got annoyed if Sri Ramakrishna uttered one or two English words, and criticized the young devotees of Sri Ramakrishna on the ground that they studied English books and did not discriminate about their food.<sup>17</sup> But Sri Ramakrishna worked patiently to broaden Viswanath's attitude towards such persons, and with noteworthy results.

Not only did his contact with Sri Ramakrishna change Viswanath's social attitudes and values, but it influenced radically his inner life. He was one of the very few fortunate souls who lived under the direct influence of the Master for such a long period. In fact, we see him attending on Sri Ramakrishna even after his *mahā-samādhi* on August 16, 1886: although Captain did not reach the Master's room till about seven hours after the supreme *samādhi* began and life seemed to have left, he at once noted that some heat remained in the body and he began earnestly rubbing the spine. He told the devotees to wait and not give up hope. Only five hours later did the physician come and

confirm that life had left the body half an hour before!<sup>18</sup>

This long contact with Sri Ramakrishna brought a transformation within the devotee without disturbing the pattern of his outer life. It brought fulfilment and added a higher quality to his life. Observing this progress, the Great Master, in March 1884, expressed his satisfaction thus:

'What a nice state of mind Captain has developed! He looks like a *rishi* [sage] when he is seated to perform worship. He performs the *arati* with lighted camphor and recites beautiful hymns. When he rises from his seat after finishing the worship, his eyes are swollen from emotion, as if bitten by ants. Besides, he always devotes himself to the study of the sacred books, such as the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata*.'<sup>19</sup>

Yet though the Master praised Captain's scholarship, he sometimes corrected his wrong understanding of the import of the scriptures. He even scolded him for his preoccupation with books, thus: "Too much reading has spoiled you. Don't read any more."<sup>20</sup>

In view of his own steady progress, Viswanath naturally felt sorry that the people of Calcutta generally failed to appreciate the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. As the Master himself noted: "He criticized the Bengalis. He said: "The Bengalis are fools. They have a gem [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] near them, but they cannot recognize it."<sup>21</sup>

Again, as he was journeying towards fulfilment, he began speaking openly about his understanding of the Master. One day when the latter introduced Ramachandra Datta to him, Viswanath spoke of his per-

<sup>18</sup> *vide Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, 1964), p. 596

<sup>19</sup> *Gospel*, p. 364

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 766

<sup>21</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 766

<sup>16</sup> *vide ibid.*, p. 621

<sup>17</sup> *vide ibid.*, p. 765



sonal views about Sri Ramakrishna: 'I have read enough of the Vedas and the Vedanta. I have met a good number of different types of holy men at different places. But after I have come in contact with him (Sri Ramakrishna) my spiritual yearnings have become fulfilled. What more should I

say to you? What we do not find in the Vedas, we find in him. I feel that he is the embodiment of the truths contained in the Vedas and all other scriptures. He is the living proof of the scriptures.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Gurudas Barman, op. cit., p. 238

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947). References: No. 1, p. 506; No. 2, pp. 721-2; No. 3, p. 660; No. 4, p. 446; No. 5, p. 531.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 101-2.

Spiritual life is often compared to the flight of a bird. Plotinus spoke of union with God as the 'flight of the alone to the Alone'. Birds mainly use their two wings for flying, but also need their tail for steering, breaking, and balancing. Some spiritual teachers have used the analogy of the bird's flying equipment to illustrate the importance of cultivating two or more complementary virtues or disciplines in making effective inner progress. The Editorial of the month is a brief reflection on a few of these teachings, which stress the analogy of bird-flight.

The Essay on Applied Religion this month forms the second and concluding instalment of Swami Budhananda's 'How to Work for Unity and Harmony Anywhere', the first instalment of which appeared in our July issue. A topic which has intimate relevance to both individual and collective life—the detailed treatment thereof by the author, we believe, will be welcomed by all discerning readers.

Readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are likely to be familiar with the name of Captain Viswanath Upadhyaya, a high official of the Royal Nepal Government of those days. Viswanath, whom the Master affectionately called 'Captain', was a deeply learned man as well as a devotee of God. He found in Sri Ramakrishna an ideal holy man, and Sri Ramakrishna in turn found in Viswanath a sincere lover of God. An informative account of their meeting and long association is contributed this month by Swami Prabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**VISISHTADVAITA—PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION; A SYMPOSIUM: BY TWENTY-FOUR ERUDITE SCHOLARS,** Published by Ramanuja Research Society, 20 Burkit Rd., T. Nagar, Madras 600017, 1974, pp. xiii+273, Price Rs. 25/-.

Sri V. Srinivasa Raghavan, the ardent Secretary of the Ramanuja Research Society, deserves grateful congratulation for bringing out this collection of essays on Visishtadvaita by reputed Visishtadvaitins. It is in reality hardly a symposium, but a collection of thirty-one essays (articles or speeches) already published in books or journals. Nevertheless it is a valuable publication, as many of the distinguished authors such as V. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar, P. N. Srinivasachari, K. C. Varadachari, A. V. Gopalachari, and K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, are no more. Many of these articles moreover were till now hardly available to contemporary students of Visishtadvaita. They are brilliant and scholarly and display great mastery of the English medium.

It is hoped that Sri V. S. Raghavan in some future symposium, will undertake to cover the entire ground of Visishtadvaita philosophy and religion, and that by a methodically planned sequence of contents. Such a book could be a complete and orderly presentation of the system, in the words of expositors in whom is the rare combination of technical thoroughness and zeal. May this hope indeed become a reality in the near future!

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**ADORATION OF THE DIVINE MOTHER:** BY M. P. PANDIT, Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras-600017, 1973, pp. xii+103, Price Rs. 6/-.

Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, a great Sanskrit scholar and poet, was one of the earliest to come under the compelling spiritual influence of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. This influence added a spiritual dimension to his scholarship and versatility. He looked upon the Maharshi, who had awakened his spiritual consciousness, as his Guru. Out of this awakening came a number of works, mostly in Sanskrit, concerned with various aspects of the Godhead and the spiritual life. Among these, the work entitled *Umasahasram*—a thousand verses on Uma, the Divine Mother—is considered his *magnum opus*.

The publication under review is a compilation from this great work, made by Sri M. P. Pandit who is himself the author of a good number of books on religious subjects. He has given a caption to each verse or excerpt selected, and then its translation, and explanation based upon *Prabha*, the commentary on the work by Sri Kapali Sastriar, the distinguished disciple of Vasishtha Ganapati Muni.

These excerpts are not merely expressions of adoration. Many of them touch upon the philosophical and mystical basis of Mother worship. These are marked by their spiritual depth. For example: 'Empress of the worlds, in the Supreme thou art the source Maya; in Indra the Lord of all Gods, thou art magic-Maya; in the Person within the orb of the Sun, thou art the yoga-Maya; in the hearts that are attached to the world, thou art the binding Maya.' (p. 67)

Has the Mother any form or is She formless? 'If they (Siva and Sakti) be too subtle, alone and unbodied, then they would be powerless to assume the body for play.' (p. 35) On page 37, the text states that the mantra, to be fruitful, must have 'some object of regard . . . If we hold to thy form as the object, alas, the mantra drops off [since we become absorbed in the Divine Mother alone].' What is the response of the Mother 'Lauded, thou bestowest the desired; remembered, thou removest sin: held thou increasest opulent power; pervading, thou effectest release.' (p. 76) And what are the gifts bestowed by Her? 'When heard, thou makest man humble; when remembered, sinless; held in the heart, thou makest him free from the notion of self and other.' (p. 39)

The explanations are quite helpful to the understanding of the texts.

Use of bigger type for the Sanskrit passages, and better spacing (a lot of space lies blank in the pages) would have made the book more attractive. But, to sum up, this is a useful treatise and aid in inculcating devotion to the Divine Mother. And as said on page 10, 'Devotion to the Feet of the Mother of Skanda [Uma] results in both enjoyment and release.'

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—MEDITATION AND ITS METHODS:** ED. BY SWAMI CHETANANANDA, Published by Vedanta Press, 1946 Vedanta Place, Hollywood, Calif., 90068, 1976, pp. 127, Price \$3.50.



It appears that when a new set of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* had been bought for the Belur Math, a disciple exclaimed, 'It is almost impossible to read all these books in a single lifetime.' When he was told that Swamiji had already within a few days finished reading ten volumes and more, he could not believe it; and Swamiji, being in a mood for banter, asked the disciple to examine him. The examinee came off with flying colours, even reproducing in many places the very language of the entries. The disciple, dumbfounded, said, 'This is not within human power.' Swamiji replied, 'Do you see, simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya (continence) all learning can be mastered in a very short time—one has an un-failing memory of what one hears or knows but once.'

This is one of the illuminating incidents cited in the book under review, which contains apposite selections from the writings and speeches of Swamiji on meditation, its nature, its role, and the conditions for its success. Meditation is a gate to the higher consciousness and it should be practised regularly at fixed hours, preferably at dawn and dusk when Nature is very co-operative. The thoughts that rush in may be tackled in two ways: either drive them resolutely away, or allow them to run, so that they exhaust themselves, and one comes to know one's own nature more thoroughly. Meditation can be on form or without form. The concentration can be on a lotus visualized as at the top of the head, or on a 'space' within the heart, a space at the centre of which is a flame burning (p. 41). Meditation must be backed up by a constructive attitude to life and suitable activity during the rest of the day. One should try to be cheerful in outlook. 'I am serious only when I have stomach-ache', said Swamiji.

After dwelling upon the practice of meditation in terms of Yoga, and the philosophy behind the seeking, the Vedantic concepts that form helpful themes for meditation are presented interestingly. The imagery of the Two Birds, the body as chariot with the self as the charioteer, the legend of Narada under the delusion of Maya etc. are presented in a striking manner.

The Editor's introduction highlighting the relations between Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is inspiring. This is a book that moves one to meditate, guides as to the techniques, and points out the goal. Christopher Isherwood in his Foreword sets the tone for the study. We have talked enough, he says in effect,

let us now act in the light given to us by Swamiji. And he narrates an incident: A group had gathered to discuss religious matters. Several of these present spoke at length and with eloquence about God and the life of prayer. Then, when the last of them had finished, a fourteen-year-old boy exclaimed abruptly, (with intense excitement, 'But--if that's all true—why do we ever do anything else?')

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Sri Aurobindo Ashrama  
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BURMA AND THE WEST: BY SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI, Published by Ranjan Prakashan, City Station Road, Agra 282003, 1975, pp. v+159 Price—ppbk. Rs. 12/-, De Luxe edition Rs. 20/-.

Coming from a professor of history with more than forty years of teaching experience in India and south-east Asia, this work is of real worth. It gives a lucid and critical account of Burma from the fourteenth century to the present day. It is a faithful 'survey of the . . . land of peacocks, pagodas and "pongyis"', wherein the author brings to bear his teaching experience in University College, Mandalay, on the theme of his study. An informative Preface, thirteen chapters giving a description of the country, people and political history—including the one especially important to us, namely, 'Indians in Burma: Personae Non-grata' —, a useful bibliography and index, make the book a worthy contribution. Official documents have been utilized, although a more thoroughgoing use of them would have been welcome.

All in all it is a very helpful contribution in this field of knowledge. We may hope that the next edition will have better printing-work, especially in view of the price.

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CRITICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS OF PROF. R. D. RANADE'S PHILOSOPHY: BY B. R. KULKARNI, Published by the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum, 1974, pp. 188, Price Rs. 12/-.

This is perhaps the most satisfying exposition so far, of the thought and vision of Gurudev Ranade who was one of the most challenging rational mystics of modern India. Though he always underlined the primacy of experience in spiritual matters, he insisted on the role of en-



lightened reason and discrimination in the analysis of that experience for fuller assimilation.

After giving a brief account of the life and work of the saint-philosopher, the author discusses his critical estimates of Western and Indian thinkers. Dr. Ranade's estimate of Tantrism in its high wisdom and faltering practice, and his ninefold scheme of Rasas (sentiments) with Bhakti (divine love) as the *murdhanyarasa* (chief sentiment) are some of the more interesting points.

Writing on the constructive elements in Dr. Ranade's epistemology and metaphysics, Prof. Kulkarni explains in what sense he accepted *pratyaksha* (direct perception) as the sole *pramana* (means of knowledge)—or more specifically *atindriya pratyaksha*, intuitive experience. There is, further, a thought-provoking resolution of the five antinomical questions in the *Gita*; namely, Is God personal or impersonal? Is God an actor or a spectator? Is God immanent or transcendent? Is the world real or unreal? Is there *videha-mukti* (liberation after death) or *krama-mukti* (gradual liberation)? His answers are: God is superpersonal; God is both *karta* (doer) and *akarta* (non doer); God is immano-transcendent; the world is ephemeral; both the Muktis find reconciliation in *jivan-mukti* (liberation in life).

Following a chapter on Theonomic Ethics, the fifth and last chapter, 'Liberating Influence of Rational Mysticism' is an illuminating commentary on the *sadhana* of Ranade.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

**THE PROPHET'S DIPLOMACY:** BY AFZAL IQBAL. Published by Claude Stark & Co. Cape Cod, Massachusetts 02670, U.S.A., 1975, pp xxxiii+142. Price \$8.00.

The Prophet's Diplomacy! Do Prophet and diplomacy go together? This question spontaneously comes foremost to mind from the very title of the book. Yet Mr. Afzal Iqbal, the widely experienced diplomat of Pakistan, with his vast study of Islamic history and varied experience as the ambassador of his country in different parts of the world, has presented the Prophet Mohammed's diplomacy in a lucid manner and has done a good service not only to the cause of diplomacy, but to the world as a whole.

In addition to the Foreword and Preface, interestingly enough the book has only three chapters—Principal Negotiations, Delegations Received and Despatched, and the Moral Diplomacy. It is the last chapter which summarizes the answer to our question how a Prophet can be a great diplomat.

It has also a lesson for the world of present-day diplomacy. After a succinct account of the Prophet's campaigns and treaties in the first two chapters, the author successfully sums up in the last chapter how true diplomacy can and should have a moral basis and how the Prophet demonstrated it in his life. It is very different from Machiavellian diplomacy which was tortuous and based on distrust, ruse, lying, and stirring up quarrels and warfare. As against that, the Prophet's diplomacy was based on trust, modesty, moderation, and human love and understanding. This should be the basis of future diplomacy if the nations of the world really want to live in peace. It is, however, a matter of regret that Muslim countries themselves have not always shown the way to follow this noble diplomacy indicated by the Prophet.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

#### TAMIL

**BHAGAVAT-VACANAMRITAM** or **TIRUVARUNMOZHI** (PARTS II and III) : TRANSLATED (from English) BY R. VISWANATHAN, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1976, pp. 420, Price Rs. 6/-.

This book is a collection of the words of wisdom which dropped from the lips of Sri Ramana Maharshi as answers to questions put by devotees at different times. Swami Ramananda Sarasvati (formerly Sri Munakala Venkataramaiah) noted down these sayings from time to time and brought them out in three parts under the title *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*. The Tamil translation of part I was published in 1968. Now the other two parts are given to the public in Tamil, in one volume. The translator has taken pains to avoid every kind of repetition in the work.

The entire collection is the continuous work of one man who had the proud privilege of hearing all these conversations between Sri Ramana Maharshi and his devotees and visitors on so many occasions. Sri Ramana answered the questions mostly in Tamil.

This book in 420 pages records the conversations from 23 August 1936 to 1 April 1939. It touches on all aspects of spiritual life and offers solutions for many kinds of spiritual problems, however subtle. Sri Ramana's answers are direct and simple, as they come from his spiritual experience and Vedantic realization.



Many types of people put questions to Sri Ramana: Indian and non-Indian, Hindus and non-Hindus, men and women, spiritual aspirants and intellectuals; and people from different cross-sections of society. The questions are all from the standpoint of relative existence, but the answers are from that of the absolute Self.

Spiritual aspirants of all types will derive much benefit from the study of this book, and many of their lurking problems will be solved thereby.

SWAMI TANMAYANANDA

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

**A SIMPLE METHOD FOR SADHANA:** BY MAJOR K. S. ABDUL GAFFAR. Published by Shri Ramana Arunachala Sadhanalaya & Mission, 41 L.J.G. Malamaruti Extension, Belgaum, 1976, pp. 11+vi, Price not stated.

**PATHS TO GOD-REALISATION:** BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA, Published by Ramakrishna Ashrama, 12th Rd., Khar, Bombay 400052, pp. 20, Price Re. 1/-.

#### SANSKRIT

**SANKIRTAN SANGRAHA:** Published by Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bombay, 1975, pp. 72, Price Re. 1/-.

**DIVYA-RAMAYANAM:** BY SWAMI APURVANANDA, Tr. by T. A. Bhandarkar, Published by Sankara Vihar, 25 Trust Square, Madras, 600012, 1976, pp. 584, Price Rs. 15/-.

**PARIMALA VIMARSAH:** BY SWAMI RAMESWARANANDAPURI, Published by the author from Kranthi Kutceram, P.O. Chovva, Cannanore 670006, Kerala, 1976, pp. xv+28, Price Rs. 2.50/-.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA (CHARITABLE HOSPITAL), VRINDAVAN

REPORT: APRIL 1974—MARCH 1975

This Sevashrama was started in 1907 in view of the obvious needs for help among the stream of pilgrims to the celebrated pilgrim centre most sacred to Sri Krishna. Dedicated to the great ideal of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji—of worshipping the divine in the poor and the sufferers, the Sevashrama has attracted much interest and help from the generous public. Thus from a very modest beginning, it has grown into a well equipped up-to-date hospital with 103 beds, and including departments of Medicine, Surgery, Paediatrics, Orthopaedics, E.N.T., Eye-Disease, Dentistry and Gynaecology, as well as those outlined below. In the year under review, 4,569 in-patients were admitted, and average occupancy of beds was 94 per day. Of the total admitted, 3,913 were discharged as cured. A total of 3,173 surgical operations was done, including eye-operations. Following is an outline of work done by some of the more distinctive specialities.

**Nandababa Eye Department:** Started in (1943), this department treated during the present year 700 disease-cases Indoors, and 8,062 Outdoors. In all, 1,042 operations were done. Further, an out-patient clinic is conducted fortnightly at Kosi-kalan, a town 38 kms. away, serving an average of 100 patients each time. In February an 'Eye camp' was conducted there, and many operations performed.

**Seth Sri Maneklal Chinai Cancer Department:** This unit, with eight indoor beds and its own outdoor clinic, has since 1969 been devoted to diagnosis and treatment of this dread disease. In the present year, 58 cases were treated Indoor and 76 Outdoor. Surgery included twelve biopsies, and nine excisions (of tumors). 28 cases were referred for X-ray therapy, as well as three of the 'excision' cases.

The *Outdoor Dispensary's* work—increasing greatly in recent years—included treatment of 43,198, with total number of patient-visits being 256,494, bringing the daily case-load to 690. 547 operations were performed, including those in the Eye department.

**Homoeopathy Department:** Under an eminent Homoeopathic physician, 3,686 new cases were treated, with 17,532 revisits.

**Clinical Laboratory (Pathology Department):** All routine laboratory examinations and many special ones, were carried out as indicated; a total of 28,987 samples of blood, urine, stool, sputum, etc., were examined this year.

**X-ray Department:** During the year, 3,260 X-ray studies were done, of which 900 were of the chest, and 1721 of bones and joints.

**Physio-therapy Department:** In addition to 780 treatments with various types of therapeutic radiations, this department took 395 electrocardiograms during the year.

**Training:** As before, volunteers from certain field units of the Government of India are taking



short periods of practical training in this hospital, as well as attending classes and also talks given by the Matron and Doctors.

*Library and Recreation:* The Sevashrama has a patients' reading room and library, with books and periodicals, as well as a tiny medical library for use by the medical staff. The wards of the hospital are equipped with loudspeakers, through which appropriate radio programmes are provided. Audio-visual programmes on health, hygiene, etc., are also arranged for patients and others.

*Relief and Welfare:* In the present year, Rs. 2,237.72 were spent for various kinds of help to devotees especially the poor. Of this, Rs. 1390.28 were for school-supplies to 289 poor students, and Rs. 612.25 to other individual needy persons.

*Immediate Needs:* In view of the still-rising costs of almost all commodities and services, the hospital has had to take loans of Rs. 48,271.89 for Maintenance Fund, and Rs. 18,200/- for Building Fund. The generous public is urgently requested to help clear off these outstanding debts. Further, it has been deemed necessary to start now a third, 'Building Maintenance Fund', to fill the large gaps left by the first two; this requires another Rs. 50,000/- as a starter. Another pressing need is for adequate water-supply: present supplies are increasingly limited; and for connections with the Canal water (which the U.P. Government has kindly agreed to authorize), another Rs. 200,000/- is estimated. Similarly, sewage disposal which so far has been increasingly difficult, now becomes possible through a Municipal sewer-line running near the Ashrama; but for proper connections an estimated Rs. 58,400/- is needed. Other needs are as follows: Endowment of hospital beds: Rs. 20,000/- for each bed; Go-Seva (cow-maintenance) Fund: Rs. 25,000/-; Road construction and Land Development: Rs. 50,000/-; Covering open verandahs (hospital): Rs. 40,000/-. It is also urged that any available books and journals be donated to one or other of the small Libraries.

Contributions (exempt from Income-Tax) should be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Sevashrama, P.O. Vrindaban, 281121, Dt. Mathura, U.P.

#### VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.

REPORT: APR. 1974—MAR. 1975

*Services:* Swami Satprakashananda conducted weekly services in the Society's chapel on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings, the meetings being open to all. Sundays, he spoke on reli-

gious and philosophical topics; on Tuesdays he conducted meditation and expounded the scriptures: *Narada-bhakti-sutras* (series completed in October) and thereafter the *Uddhava-gita*. Questions were invited after these class-talks. On special occasions—whether Sundays or Tuesdays—devotional songs were sung and/or slides and coloured films were shown. The Swami also held monthly Discourse on the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and answered questions from the audience. Tape recordings of the Sunday lectures and Tuesday discourses were used as basis of continued regular meetings throughout the summer recess; and throughout the year devotees who could not easily attend services came to listen to the tapes 'by appointment', while others—including some from out-of-town—used duplicate tapes in their own homes. On occasions when the Swami was unable to lecture, tape recordings of appropriate lectures were used for the services.

*Anniversaries:* As in previous years, the birthdays of Sri Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Swamy Brahmananda, Premananda and Shivananda, were observed with morning devotions in the Shrine and special service in the Chapel. Other festivals such as Christmas, Good Friday and Durga Puja were duly observed, with special services. Refreshments were served to all after each function; and on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, a full Hindu dinner.

*Notable Visitors:* Swami Hiranmayananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bombay, visited the Centre July 5th—8th, and gave a lecture on Sunday, July 7, in the Chapel. Swami Bhashyananda, Head of the Chicago Centre, visited this Centre briefly November 27th—28th. On November 25th, Swami Yuktananda arrived from India, via London, to take up the work of assistant Minister here. Swami Satprakashananda gave him cordial welcome and introduced him to the congregation on December 8. Swami Yuktananda spoke in the Chapel on Sunday mornings from time to time, performed the morning worship in the Shrine, and regularly held the Sunday afternoon classes for young people.

*Groups of Visitors:* During the year many interested groups, especially of young people, visited the Centre. At least seven of these had pre-arranged meetings here with the Swamis; at least six more attended one of the regular services, and had question-and-answer periods with one of the Swamis either before or after the service. Almost all the groups were from schools, colleges,



or churches, some of these being at a considerable distance. At least three groups came from Divinity Schools, and several others from established Christian institutions. Although Swami Satprakashananda's health did not allow him to answer invitations to outside meetings, Swami Yuktananda gave two such talks, both to college groups.

*Interviews:* Throughout the year, including the summer recess, Swami Satprakashananda received guests and visitors and gave interviews. Most of the (approximately 200) interviews were with spiritual aspirants; some however came for solving of personal problems.

*Other Activities:* The Sunday afternoon classes for young people—begun last year—were continued, although unavoidably suspended for part of the year. A Baldwin Organ was donated to the Society, and has added greatly to the services, both Sundays and Tuesdays, and especially at Christmas-time. A short film on the activities of the Society was prepared and sent to the Bombay Centre, at the request of Swami Hiranmayananda. The Society's well-stocked bookshop was open to all throughout the year; and its Library was well utilized by members and friends. A good supply of literature on Vedanta for free distribution was kept available, and many requests for such were answered by mail also. The manuscripts of two books by Swami Satprakashananda were accepted during this year, for publication by Claude Stark & Co.

The *Vedanta Society of Kansas City* (Missouri), a long-established though unofficial branch of the St. Louis Society, continued its weekly and fortnightly meetings with the tapes of the Swami's lectures.

## OBITUARY

### SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

We record with deep sorrow the passing away of Swami Prabhavananda, the Founder and Head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A., at the main Centre of the Society at Hollywood (Los Angeles) on July 4, 1976, at the age of 82 years. In recent months he was undergoing treatment for a congestive heart condition, and a heart attack brought about the end.

Swami Prabhavananda was a disciple of Swami Brahmananda who was a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Soon after graduation from the

University in 1914 he joined the Ramakrishna Order. In 1915 he was sent by his Guru to the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in the Himalayas, where he worked as Assistant Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* for two years. In 1917 he was posted to Madras where he worked as Assistant Editor of the *Vedanta Kesari* for four years. He took his vows of Sannyasa from Swami Brahmananda in 1921.

The Swami came to the United States in 1923 and after successful periods of work at San Francisco and Portland, established the Vedanta Society of Southern California in 1930. He remained its Spiritual Leader and Head until the end. By the power of the Swami's loving inspiration and expert guidance, the Vedanta work made rapid progress. The activities of the Hollywood Centre expanded in various directions, making it today one of the largest Vedanta Centres outside India. He initiated many disciples and gave instructions to a large number of spiritual seekers for a long period of over half-a-century. Among the Swami's close and sincere followers were many distinguished authors, speakers, scientists, and business executives,—both men and women—of the Western world, such as Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood, Joseph Kaplan, and Spencer Kellogg.

Swami Prabhavananda was a forceful writer and speaker, and a spiritual teacher of a high order, harmoniously synthesizing simplicity of expression, practical Vedanta, devotional fervour, ritualistic precision, rational understanding, and the goal of God realization. He translated many of the Indian scriptures and wrote several books on Vedanta in theory and practice. For a number of years he edited and published a bi-monthly magazine *Vedanta and the West*. In addition to the main Centre at Hollywood, the Swami established a monastery and a convent at Hollywood, a Temple and convent at Santa Barbara, a monastery at Trabuco Canyon, and a memorial home in Pasadena which had been sanctified by Swami Vivekananda's stay in 1900.

Our heartfelt sympathies go to all the members of the congregation and the monastic brothers and sisters of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, who will have sorely felt bereaved by the passing away of Swami Prabhavananda.

May his soul rest in peace!