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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

"Truth is one : sages call It by various names"

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया
समानं वृक्षं परि षस्वजाते ।
तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्य-
नश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशाति ॥

यत्रा सुपर्णा अमृतस्य भाग-
मनिमेषं विदथाभिस्वरन्ति ।
इनो विश्वस्य भुवनस्य गोपाः
स मा धीरः पाकमत्रा विवेश ॥

यस्मिन् वृक्षे मध्वदः सुपर्णा
निविशन्ते सुवते चार्धि विश्वे ।
तस्येदाहुः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वग्रे
तन्नोन्नशद्यः पितरं न वेद ॥

1. Two beautiful birds (the individual self and the Supreme Self) which are friends and related to each other, resort to the same tree. Of these one eats the tasty fruit, while the other looks on without eating.¹

Rg-Veda 1.164.20

2. In this body, where the senses (*uparṇā*) which are parts of the immortal Self ceaselessly (*animesam*) reveal (*abhisvaranti*) the reality, the immutable (*dhiraḥ*) Lord of the body (*ino viśvasya*) who is the protector of the whole universe (*bhuvanasya gopāḥ*), has entered (*ā viveśa*) through the ripe (*pākam*, i.e. purified) mind.²

Rg-Veda 1.164.21

3. On this tree of life the senses (*suparṇā*) which are enjoyers (*madhvadah*) go to sleep (*nivisante*) and on waking up shine (*suvate*) upon the world. At the tip of the tree is the sweet (*svādu*) fruit (*pip-palam*) of supreme bliss. One who does not know the Father, i.e. the Supreme Self, cannot get (*na ut-naśat*) that fruit.³

Rg-Veda 1.164.22

* More selections from the 'Asya Vāmasya' hymn of Dīrghatamas.

1. This verse occurs in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.1), but few people are aware that its original source is in the *Rg-Veda*. It is accepted as forming the foundation of Vedānta philosophy. For interpretation, see Śaṅkara's commentary on the said Upaniṣad.

2. Sāyaṇa has given two interpretations of which the first one refers to the sun. We have followed the second interpretation, the import of which is that the sense-organs have behind them the Atman (cf. *Kena Upaniṣad* 1.1) which reveals all objects presented to it.

3. Here again Sāyaṇa gives two meanings, the first of which is: 'Just as birds go to the tree at night and fly away in the morning, the rays go back to the sun at night and emerging in the morning shine upon the world.' Our translation follows the second interpretation which is in accord with the Upaniṣadic meaning.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The various mental processes, powers and transformations involved in concentration are the subject of this month's EDITORIAL.

Incredible as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that the dark forces of orthodox Hinduism tried everything possible to undermine the epoch-making work of Swami Vivekananda for Hinduism. Tragically, Panchkori Bandyopadhyaya, a boyhood friend of Swamiji, acted as the standard-bearer of these Hindu pharisees during the closing years of the last century. His subsequent transformation into an admirer of Swamiji is the story of the triumph of truth over falsehood and of love over self-interest. And this story is narrated with impassioned vividness in the article PANCHKORI BANDYOPADHYAYA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA by Swami Jitatmananda, former Principal, Vivekananda Centenary Memorial College, Rahara.

We are thankful to William Page, an American scholar now working in Luxembourg, for sending us an interesting and

informative article on contemporary Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan entitled NOTES ON A CHINESE MONASTERY.

'It is high time that we woke up and realized the folly of mental tension, hurry, anxieties, etc., all of which are caused by an overprotruding ego,' says Prof. U. A. Asrani, former Asst. Professor of Physics at Benaras Hindu University and well-known writer on Jñānayoga, in his thought-provoking article THE WISDOM OF THE UPANISHADS IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN SCIENCE.

In the eighth instalment of IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE? Dr. Vinita Wanchoo examines the meaning of optimism and world denial according to Vedanta.

To keep a fledgling monastic organisation on its wings in a worldly atmosphere needs extraordinary spiritual resourcefulness. The trials and tribulations of a saint who was endowed with this in this task is told with characteristic felicity by Swami Atmarupananda in the fifth instalment of ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN.

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION—IV

(EDITORIAL)

Meditation is the bridge that connects the lower mind with the higher mind. Through that the aspirant crosses over from the din and distractions of the sense-bound world to the world of stillness and silence, from the world of darkness to the world of everlasting light. All preliminary spiritual disciplines end in meditative awareness.

Preliminary spiritual struggles lead the aspirant to the boundaries of the discursive mind. There he encounters the thought-barrier. Take the case of sound. It is nothing but air waves. Yet, an ordinary

aeroplane cannot go beyond the speed of sound. Only specially constructed planes with powerful engines can break the sound-barrier. Similarly, though thoughts are apparently feeble, non-substantial things, one cannot easily go beyond thoughts. It is through meditation that the aspirant pierces the thought-barrier and reaches the higher plane of intuition.

Five states of the mind

We have already seen that consciousness pulsates through the three states waking,

dream and deep sleep. Even during the waking state the mind does not always remain in the same condition. According to the commentators of the *Yoga-Sūtra*, the human mind may exist in any of five states: *kṣiptam* (restless), *mūḍham* (dull), *vikṣiptam* (preoccupied), *ekāgram* (concentrated) and *niruddham* (closed).¹ Bhoja says that every person has one of these states of mind predominant in him and this determines his behaviour. Spiritual aspirants may find their minds going through the first four states repeatedly. This is a big problem especially during the early years of spiritual life, and those who want to lead a meditative life should have a clear understanding of the five states.

Kṣiptam or the restless state of mind is one in which the mind is totally under the sway of the senses. It flits aimlessly like a butterfly. This is the predominant state of mind in children and those who lead a purely sense-bound life. It is a state in which *rajas* predominates. Restlessness of the mind can be controlled through disciplined work, deep studies, yoga exercises, etc.

In the state called *mūḍham*, the mind remains dull and inactive owing to a preponderance of *tamas*. It may be caused by physical factors like fatigue or disease. But more often it is caused by conflict of emotions. When the conflict between two opposing desires becomes too strong, the mind enters an impasse. The problem becomes worse when, owing to repression, the person is unable to detect the cause of the conflict in him. The blues, depression, spiritual dryness, etc. also come under this category, and their origin can usually be traced to the building up of tension in the unconscious.

The third state is *vikṣiptam* in which the

mind remains active, but not restless as in the first state. It gets preoccupied with different ideas. This is the predominant state of mind in scientists, artists, philosophers, scholars, social workers and other cultured people. This condition is brought about by the prevalence of both *rajas* and *sattva* in more or less equal measure. This is a state in which concentration can be practised, for concentration is impossible in the first two states. However, this concentration is only a sort of preoccupation with ideas or activities and is something quite different from true meditation, as has been pointed out elsewhere.² Spiritual aspirants should learn to keep the mind at least in this state through work, studies and deep thinking.

We now come to the fourth state of mind known as *ekāgram* in which alone higher spiritual experience becomes possible. In this state the mind remains calm, concentrated, and free from mental automatisms, the will is free from the hold of desires, and the *buddhi* or intuition is awake. It is a state in which *sattva* predominates. Whereas the first three states are natural to man, the fourth state has to be acquired through years of purification and discipline, especially *brahmacarya*. Complete continence increases the spiritual force known as *ojas* as a result of which the brain becomes cool, a new power like an electric charge develops in it, and the whole subtle body becomes luminous. By *ekāgram* is meant, not ordinary concentration, but a state of higher contemplation. This becomes a permanent attribute only when the psycho-physical system is made ready.

The fifth state of mind known as *niruddham* is a superconscious state. Whereas in the previous state the *vṛttis* are only restrained, here the mind remains completely closed. No *vṛtti*, and hence

1. Cf. the commentaries of Vyāsa and Bhoja on *Yoga-Sūtras* 1.1 and 1.2 respectively.

2. See July editorial.

no experience, arises in the mind; the *saṁskāras* (latent impressions) alone remain in the unconscious depths. In this state the mind ceases to be mind, as Gaudapāda puts it.³ Yogis call this state *asamprajñāta* or *nirbīja*, while Vedantins call it *nirvikalpa*. Only a person who is fully established in the fourth state can really attain this highest state. If others attempt to 'close' their minds by suppressing all *vṛttis* artificially (e.g. by certain exercises of Haṭha Yoga), the usual result will only be a kind of hypnotic stupor or a state of suspended animation.

Functions of the mind

What is mind? It is difficult to find a right answer to this question. Air cannot be seen with the eyes; we can only feel its presence when it moves. Similarly, when the mind is perfectly still, its presence cannot be detected. Mind is known only by its functions.

We have already discussed several functions of the mind. Before proceeding further it is necessary to restate these synoptically. According to Pañcaśikha, a very ancient authority on Yoga, the functions of the mind are of two types: those which are perceived (*pari-dr̥ṣṭa*) and those which are unperceived (*apari-dr̥ṣṭa*). Various *vṛttis* which produce names, forms and emotions belong to the first type. The second type of functions, which cannot be directly perceived but can be inferred from their effects, has been divided into seven groups.⁴

The first of these, *nirodha* (suppression), is the capacity of the mind to be free from

all *vṛttis*. In fact, between every two thoughts, the mind remains free of *vṛttis* for a split second. This interval is normally so short that it is seldom noticed, but by practice it can be prolonged. The second and third functions are *karma* and *saṁskāra*, which respectively mean *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā* explained last month. The fourth function is *pariṇāma* which means the various mental transformations to be discussed soon. The fifth function is *jīvanam*, life-activities or the movements of *prāṇa*, for it is the mind which controls and guides the movements of *prāṇa*, which in turn animates the body. The sixth function, *ceṣṭā* is the unseen action of the mind which makes the senses work. When the mind is elsewhere we will not see an object even if we are looking at it.

The seventh unseen function of the mind is *śakti* by which is meant the various mysterious psychic powers like clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-transference, psycho-kinesis, etc., which remain undeveloped in ordinary people. Patañjali calls these powers *vibhūti*s and has dealt with them in detail in his Yoga Aphorisms. Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Powers of the Mind' speaks about the miraculous powers of certain people which he personally tested and found to be true.⁵ It is commonplace to condemn these extraordinary powers as bad or dangerous. But it should be remembered that what is really harmful is not the powers themselves but the way they are used. Great saints and sages in all countries have used them with discrimination for the welfare of suffering humanity. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'The powers acquired by the practice of Yoga

3. मनसो ह्यमनीभावे and अमनस्तां तदा याति ।
Gaudapāda, *Māṇḍūkya*
Kārikā 3,31, 32.

4. निरोधकर्मसंस्काराः परिणामोऽथ जीवनम् ।
चेष्टा शक्तिश्च चित्तस्य धर्मा दर्शनवर्जिताः ॥
Quoted in Vyāsa's Commentary on *Yoga-Sūtra*
3.15.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 10-12.

are not obstacles for the yogi who is perfect, but are apt to be so for the beginner.⁶

We should not look upon the mind as a source of sin, conflict and sorrow. The human mind is a storehouse of great powers. But owing to various obstacles and limitations, only a fraction of these is manifested in normal life. And it is with this small fraction that all the great discoveries of science and the achievements of art have been made. A yogi looks upon his mind as a source of power, peace and goodness. The *Gītā* says that a properly cultivated and purified mind acts as one's friend and an undisciplined mind acts as one's enemy.⁷ Instead of looking upon himself as a weak, miserable, worthless sinner, a spiritual aspirant should constantly remind himself of the infinite possibilities that remain hidden in his mind waiting to be discovered and developed. This is the central point in Swami Vivekananda's message to the modern world. Such a bracing yogic attitude is a necessary precondition for the practice of meditation.

Will and its function

All the powers and functions of the mind are really the powers of Prakṛti, its unmanifested cause. However, the powers of Prakṛti are not manifested in all beings in an equal degree. Knowledge, skill, talents, strength, emotions, virtue—all these vary very much from person to person. How does this variation come about?

The answer is given by Patañjali in two important aphorisms which, according to Swami Vivekananda, provide the whole rationale of evolution. These aphorisms are: 'Evolution of species is caused by the filling in of Prakṛti' and 'Individual effort is needed, not to produce changes, but to

remove the obstacles to the manifestation of Prakṛti, as in the case of the farmer.'⁸ Explaining these aphorisms, Swami Vivekananda says, 'The water for irrigation of fields is already in the canal, only shut in by gates. The farmer opens these gates, and the water flows in by itself by the law of gravitation. So all progress and power are already in every man, perfection is man's nature, only it is barred in and prevented from taking its proper course. If anyone can take the bar off, in rushes nature.'⁹ Prakṛti does all work. All the changes going on in the universe are the working of Prakṛti. Individual effort is needed only to remove the obstacles to the working of Prakṛti.

Where does this individual effort come from? It cannot be from Prakṛti itself, as the Sāṃkhya philosophers hold, for then it will not explain the part played by the farmer. Nor can it be from the true Self or Ātman which is of the nature of pure consciousness. The volitional impulse must therefore come from the empirical self, which is the reflection of the true Self on *buddhi*. It is the agent-self (*kartā*) whose chief characteristic is will. Consciousness and will are the higher and lower aspects of the self. Śrī Rāmānuja and other dualist thinkers do not accept the distinction between true (*pāramārthika*) and empirical (*vyāvahārika*) selves. According to them consciousness and will are the static and dynamic aspects respectively of the same self. The self as the knower is consciousness, the self as the doer is will. For our purpose it is enough to know that will is a product of consciousness, as pointed out

8. जात्यन्तरपरिणामः प्रकृत्यापूरात् ॥ निमित्तम-
प्रयोजकं प्रकृतीनां वरणभेदस्तु ततः क्षेत्रिकवत् ॥

Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 4.2, 3.

9. *Complete Works* (1977), vol. 1, pp. 291-92.

6. *Complete Works* (1972), vol. 7, p. 65.

7. *The Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.5, 6.

by Swami Vivekananda.¹⁰ The self is endowed with both consciousness and power—power not to create but to remove obstacles, for Prakṛti does all creative work. It is significant that in ancient Yoga texts the Puruṣa is referred to as *citi-śakti* (consciousness-power), and Vyāsa uses this term throughout his commentary on Patañjali's aphorisms.

The mind can be controlled not by the mind but by something higher, namely the self. The self exercises this control through the will. But if the will is itself bound, the mind cannot be controlled. The more free the will is, the greater the mind-control. Only the yogis have free will. Says Swamiji, 'Remember always that only the free have free will: all the rest are in bondage. . . . Will as will is bound.'¹¹

Pure consciousness is ever free, bondage applies only to the will. It is the will that is bound, and so freedom applies only to the will. It is the will that is bound, and so freedom really means freedom of the will. It becomes free when it becomes one with the Ātman. Swamiji says, 'That which seems to be the will is really the Ātman behind, it is really free.'¹² In the vast majority of humanity the will is bound by desires, both good and bad. Freedom of will means freedom from both good and bad desires, freedom to remain as the pure Ātman.

The popular notion of 'free will' as the freedom to do anything one pleases is not true freedom. In fact, in the normal day-to-day life of the average person free will rarely comes into operation. Most of our normal actions are controlled by good or bad desires. A good person's will is as much

controlled by good desires as a bad person's will is controlled by bad desires. We understand how much bound our will is only when we try to meditate. The test of freedom of will is the ability to focus the mind on the Ātman. This becomes possible only when the will is freed from bad as well as good desires and directed to its own source. One of the most pathetic things in spiritual life is the inability of even good people to turn to God freely.

How then does the will become free? Every person has a limited degree of freedom of will, somewhat like the freedom that a cow tied to a post has to move. It is by continually exercising this limited freedom that he finally gets full freedom. Self-analysis and constant discrimination are great aids in this task. Another way is to pray to God intensely. What years of self-effort cannot achieve, Grace accomplishes in a short time. It should also be noted that a good will is comparatively more free to turn towards God than a bad will. So one of the first tasks in spiritual life is to acquire a good will through good karma.

It is important to keep in mind the difference between will and desire. Will is the power of the self. Desire is produced by *saṃskāras* and is a power of mind. The will being a spiritual faculty does not directly act on the external world but does through the medium of the mind. When will gets connected to a desire, it becomes a *saṃkalpa* or intention. The actions of ordinary people are impelled by various *saṃkalpas*. The actions of a yogi are impelled by the pure will, detached from desires. When will is directed inward towards the Ātman, it becomes meditation.

The usual Sanskrit term for will is *icchā*, but this is also used to mean desire. The *Gītā* uses a more accurate term for will: *dhṛti*. It classifies *dhṛti* into three types—*sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*—depending upon the degree of freedom of the will.

10. Swamiji has thereby refuted the view of Schopenhauer and the Voluntarists that the will is superior to consciousness and that Reality is nothing but Will. See *Complete Works* (1977), vol. 8, pp. 362-63.

11. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 99.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

'That will by which the activities of the mind, senses and *prāṇa* are controlled through unflinching Yoga is *sāttvika*. That will by which Dharma, wealth and pleasure are pursued and which demands immediate results is *rājasika*. That will by which the stupid man holds on to sleep, fear, sorrow, depression and lust is *tāmasika*.'¹³

Stages in concentration

Yogic concentration passes through three stages: *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*, of which the second stage alone is called meditation. All the three stages together are termed *saṁyama*.

The normal mental life of the average person is dominated by mental automatism and impulses resulting in preoccupation with certain ideas and confused awareness. The main cause for this is unsteadiness of will. For clear awareness, the will must first of all be detached from desires and then fixed at a particular centre of consciousness within. This fixing of the will is *dhāraṇā*. This becomes possible only when the centre of consciousness is developed through purification of mind, prayer, worship, etc. An easier method of *dhāraṇā* is to fix the mind on an external object by gazing at it steadily. Books on Yoga, Buddhism and occultism teach this kind of concentration on a *maṇḍala*, a crystal or a point. Progress is quicker by this method but, since this may lead to the development of psychic powers, spiritual aspirants are usually advised to practise inner concentration.

The second stage is *dhyāna* or meditation. It should be noted here that all the so-called meditation techniques are really techniques of *dhāraṇā*. Meditation is not a technique but a stage in concentration. When by following a particular technique

of *dhāraṇā* a single stream of thought is maintained, it becomes meditation. The door (i.e. *dhāraṇā*) to meditation may vary, the object of meditation may also vary, but meditation as a mental process does not vary in its basic nature. Indeed, meditation or meditative awareness may be regarded as a common highway shared, at least for a short distance, by all the different religious paths. It is therefore, important to know the mental processes involved in meditation.

Dhāraṇā is an attempt to reduce the number of thoughts. In *dhyāna*, by the use of will-power distracting thoughts have been eliminated and, like the wire in a one-stringed musical instrument, the mind remains stretched between the subject and the object. Owing to self-direction there is some tension in the mind, but this is not like the tension produced by stress and conflicts in ordinary life.

Meditation is the maintenance of a single meaningful thought. The mental process which produces a meaningful thought is called a *pratyaya*. It is the mental counterpart of a sentence. In fact, a sentence is only the verbal expression of a *pratyaya*. Just as words go to make a sentence, *vrttis* go to make a *pratyaya*.

The single *pratyaya* or meaningful thought that is maintained in meditation can be divided into three parts: *artha* (the object), *śabda* (its sound symbol) and *jñāna* (knowledge). Cognition becomes complete only when all the three are combined in the mind. When you suddenly see an animal, your mind at first registers only its external form (*artha*). But when you hear (or mentally utter) the word (*śabda*) 'cow', you will gain the knowledge 'I know this animal'. The sound symbol as it were strikes the self and produces the fire of knowledge. This connection of 'I'-consciousness with the object produces what is called meaning. Thus the function of a word or sound

13. *The Bhagavad-Gītā* 18.33-35.

symbol is to convey the meaning of an object to the self. Without words it is impossible to have meaningful thinking.

Actually the three—the object, the word and the knowledge—are distinct *vṛttis* and are produced by different causes. In normal thinking these get united to form one *pratyaya*. Meditation is the maintenance of a single *pratyaya* in the mind.

In order to maintain the same *pratyaya* in the mind, you may have to repeat the corresponding word continuously; otherwise, another thought may arise in the mind. That is why in meditation when you visualize the form of your Iṣṭa-devatā (Chosen Deity), you are also advised to repeat the related *mantra* continuously. If after repeating the *mantra* for some time you suddenly stop it, you may still be able to visualize the Form for a short while but, especially in the case of beginners, the chances are that other words will produce other images in the mind. When the *mantra* is stopped and you are able to visualize the Form for some time, it does not mean that the *mantra* has disappeared. It has only merged in the Form, leaving its meaning behind. The *vṛtti* produced by the *mantra* has merged in the total *pratyaya* or thought about the Deity.

We now come to the third stage in concentration known as *samādhi*. This word has different meanings in different systems. We follow the simple but precise definition given by Patañjali which is comprehensive enough to include the meanings given to it in other systems as well.

When a purified mind undergoes a high degree of concentration, the higher self emerges to the surface and its light illumines the object which alone now shines in the mind (*arthamātra nirbhāsa*). It is now no longer necessary to produce and listen to the word (*śabda*) which merges in the object. As a result, the memory becomes clear of verbal confusion (*smṛti pariśuddhi*).

The will has now merged in the awakened Ātman. As a result, self-direction, the effort to hold the object constantly in the field of consciousness, becomes unnecessary. And so the awareness 'I am meditating' is lost (*svārūpa-śūnyam iva*). Though the 'I'-consciousness persists in lower *samādhi* it gets so much identified with the object that its separate existence is not very obvious.¹⁴

Even if one does not get this experience, it is good to keep in mind the difference between *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. The former is a self-directed (i.e. needing continuous exercise of will) state in which the object, the word and the knowledge together exist in the mind as a single *pratyaya*. *Samādhi* is a spontaneous state in which the object alone shines in the field of consciousness.

The type of *samādhi* described above in which the object alone shines in consciousness is called *samprajñāta*. If the object also is dropped and if all the *vṛttis* of the mind are stopped, the mind remains in a closed state and its presence cannot be detected. Then the Ātman alone abides. This *samādhi* is called *asamprajñāta*.

During all these stages the mind is continuously undergoing changes. Even in the highest *samādhi* when all the *vṛttis* are stopped, the mind undergoes subliminal changes. The individual mind is only a part of the cosmic mind and oscillates with it. According to *Sāṅkhya-Vedānta*, the whole phenomenal world is in a state of flux. *Pañcaśikha* says, 'Every substance except the self is undergoing change every second.'¹⁵ The movements of the mind cannot be totally stopped but can be controlled.

14. तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 3.3. Also cf. 1.43.

15. प्रतिक्षणं परिणामिनो हि भावा, ऋते

चितिशक्तेः ।

Quoted in *Yogasudhākara* on *Yoga-Sūtra* 3.10

These continuous changes of the mind are called *pariṇāma* or transformation. These are of different types. Here we are interested in only those transformations which take place during concentration. According to Patañjali, these are of three types: *samādhi pariṇāma*, *ekāgratā pariṇāma*, and *nirodha pariṇāma*.

In the normal state the mind exhibits two tendencies: one is to get scattered or distracted (*sarvārthatā*), the other is to get concentrated (*ekāgratā*). When a person tries to practise *dhāraṇā*, he finds these two tendencies alternating in his mind. For a few seconds the mind gets concentrated, but again it gets scattered.

As concentration deepens, the scattering tendency of the mind becomes weak and the tendency for one-pointedness becomes strong. This is what happens during *dhyāna* or meditation. This kind of mental transformation is called *samādhi pariṇāma*,¹⁶ meaning a struggle for the attainment of *samādhi*.

As meditation gains in intensity, the scattering tendency of the mind gets completely suppressed, and the mind retains only a single *pratyaya* or thought. If the aspirant is meditating on his Chosen Deity, the divine Image now remains steady in the mind. It appears to be still and unchanging, but actually it is not so, for the mind is changing even in this state. What really happens is, the same *vr̥tti*, the same Image, alternately rises and falls so quickly that it appears to be stationary. This succession of the same *pratyaya* in which its rise and fall are equal is called *ekāgratā pariṇāma*.¹⁷

Though this happens in the advanced stages of *dhyāna*, it is the chief characteristic of *samprajñāta samādhi*.

Between the fall of one *pratyaya* and the rise of another, there is a small gap. Between two thoughts the mind remains closed for a split second. In normal thinking this is usually not noticed. But in the advanced stages of *samādhi* when all *vr̥ttis* disappear except that of 'I', this gap becomes noticeable. Then the yogi experiences pure self-existence as a broken series: 'I ... I ... I ...'¹⁸ The interval between two 'I'-*vr̥ttis* can now be prolonged. When this is done, a long time may elapse before the next *vr̥tti* rises during which period the mind remains in a closed state. This is *asamprajñāta samādhi*.

There are, however, *samskāras* in the depths of the mind which go on changing even when all the *vr̥ttis* are stopped. This subliminal transformation is called *nirodha pariṇāma*.¹⁹ In it the *samskāras* of suppression (*nirodha samskāra*) are struggling with the *samskāras* of emergence (*vyutthāna samskāra*). As long as the former gain the upper hand, the mind remains in a closed state, but when the latter gain the upper hand, *samādhi* breaks and the person comes down to outer consciousness.

A right understanding of these three mental transformations provides the key to a right understanding of Patañjali's Yoga. It will also be of great help to sincere aspirants who are seriously practising meditation with the hope of getting some spiritual experience. Meditation to become a vehicle of transcendence must be practised with yogic attitude and knowledge.

(to be continued)

16. सर्वार्थतैकाग्रतयोः क्षयोदयो चित्तस्य

समाधिपरिणामः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 3.11

17. शान्तोदितौ तुल्यप्रत्ययौ चित्तस्य-

एकाग्रतापरिणामः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 3.12

18. See Swami Vivekananda's poem 'A Hymn of Samadhi' in the *Complete Works* (1978), vol. 4, p. 498.

19. व्युत्थाननिरोधसंस्कारयोरभिभवप्रादुर्भावौ
निरोधक्षणचित्तान्वयो निरोधपरिणामः ।

Yoga-Sūtra 3.9

PANCHKORI BANDYOPADHYAYA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

Panchkori Bandyopadhyaya was a brilliant journalist and famous writer attached to *Baṅgabāsi*, the most influential Bengali journal of the 1890s. The story of his antagonism to Swami Vivekananda and subsequent transformation into an ardent admirer, is not an isolated instance. It is a typical example of the phenomenon of the resistance of so-called intellectuals and conservatives against a pathfinder who, emerging out of their own society, bursts upon them with his creative thoughts which sound not only new but also iconoclastic to their untrained ears. It is also the story of the triumph of truth and love over bigotry, falsehood, selfishness and jealousy.

Panchkori was a boyhood friend of Narendranath (the childhood name of Vivekananda). At the time when Narendranath was only an unknown, itinerant monk in India, Panchkori joined the *Baṅgabāsi* in 1892 as a journalist. Soon by dint of his virtuosity he was appointed the chief editor of the same magazine from 1895. Besides *Baṅgabāsi*, Panchkori also started writing as an influential and popular journalist in more than a dozen journals of his time, and edited some of the widely circulated dailies and weeklies like *Sāptāhik Basumatī*, the English daily *Telegraph*, the *Bengal* established by S. N. Banerji, a Hindi daily named *Bhārat Mitra*, *Sāhitya*, *Nāyak* and *Prabāhinī*. Though popular as a satirical and humorous writer on social themes, Panchkori was also hailed as a serious writer on Bengal society and its religious framework. After his passing away in 1923 the Bengali daily *Bhāratī* commented that on his death Bengali literature had only become poorer at the loss of such a thoughtful and scholarly writer whose expositions on India's scrip-

tures, *Purānas* and ancient history were enough to astound any serious reader. In his day Panchkori was, in short, a literary power in Bengal to reckon with.

But there was another side of the coin. Despite all his brilliance as a prolific writer, Panchkori was in a sense a tragic character who sold his intellect for money and suffered thereby a dichotomy at once deep and pathetic. Basically a seeker after truth, Panchkori was forced at times to strangle his voice of conscience when *Baṅgabāsi*—run under the powerful patronage of Bengal conservatives—hung too heavily on him. At other times when Panchkori had to write in different journals for money, he had to write as a snob and sometimes even as a comedian entertaining his readers with humour and satire. The selling out of intellect obviously pained the sensitive man, and at times he would make confessions to relieve himself, as in the following lines:

The writer [is he] who sells himself well. . . . Since buffoonery sells easily, people engage me as a writer. I have to confess that I write only to earn the bread of my life. No one listens even if I cry in pain. I have, therefore, to laugh. O God! They fail to see how much of pain is mixed with my laughter. [*Prabāhinī*, 7 Pausa 1321.]

Panchkori met Sri Ramakrishna twice in his life. As a young man he came in close contact with Narendranath and was drawn to him by his stupendous intellect, boldness and charming personality. Yet when the same Narendranath returned to India in 1897 as a triumphant champion of Hinduism, Panchkori stood against him as a powerful writer and chief editor of *Baṅgabāsi* when its owners were at the height of their propa-

ganda-campaign aimed at underrating Vivekananda and holding up, if possible, the Calcutta reception which was being organized in his honour. In the *Baṅgabāsi* editorial published immediately before Swamiji's Calcutta reception on 28 February 1897, Panchkori emerged as a strong anti-Vivekanandist, his pen writing the widely known and infamous editorial denouncing Swamiji. The editorial read in part:

When it is claimed Vivekananda is the saviour of Hinduism, he is a monk, a dandi, a Swami, a yogi or a Paramahansa—then only are we compelled to raise a strong protest. If Vivekananda is presented before us in his previous name Babu Narendranath, we shall welcome him with all ceremony.

The prophet was not to get a stone among his own men to lay his head on. The creative mutation of Narendranath into Vivekananda, the metamorphosis of a Calcutta boy—Panchkori's own boyhood friend—into a 'world prophet' at whose feet the West had literally sat to learn of the ancient Indian wisdom, was too great a fact for the Bengal conservatives to accept without heart-burn. But in the same editorial Panchkori's innate respect for Narendranath betrayed itself. Despite the note of denunciation, Panchkori welcomed 'Narendranath' with a 'golden crown' and 'silver throne'. He paid his respect to Narendranath's 'brilliant intellect', 'moral courage' and 'tremendous vitality'; although, he added, Naren used at times to take food not in keeping with the Brahminic tradition.

Despite the infamous editorial the influential *Baṅgabāsi* failed to stop the tumultuous Calcutta reception of Vivekananda. It nevertheless succeeded in creating new detractors. The Maharaja of Darbhanga (obviously under the influence of *Baṅgabāsi*) declined to preside over the Calcutta reception in honour of Vivekananda held at

the residence of Raja Radhakanta Deva, although he had agreed to it earlier. The same *Baṅgabāsi*, it may be remembered, had tried to create a public opinion against the Calcutta public's official recognition of Vivekananda's success in 1894, and had failed. Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherji of Uttarpara, a staunch Brahminical stalwart, presided over the same meeting in 1894, and the *Indian Mirror* (6 September 1894) noted with wonder: 'It was a sight to see a Brahmin presiding over a meeting called for honouring a Shudra.'

But the *Baṅgabāsi* attack continued. The next explosion came when Vivekananda visited the Dakshineswar temple on 21 March 1897 along with the Maharaja of Khetri. Already under the influence of *Baṅgabāsi* Trailokya Nath Biswas, the owner of the temple, had arranged a cold reception for Vivekananda in the temple. He absented himself, in spite of Swamiji's request, from receiving the guests. Immediately after the visit *Baṅgabāsi* launched almost a war on 'Shudra Vivekananda' who had defiled himself by crossing the seas, by living and eating with *mlecchas*, by arrogating the power of calling himself a 'Swami' which was so far allowed to no 'Shudra'. It flashed a distorted report of Vivekananda's visit to the temple. It again compelled Babu Trailokya Biswas to publish a statement (published in English translation in the *Indian Mirror* on 4 April 1897) in its own columns which reported how seriously the great descendant of Rani Rasmani was concerned to protect the temple and Hinduism from the evil influence of 'Shudra Vivekananda' who, already a renegade and outcaste on account of his Western travel, had defiled the image of Mother Kali by his unholy presence. The tail-end of the episode is worse than shameful. The image of Kālī was reconsecrated and purified after the visit of Naren whom Sri Ramakrishna, the child of

Kālī, had offered to the Divine Mother for the good of the world !

Baṅgabāsi had at last won a battle. The aftermath of the victory is all the more interesting: Bengal conservatives were crowned with ineffaceable shame by restricting Vivekananda's entry into the temple for the rest of his life. And all this happened primarily due to the power of Panchkori's pen.

Vivekananda's regal, elephantlike entrance into the narrow lanes of Bengal conservatism calls to mind at least one historical parallel: Christ's triumphant return to Jerusalem. The Pharisees and Sadducees, who had virtually been separated on account of affluence and luxury from the rank and file of the Jewish community, were secretly siding with the dominant minority group, the Roman Masters. They were even hypocritically professing themselves custodians of their God, and better examples of religion and ethics before the illiterate Galileans. Christ saw the falsity behind the veil and rent it asunder. The reaction was obvious. They actively gathered round the Roman Masters in order to crucify the prophet of their own race who had been putting them to shame.

Fortunately, Vivekananda fortified himself, perhaps without his knowing it, with a historic act of discretion. He landed first at Colombo and entered Bengal only after a series of tumultuous ovations, colossal public receptions and a number of inundating lectures in Madras and other southern provinces. And when he celebrated in the Dakshineswar temple garden, for the first and last time in his life, the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna in the second week of March 1897, the Calcutta public thronged in unprecedented strength around the hero. Only a week later began the historic attack from *Baṅgabāsi* on Swamiji's second visit to the temple.

Conservative resistance, however organized

and powerful, cannot stand in the long run against the truths preached by a prophet of the new age, and generally results in the disintegration of its own body social. Gamalliel, a Jewish antagonist of Christ, started his crusade against Christ's followers after the crucifixion. Soon he lost his greatest follower Saul who, transformed by a sudden theophany of Christ, eventually became the greatest exponent and protagonist of the new Christian faith.

The conservative resistance to crossing the *kālāpāni* ('black waters', i.e. the ocean) was slowly giving way. The Maharaja of Jaipur had a few years earlier defied the pandits and gone abroad with, of course, a conciliatory gesture. He took the ancestral image of God with him and bathed the image before going to and after coming from the West in the Ganga. Raja Benoy Krishna made a stir on this issue and had already influenced stalwarts like Bankim Chatterji and others who openly started criticizing the conservatives for their resistance to sea-voyage. Raja Benoy Krishna published a brochure in which he justified the sea-voyage from the standpoint of ancient scriptures. The brochure was sent to the then law-minister of India Sir Alexander Miller, so that a law could be passed in order to save the sea-going Indians from the conservative persecution. But the British rulers, reluctant to open to the natives the sea-path across the continents for fear of the West's getting exposed to the Indians, and also in anticipation of Indians getting advanced socially and otherwise, shuttled the ball to the court of the pandits for their valued opinion. There, as expected, it stopped dead. It was at this transitional moment that Swami Vivekananda's great success in the West burst upon the Indian scene like a bomb-shell. Raja Benoy Krishna and the neo-reformers who found in Swamiji their triumphant leader, got more inspired. They made a

great success of the Calcutta reception where the Raja himself presided.

Vivekananda, much to the shock of the conservatives, not only spurned the very idea of *prāyaścitta* or purificatory penance after sea-voyage, but held his ground with adamant firmness in the subsequent Calcutta lectures, quoting the scriptures in his support. In the Calcutta Town Hall lecture on 'Vedanta in All Its Phases' he rent the veils of age-old superstition and the vested interest of the self-seeking social leaders with ruthless criticism and banter. The conservative reaction increased. Numerous Bengali journals like *Dharma-pracāraṅk* (Jaiṣṭha and Āsāḍha, Śāk 1816), *Anusandhān* (1 Pauṣa 1304), and *Dāsī* (September 1897) attacked Vivekananda openly in the most perverted manner. Had the same situation arisen even a century earlier under the rule of a Hindu king, Swamiji, as pointed out by Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta, would have been 'hanged to death'.

What was Vivekananda's reaction? He treated the conservative howling of *Bāṅgabāsi* and other papers with an air of total indifference and sometimes with humour. He never allowed any admirer to join the fray by way of rejoinders. It was for history and posterity to decide if Ramakrishna had led him along the right way for the welfare of his countrymen and the world at large. When on one occasion the matter was pointed out to him by his disciple Sharatchandra Chakravarty Swamiji spoke of the calm equanimity a monk should possess with regard to worldly praise or blame. He also added, 'Without persecution the beneficial ideas of the world cannot easily penetrate to its core.' Did he not face all alone a similar and more virulent resistance from missionaries in the United States? When Vivekananda was warned by Miss Mary Hale to be cautious and compromising, the prophet within Vivek-

ananda at once reacted:

The duty of the ordinary man is to obey the commands of his 'God', society; but the children of light never do so. This is an eternal law. One accommodates himself to surroundings and social opinion and gets all good things from society, the giver of all good to such. The other stands alone and draws society up towards him. The accommodating man finds a path of roses; the non-accommodating, one of thorns. But the worshippers of 'vox populi' go to annihilation in a moment; the children of truth *live for ever*. [Letter dated 1 February 1895.]

What happened to Panchkori? The answer may be found in a statement made by Sister Christine about Swamiji's influence on human personalities. She has pointed out that Swamiji had an irresistible power of attracting towards himself all sincere souls who came in his contact. Constant friction against the world-force in Vivekananda brought Panchkori a revelation of the truth. He saw in his boyhood friend a new being, transformed by the touch of Ramakrishna, a re-enactment of the Pauline phrase: 'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; . . . It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.'

'After such knowledge what forgiveness?' Eliot wrote long afterwards about Christians unbelieving in Christ. It was no more possible for Panchkori to cling to *Bāṅgabāsi* any more. His days of dichotomy were coming to an end. By the time Vivekananda passed away he was free from the conservative tentacles of *Bāṅgabāsi*, and took up the editorship of another paper, *Raṅgālaya*. At last he was free to look at Vivekananda with a freed conscience. Vivekananda passed away on July 4, 1902. Panchkori, with a conscience lacerated on account of his recent antagonisms, wrote in obituary:

Bengal will not have, in ages to come, another jewel as that which it lost on the demise of Vivek-

ananda... I remember his strong, well-formed, angelic body, the songs from the soft, melodious, cuckoo-like voice, his pride, dignity, the radiance of knowledge... and above all, his fascinating power, simplicity and his love for ascetic life. Slowly, one by one memories are coming up and crowding my mind... only to make it tormented. We have to bear the lot of common mortals. He, who was Divine, left us in no while. [*Rangālaya*, 28 Aṣāḍha 1309.]

Full of remorse for his earlier denunciations, Panchkori saw with wonder that *Baṅgabāsi* had not spared Vivekananda even after his death. It published a nasty obituary replete with sarcastic remarks about the 'intelligent disciple of Ramakrishna... Narendra Nath Dutta, nowadays known as Swami Vivekananda to many,' who 'tried to attract many by the sheer power of his lectures,' and who by the 'credit of oratory' even attracted ladies, who subsequently became his disciples—which 'certainly testifies to his creditable enterprise.'

And now it was for Panchkori to take up the sword against the insinuations of *Baṅgabāsi* which had fallen, in his absence, into the hands of non-brahmin leaders. He published in the same issue of *Rangālaya* (28 Aṣāḍha, 1309), a critique entitled 'The Delirium of *Baṅgabāsi*' in which he wrote:

When *Baṅgabāsi* antagonized Vivekananda we (the brahmins) were engaged in the editorial work. We are responsible for those opinions; we are brahmins and as such it was natural for us to have a strong desire to uphold brahminism. But now as *Baṅgabāsi* is in the hands of pure Shudras, why should the earlier hatred against a Shudra be expressed even now?... He who is dead has left us for good. Does anyone strike the dead? When the *Englishman* of the Britishers can express grief at the death of this Bengali, how is it possible for Bengal-born *Baṅgabāsi* to disown the grief with heartless banter? Cursed is *Baṅgabāsi*.

During the next decade after Vivekananda's death Panchkori was only gasping

for the fresh air of a conscience free from the whirlpool of political topsy-turvydom in which he found himself as a writer in a dozen journals. At last he took up the editorship of *Prabāhinī* where his innate genius expressed itself in all its brilliance. With fervent hope Panchkori wrote: 'So long I have only spent myself in the mire of politics... now I only hope that *Prabāhinī* will lift this wretched one above the mire.' (*Prabāhinī*, 17 Māgha 1320.) True to his expectation it was in *Prabāhinī* that Panchkori gave us his *magnum opus*, the short but most stirring reminiscence of Vivekananda ever written in Bengali. Every line in it is loaded with gold, and every word charged with sincerity and pathos from a heart which knew not how to react to the happy return of a long-rejected friend and his equally majestic departure in the prime of youth.

Vivekananda stood, in his eyes, a *kṛpāsiddha*—the annointed one chosen by the grace of God. Who could drive the host of educated Bengali youth like Brahma-ananda, Saradananda and others to the doors of suffering humanity to bring them succour and relief? Vivekananda could and did. He made them 'forget the ease and comfort of this world in search of a higher joy.' Vivekananda could inflame them with a fire 'under whose influence the luxurious babus could sit on the bedside of a pox-afflicted patient unafraid, could dive unhesitatingly into a storm-tossed sea, could face undaunted the devastations of a plague.' 'The Master', writes Panchkori, 'who could inspire such a spirit of self-sacrifice is verily the Son of God, God incarnate in man.'

The reminiscence tells us that Panchkori met and talked to Vivekananda after his return from the West, in an intimate and informal atmosphere. When Panchkori began to praise him on one of his English speeches Narendranath shut his friend's

mouth with warm affection. In the company of his friends Narendranath had not the least sense of ego. There he was all full of fun and love. When Panchkori spoke of Ramakrishna's boundless grace, Vivekananda burst into tears at those words, and embraced his friend. Then he began to sing with matchless melody in his rich, deep, golden voice:

I dare not close my eyelids
Lest the star should get lost in darkness.

Panchkori reminisced that while discussing Bhakti, Vivekananda sometimes revealed the great emotions of *mahābhāva*, but he suppressed them and told his friend, 'Brother, do not for God's sake intoxicate me with Bhakti. I will lose my balance. My work is yet unfinished. Do not open that floodgate. I will go mad.' While singing, Vivekananda would at times become truly devoid of all external consciousness. Once when he was playing with Panchkori's little daughter and singing the song '*Temni, temni, kore nāco dekhi śyāmā*' ('Mother, would Thou dance again in Thy old rhythm') he fell into a trance and the child too lay unconscious in ecstasy on his chest! Vivekananda, as we know, usually kept his ecstatic devotional fervour under control, but this time it defied all restraint.

The concluding lines of the reminiscence are a grand finale. The feeling of glorification and elegiac devotion for a beloved one who passed unhonoured and unsung imparted to the lines a rare beauty which no translation can ever bring out.

He has passed away [wrote Panchkori], scattering abroad the seeds of his master, and sounding the drum of his master's glory. He has passed away after spelling out with thunderous solemnity the gospel of the great harmony of life in the ears of the Bengal public. The time to understand and preach him has not yet come. That is why, buried in thy memories, I am waiting for

a second coming. Come, my friend. It is said that you come when they call you with the fullness of their hearts. That is why I am calling you. Come in a different guise and fulfil your mission.

It is not exactly known on how many occasions Panchkori wrote on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Some of his writings have been unearthed from old archives. In each of them we find that Panchkori had discovered newer dimensions of Vivekananda. On one occasion Panchkori had, in the house of Girish Ghosh, a detailed discussion with Vivekananda regarding the rejuvenation of the motherland from the terrible influx of the non-Aryan culture. Swamiji expounded in his inimitable style that Advaita Vedanta in its purest form which urges man to be conscious of the infinite strength within, is the only way to resist the inundation. About the discussion Panchkori wrote: 'Just as Caitanya's contribution could not be measured by the yardstick of Bhavaddev and Raghunandan (pandits contemporary with Śrī Caitanya), similarly the dimension of the activities of the disciples of Ramakrishna cannot be measured by the standards set up by today's pandits.' In Panchkori's essay (*Prabāhini*, 18 Māgha 1329) on *Sukadeva*—the eternally pure one unsmitten by sin—he saw in the image of Sukadeva his friend Vivekananda standing out in immaculate purity.

As days rolled on, Vivekananda grew in dimension in Panchkori's eyes. From his boyhood friend Narendranath, Vivekananda emerged slowly in his vision, a colossal figure who 'at this supreme moment of global upheaval' stands 'spanning the horizons of the entire past' like 'one sent from above' for the good of mankind.

Bowed with awe and reverence, Panchkori wrote in a mood of sombre soliloquy:

Look, see Belur-on-the-Ganges on the Western bank... The tumultuous sound of the war-drum that had once broken your stupor is hidden

there, the radiance of divinity that had once dispelled the darkness of illusion is still there; those who were thrice blessed with his company are there still living and active. . . .

Look at him for the last time. Sitting at the foot of the Himalayas no one could ever apprehend the Himalayan grandeur in its proper

magnitude. . . . One has to climb the peaks of Darjeeling in order to enjoy the unspeakable beauty of Kanchenjunga. . . . In order to realize the profound dimension of this Himalayan superman, go thou to Belur and there standing at the height of his thoughts have a glance at him. [*Sāhitya*, Phālguna 1329.]

NOTES ON A CHINESE MONASTERY

WILLIAM PAGE

Chinese Buddhist monasticism, while moribund in China itself, is alive and well in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the overseas Chinese communities of Southeast Asia. Both in theory and in practice, it offers interesting comparisons with Hindu monasticism. The following observations are based on numerous visits to one particular Chinese monastery from 1969 to 1975.

Deep in the Central Mountains of Taiwan lies Shih-t'ou Shan (Lion-Head Mountain), so called because, from a distance, its contours resemble a lion in repose. One of Taiwan's chief centres of Buddhist monasticism, this mountain cradles, along its forested flanks and summit, at least twelve temples and monasteries. In the evenings, when the mists shroud the peaks and the sonorous chanting drifts out of the brightly lit shrines and pagodas, the mountain becomes transformed into a scene out of ancient China.

Buddhist hermits from Hsin-chu, on the western coastal plain, began settling on Shih-t'ou Shan as early as the 1800s, attracted by the mountainous scenery, the solitude, and the numerous caves. As time went on, more monks gathered; the original humble cave-hermitages expanded into monasteries, complete with temple, courtyard, kitchen, and dormitories. Even now, the central shrine in each monastery is usually set against the back wall of the

original cave; but with the increasing prosperity of Taiwan, some of the temples and pagodas have become quite large and ornate, the upswept yellow-tiled roofs frequently adorned with dragons and phoenixes. Some of the larger establishments have also become a bit commercialized, running souvenir shops and soft-drink stands which cater to the pilgrims and tourists who visit the mountain, most often on weekends. Temples on Taiwan have traditionally served as social centres as well as places of worship, and the path that originally snaked over the flanks and ridges of Shih-t'ou Shan is now paved with flagstones, and well-trodden. Sometimes, in fact, the mountain fairly swarms with tourists, and often with busloads of schoolchildren, so that, if you are looking for solitude on Shih-t'ou Shan, it is wise to avoid the weekends.

The monasteries on Shih-t'ou Shan vary widely in their attitudes toward visitors. Traditionally, Chinese monasteries have welcomed guests. Several of the larger and wealthier establishments offer meals and accommodations for visitors; others offer only meals; some, valuing their solitude, offer only tea. These latter are generally small and secluded, inhabited only by a few nuns. The nuns at one such temple gently disparage the larger, more commercialized monasteries as being little more than hotels.

Asceticism is not dead on Shih-t'ou Shan,

however; even in the largest monasteries, the monks generally keep to themselves, studying the scriptures and practising meditation; while the nuns in the smaller establishments devote themselves exclusively to these practices, undistracted by the comings and goings of visitors. And off a side-path that winds down the mountain is a simple little cave-temple, little more than a hut with an altar inside, inhabited by a lone, half-blind Taiwanese hermit who grows a few simple vegetables for his sustenance and whose conversation, when he speaks at all, consists of terse, cryptic remarks that remind one of Zen koans.

A word should be said about the philosophic basis of Chinese Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism adheres to the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) school of thought, and I was much struck by its similarity to the Advaita Vedānta. This is not altogether surprising, since both the Vedānta and the Mahāyāna originated in India. A man could read Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (Crest-Jewel of Discrimination) and the *Vajrachedika Sūtra* (Diamond Sutra) of Mahāyāna Buddhism and suppose, except for differences in terminology and nuances of emphasis, that they were written by the same hand.

The Mahāyāna holds that ultimate reality is Void (Sanskrit *śunya*, Chinese *k'ung*). The Void holds the same position in Mahāyāna philosophy as Brahman does in the Advaita Vedānta. Despite the negative connotations of the term, the Void is not conceived in a negative or nihilistic way. Like Brahman, it contains within itself both the positive and the negative, and transcends them both. Like Brahman, too, it is all-pervasive and all-inclusive, yet devoid of qualities and incapable of being defined. It is the spiritual substratum of the phenomenal universe, the warp and woof upon which the thread of the universe is woven. Name it, and you miss the mark; define

it, and you fall into a swamp. Ultimately, according to the Mahāyāna, everything is Void. Yet although the Void cannot be defined, as with Brahman in the Vedānta, it can be known by the pure mind.

Mahāyāna Buddhism posits the existence in every living being of an eternal Buddha-nature (Chinese *Fo-hsing*), sometimes called the Original Mind (Chinese *Pen-hsin*). This is the medium through which the Void may be known. By purifying his mind, the spiritual aspirant realizes his identity with the Buddha-nature, becomes a Buddha himself, and perceives the Voidness of the phenomenal universe. In a sense, this Buddha-nature may be similar to the Ātman of the Vedānta; as the Ātman is Brahman internalized, so the Buddha-nature seems to be the Void internalized. Both are different aspects of the same fundamental Reality.

On a more down-to-earth level, Mahāyāna Buddhism, like Hinduism, has a wealth of colourful deities. Among the most popular of these are deified Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: Amitābha Buddha (Chinese *O-mi-t'o Fo*), the Lord of the Great Western Paradise; Maitreya Buddha (Chinese *Mi-le Fo*), the Buddha-to-Come, portrayed in China as an enormously fat, smiling Buddha known to Westerners as the Happy Buddha; and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (Chinese *Kuan-yin-P'u-sa*). Interestingly enough, Avalokiteśvara became transformed in China from a male to a female deity, and is depicted in female form. Her full name is Kuan Shih Yin P'u-sa, 'She Who Heeds the Cries of the World'. She is known to Westerners as the Goddess of Mercy. The historical Buddha, Śākyamuni (Chinese *Shih-chia-mou-ni Fo*), is of course worshipped and revered, but does not seem to enjoy the popularity of Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara. Other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are worshipped as well.

On a less orthodox level, Chinese Buddhism has incorporated a number of popular

deities taken over from Taoism. Indeed, Taoism has so interpenetrated Chinese Buddhism that it is sometimes difficult to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. Thus, each town on Taiwan has its city god; there is a kitchen god, an earth god, a god of the dead (*Yen-lo Wang*, derived from the Hindu god Yama), and a host of other colourful deities. These are generally portrayed as stout and regal-looking, opulently garbed like emperors, some of them bearing weapons and looking quite fierce. One of the most popular deities on Taiwan is a ferocious-looking, red-faced, bushy-browed, scowling god named Kuan Kung. Originally he was a legendary general who became deified over the centuries, and he always has his hand on his sword-hilt.

Probably the most popular school of Mahāyāna on Taiwan is the Pure Land School (Chinese *Ching-t'u Tsung*). While admitting the ultimate reality of the Void, it places its faith in Amitābha, O-mi-t'o Fo, and believes, in accordance with its central scripture, the *Sukhāvati-Vyūha*, that merely reciting the name of Amitābha once with devotion is enough to insure rebirth in the Pure Land, the Great Western Paradise (Chinese *Chung-t'u*, or *Hsi-t'ien*; Sanskrit *Sukhāvati*) for innumerable aeons. Taking the name of Amitābha is believed to wipe out a plenitude of sins. Consequently, the primary devotional practice of this sect is the recitation of the *mantra* (Nan-wu O-mi-t'o Fo') (Sanskrit *Namo Amitābha-Buddhāya*, Homage to Amitābha Buddha), using a rosary of 108 beads.

The spiritual and material goals of Mahāyāna Buddhists as observed on Shih-t'ou Shan varied greatly. The average Chinese or Taiwanese layman, steeped in the popular religion, prayed to the gods for the material blessings sought by most men in every age: a good husband for the unmarried daughter, a good job for the

son, success in examinations for the student, and wealth and happiness in general. Ultimately, of course, they looked forward to rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha, a heaven whose splendours and delights are catalogued in rich detail in the *Sukhāvati-Vyūha*: jewel-bearing trees, crystalline rivers, perfumed breezes, and the like. Rebirth in this paradise was supposedly for a sufficient number of aeons to postpone for a satisfactory interval the inevitable descent into the uncertain maelstrom of reincarnation. The average layman was not concerned with liberation from the wheel of rebirth, nor with becoming a Buddha, nor with plumbing the vastness of the Void: he simply wanted success and prosperity in this life, and paradise in the next.

The monks I talked to had a somewhat more lofty goal. They wanted to realize their essential Buddha-nature and perceive the Voidness of all things. The abbot of one monastery expressed this hope succinctly: he wanted to *ch'eng Fo*, become a Buddha. To this end, the monastics chanted scripture, recited the name of O-mi-t'o Fo, practised meditation, and conducted lengthy worship services three times a day.

The Indian and Sanskrit influence on Chinese Buddhism was interesting to observe. In one of the more secluded temples on Shih-t'ou Shan was an image of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva with numerous arms—supposedly a thousand, though in fact far fewer. Dangling from her crown, on both sides, were ornate strips of cloth bearing words written in a Sanskrit-derived script. I saw similar inscriptions in a temple at Hangchow, on the China Mainland, on a visit in 1978. Nobody knew what the inscriptions meant, either on Taiwan or on the Mainland; but it was evident even to my unpractised eye that the script was related to Sanskrit. To me it looked somewhat like Punjabi, but I am far from an expert in this realm. I thought I could make

out the word *prajñā*, which would not have been unlikely, since the *Prajñāpāramitā* plays an important role in Chinese Buddhism. I believe Swami Vivekananda makes mention of seeing similar inscriptions, either in China or in Japan, somewhere in his writings.*

All of the Mahāyāna scriptures, of course, were originally written in Sanskrit, and later translated into various vernaculars. Indeed, much of the history of early Chinese Buddhism consists of attempts to procure the Sanskrit texts from India, bring them back to China, and translate them into Chinese. The two famous Chinese pilgrim-monks, Hsuan Tsang and Fa Hsien, made heroic journeys to India for this purpose; and some of Hsuan Tsang's translations are still in use today.

Some of the chanting I heard during the worship services on Shih-t'ou Shan baffled me at first; it made no sense at all in Chinese. Later I discovered that the chanting consisted of excerpts from the scriptures *transliterated* (as opposed to translated) from the original Sanskrit into Chinese.

There can hardly be two more dissimilar languages on earth than Sanskrit and Chinese: the one heavily inflected, the other not inflected at all; the one based on a highly phonetic alphabet, the other based on a rigid system of ideograms. In Chinese, each ideogram represents a separate syllable; sometimes a syllable has several possible meanings; at other times, it has no meaning at all in isolation, but only in the context of other syllables which constitute a given word. In transliterating Sanskrit sounds into Chinese, therefore, the trans-

literator has to hunt for ideograms representing Chinese syllables whose pronunciation corresponds most closely to that of the Sanskrit original. In the process, the meaning is lost; and since Chinese has a limited number of sounds, the effect is often bizarre.

The Sanskrit mantra *namo amitābhā-buddhāya*, for example, is transliterated into Chinese as 'Nan-wu O-mi-t'o Fo'. The closest the transliterator could get to the Sanskrit word *namo* was to juxtapose the ideograms pronounced 'nan' and 'wu'. Since 'nan' means 'south' and 'wu' means 'no', the literal translation of the mantra means 'South No Amitābha Buddha'.

As further examples, *Brahman* is transliterated 'P'o-lo-men' (meaning, literally, 'Wife-Net-Gate'); *Ramakrishna* comes out as 'Lo-mo-k'e-li-hsi-na' (meaning 'Net-Rub-Overcome-Mile-Hope-That'); and the closest they can get to *Om* is 'An'. The ideogram which they have chosen to represent this sacred syllable has the unfortunate meaning 'to gobble up'!

So to the average Chinese chanting excerpts from, say, the *Diamond Sutra*, in transliterated Sanskrit, what he is chanting is meaningless to him, save for the fact that it is holy scripture, much as the Latin mass would be meaningless to one who knows no Latin. Of course, the scriptures have been translated (as opposed to transliterated) into Chinese as well; and here the meaning is clear. Buddhist terminology itself has sometimes been transliterated (as in the name 'Shih-chia-mou-ni Fo', Śākyamuni Buddha), but more often directly translated: *Suddhodana*, the name of Buddha's father, becomes 'Ching-fan', meaning 'Pure-Rice'; *Dharma* becomes 'Fa', meaning 'Law'; *Triratna*, the 'Three Jewels' of Buddhism, becomes 'San Pao', the 'Three Treasures'. The translations are generally more felicitous than the transliterations; thus the term *Advaita*, which would probably be transliterated 'A-te-wei-t'o', translates quite

* Cf. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 397-98, where the Swami is said to have seen Chinese and Japanese temples inscribed with Sanskrit mantras in old Bengali characters.—Ed.

sensibly as 'Pu-erh', meaning 'No-Two'!

The monks of Shih-t'ou Shan were aware of Buddhism's debt to Sanskrit, but seemed uneasy in the awareness, as if it implied somehow that their religions was a mere cultural offshoot. None of them know Sanskrit, although I have no doubt that there must be learned monks on Taiwan who have studied it.

Their attitude toward Hinduism was interesting. They knew nothing of Hinduism except as it existed at the time of Buddha. Thus, when I told them that I believed in 'Yin-tu Chiao' (literally, 'India Religion'),

they would smile indulgently and say, 'Ah, yes, you believe in P'o-lo-men Chiao'—Brahmanism; Hinduism as it was at the time of Buddha. When I tried to explain that Hinduism had evolved and changed considerably since the time of Buddha, they merely nodded politely. They agreed, superficially at least, with the idea that all religions—Hinduism and Buddhism included—lead to the same goal; but it seemed to make them uneasy, as if conducting to a diluted metaphysic.

(to be continued)

THE WISDOM OF THE UPANISHADS IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN SCIENCE

PROF. U. A. ASRANI

The stress of modern civilization

The Upaniṣads declare at the top of their voice: the individual Jīva (self) does not exist at all; Brahman is the sole reality. The variegated world, and the alienation of the Jīva from it as possessor and enjoyer, is merely a chimera—the Māyā of Śaṅkara. In the present age of stress and strain, the wisdom of the Upaniṣads gets a new importance. The life of modern man is full of hurry and anxiety caused by unlimited ambitions and inexhaustible desires, for comfort, luxury, and personal prestige. Above all, there is everywhere an obtrusive sense of egoism.

Everybody knows that death destroys at one stroke the entire house of cards of possession as well as the ego, the possessor. We observe everyday our loved ones passing out of life's arena. Still our delusion of egoism persists. Hence it is, probably, that nature punishes us with that host of

psychosomatic diseases. Medical men call them functional diseases, so that they may appear less troublesome to the patients; but correctly speaking they are stress-diseases. J. A. Schindler—the late head of the Medicine Department, Munroe Clinic, U.S.A.—calls them 'emotionally induced'.¹ In general, they are called 'psychosomatic'. The modern medical world has come to the conclusion that mind and body—psyche and soma—actually form one integrated unit. Each influences the other; but yogic texts add that the influence of the mind over the body is 'far more powerful' than that of the body over the mind.²

It is no wonder, therefore, that high blood-pressure, heart attacks and paralytic strokes are becoming very common now—

1. J. A. Schindler, *How to live 365 Days a Year* (Allahabad: St. Paul Society, 1976).

2. *Yoga Today* (A Collection) (Bombay: MacMillan Co., 1971).

a-days even in India. Peter Blythe, the distinguished British psychotherapist, gives the undermentioned list of diseases recognized as psychosomatic, in his book *Stress Disease—The Growing Plague*:³ hyper-tension or high blood-pressure; coronary thrombosis or heart trouble; migraine or painful headache, usually one-sided; hay fever, with common cold and allergies; asthma; pruritus or intense itching; constipation; colitis or diseases of the colon; rheumatoid arthritis; menstrual difficulties of women; nervous dyspepsia or flatulence and indigestion; hyperthyroidism or over-active thyroid gland; diabetes mellitus or sugar in the urine and blood; skin disorders; tuberculosis.

It is high time we woke up and realized the folly of mental tension, hurry, anxieties, etc., all of which are caused by an over-protuberant ego. We should also warn ourselves against the dreadful diseases we are likely to get thereby, which may even lead to premature death. If such a demise unfortunately occurs, all the skill and learning acquired during a lifetime will be prematurely lost to oneself, to one's family, and to humanity at large. The same protuberant ego is at the base of all economic, political, communal and national quarrels. Peace on earth appears nowadays to have almost vanished in mid air. But world peace is as vital a need for mankind today as psychosomatic health for individuals.

It has been proved beyond doubt that mental relaxation helps considerably in the control and cure of psychosomatic diseases. By relaxation is meant not the temporary relief produced by refreshing drinks, smoking or diversions or entertainments. It should be a genuine relaxation of the mind, says Hans Selye, the pioneer researcher on

stress in his work *Stress of Life*.⁴ All thoughts and emotions should end in what the Christian mystics have called 'Silence' and the Indian Jñāna-yogis *nirvikalpa avasthā*.

Even neuro-muscular diseases like paralytic strokes can be beneficially treated by mental relaxation.⁵ Dr. K. K. Datey, the world-renowned cardiologist of Bombay, gives the benefits of performing the Haṭha-yogic *śava āsana* (corpse pose) for three months, in the relief of several psychosomatic troubles, including high blood-pressure.⁶ It appears reasonable to presume that if the mental relaxation of Jñāna-yoga is added to the physical relaxation of the corpse pose, the benefits will be considerably enhanced. Jñāna-yoga uses the philosophy of the Upaniṣads as a relaxing philosophy of life. *Aham brahmāsmi*—'I am the Cosmic Consciousness': when one's consciousness expands to this infinite awareness one gets totally relaxed. In Dr. Datey's own words, it becomes thereafter an effortless 'way of life'.

We need not import costly American electronic feedback gadgets for learning mental relaxation. Even in devout prayers or the self-surrender of Bhakti, we feel completely relaxed like children in the lap of their mothers. Mantra-yoga also helps us to forget the self, at least for a while, when we get absorbed in the repetition of the *mantra*. Followers of Transcendental Meditation have proved by scientific methods mental relaxation and psychosomatic benefits produced by *mantra-japa*. Dr. Herbert Benson—Director of the Hypertension Section in Boston and Associate

4. Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (London: Longmans, 1956).

5. Cf. 'Teaching Your Body to Heal Itself', *Reader's Digest*, July 1974.

6. *Yoga-Science Journal* (Delhi), February 1979.

3. Peter Blythe, *Stress Disease, The Growing Plague* (London: Arthur Baker Ltd., 1973).

Professor at Harvard—claims further that any *mantra* would do.⁷

The Jñāna-yogic meditations on the *mahāvākyas* of the Upaniṣads go even further than *mantra-japa*. They strike at the very root of the ego through the auto-suggestion 'I am not the body, I am the Infinite'. Consciousness gets expanded thereby, the personality gets purified of all selfishness, and the stress and strain of worldly desires vanish.⁸

The Jñāna-yoga of the Upaniṣads aims really at securing liberation, or *jīvanmukti*. Health and the cure or control of psychosomatic diseases result from it as a secondary grace without any drugs. It is something like the *prasāda* which you get when you visit a Hindu temple. Experience appears to show that restoration of health comes very much earlier than the high ideal of *jīvanmukti*.

Modern science leans, like the Upaniṣads, towards holism

It may appear strange, but it is nevertheless true that modern science, in spite of its being perfectly 'realistic' rather than idealistic or mystic, is tending distinctly towards a wholistic (or 'holistic') view of the universe, not much different from that of the Upaniṣads. It appears to abhor the idea of 'individuality' in matter and even in living plants and animals, discrediting the concept of separate *jīvas* alienated from the rest of the cosmos. The *Transpersonal Psychology* magazine in its Fall 1969 issue carried an article containing quotations from renowned physicists and astronomers as well as from pantheistic mystics—all having been purposely mixed together haphazardly,

without mentioning the names of the sources until the end of the article. They all look very much alike, thus demonstrating the similarity of outlook between mystics and modern scientists.

In modern science, relativity theory has been a great unifier. Time is no longer independent of space; both are now combined into a single four-dimensional space-time continuum. Moreover, matter and energy—apparently so different—are shown to be two states of the same entity.

But an even greater unification is being aimed at. All matter and life in the universe is subject to three independent but interpenetrating fields—gravitational, electromagnetic and nuclear. Einstein, the author of relativity theory, worked hard to unify these three; but he died in 1955 before achieving success. Now it is reported that the Nobel Prize in physics for 1979 has been awarded to three scientists who have given a unified field theory for the electromagnetic and nuclear fields. The gravitational field alone remains to be integrated. But already physicists reject the idea of independent, individual units of matter: there are only mutual interactions under the influence of the above three fields. Even the tiny constituent of matter known as the electron has been found to be merely an 'energy knot'. 'There is no such thing as one and the same substance of which the electron consists at all times.'⁹

The evolutionary outlook of modern biology also appears to disregard the sanctity of individuality. The evolutionary drive of nature sportingly sacrifices seeds, plants and animals in billions and billions in its onward march. It even leaves behind whole species: about ninety percent of the species evolved since the first appearance

7. Herbert Benson, *Relaxation Response* (New York: Avon Books, 1975).

8. For further details, see U. A. Asrani, *Yoga Unveiled* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977).

9. Herman Weyl, *Philosophy of Mathematics and Natural Sciences*, quoted in Gopi Krishna, *Yoga: A Vision of Its Future* (Delhi: Kundalini Research and Publication Trust, 1978), pp. 16-17.

of life billions of years back have become extinct. Man is only a very recent arrival on the evolutionary scene. In spite of his phenomenally rapid cultural progress and his claims of superiority, even he appears from the evolutionary point of view as but a new species still on trial.¹⁰

Dr. H. J. Morowitz—professor of biophysics and biochemistry at Yale University, U.S.A.—says the greatest riddle in biology is how life evolved spontaneously out of nonliving matter. He thinks that no solution is possible unless we take a holistic view, in which life is seen not as an entity but merely as a *process*. All of us living beings are like vortices in a huge global continuum stream (which includes sunlight also, since it enlivens the globe). In a vortex, it is only the process which remains intact as long as the conditions for its existence persist: the same water drops do not remain in a whirlpool.¹¹ In his recent correspondence with me (March 1979), Dr. Morowitz writes that his views are still essentially the same.

Referring to the same riddle the renowned Indian nuclear physicist Raja Ramanna writes that spontaneous evolution of life out of nonliving matter is even otherwise quite possible. He quotes the work of Prigogine and the theory of spontaneous chance fluctuations.¹² Nobel laureate Jacques Monod says: 'Chance is at the source of every innovation, of all creation, in the biosphere. Pure chance, absolutely free, but blind, is at the root of the stupendous edifice of evolution. This central concept of modern biology is no longer one among other possible or conceivable hypotheses. It is today the sole

conceivable hypothesis.'¹³ However that may be, a very large consensus of scientists think that in the evolutionary process there is no interference or direction from outside. The global continuum, with sunlight playing on it, acts as one whole. Matter, life and consciousness are only stages in its evolutionary march.

Modern psychology also regards the sense of individuality in man as *mainly* the result of *postnatal* conditioning—cultural, nurtural and social. Personal pronouns like I, mine, he, his, you, yours, come into the vocabulary of a child only around the age of twenty-four months.¹⁴ Human heredity is very complex, unpredictable and unknowable.¹⁵ But psychologists think that in man, nurtural, educational and social conditioning considerably overpowers even our instinctive urges, as for food and survival. We voluntarily undertake fasts; a 'Sati' voluntarily mounts the funeral pyre of her husband. For a soldier on the battlefield, there is no alternative of 'flight' as there is for other animals in danger; he has to 'fight'. Therefore, the instinctive aspects of individuality which have been inherited by us from animals during the long process of evolution—for example, eating, drinking, and other bodily functions—may be performed by us like actors on the stage of life; but they need not be taken more seriously, or with personal attachment. The individual ego has been unconsciously manufactured by man himself during the process of conditioning to serve practical purposes in the drama of life. It is very unwise for him to get trapped within the cobwebs of his own making—his personal

10. A. E. Morgan, *A Search for Purpose* (Ahmedabad: Nava Jivan Press, 1950).

11. *Main Currents in Modern Thought* (New York), May-June 1972.

12. 'Physics of Life and Death', *Bhavan's Journal*, August 13, 1978, pp. 112 ff.

13. Quoted in *Kundalini* (New Delhi), no. 1, 1979, p. 4.

14. A. Deikman, *Personal Freedom* (New York: Grossman-Viking Press, 1976), p. 18.

15. A. J. Cantor, *Ridding Yourself of Psychosomatic Health Wreckers* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1967), p. 135.

desires and attachments based on that ego—and then to continue to bear the stress and distress of his so-called ‘civilization’ throughout life.

Parapsychology sets its final seal of approval on the holistic view of the cosmos. Sometimes man’s mind simply refuses to remain encased within his body or brain. It communicates with other minds, even perhaps at the distance of the moon to the earth. It influences animal minds and dead matter as well. All this may be inscrutable, but experiments have shown that it is possible.

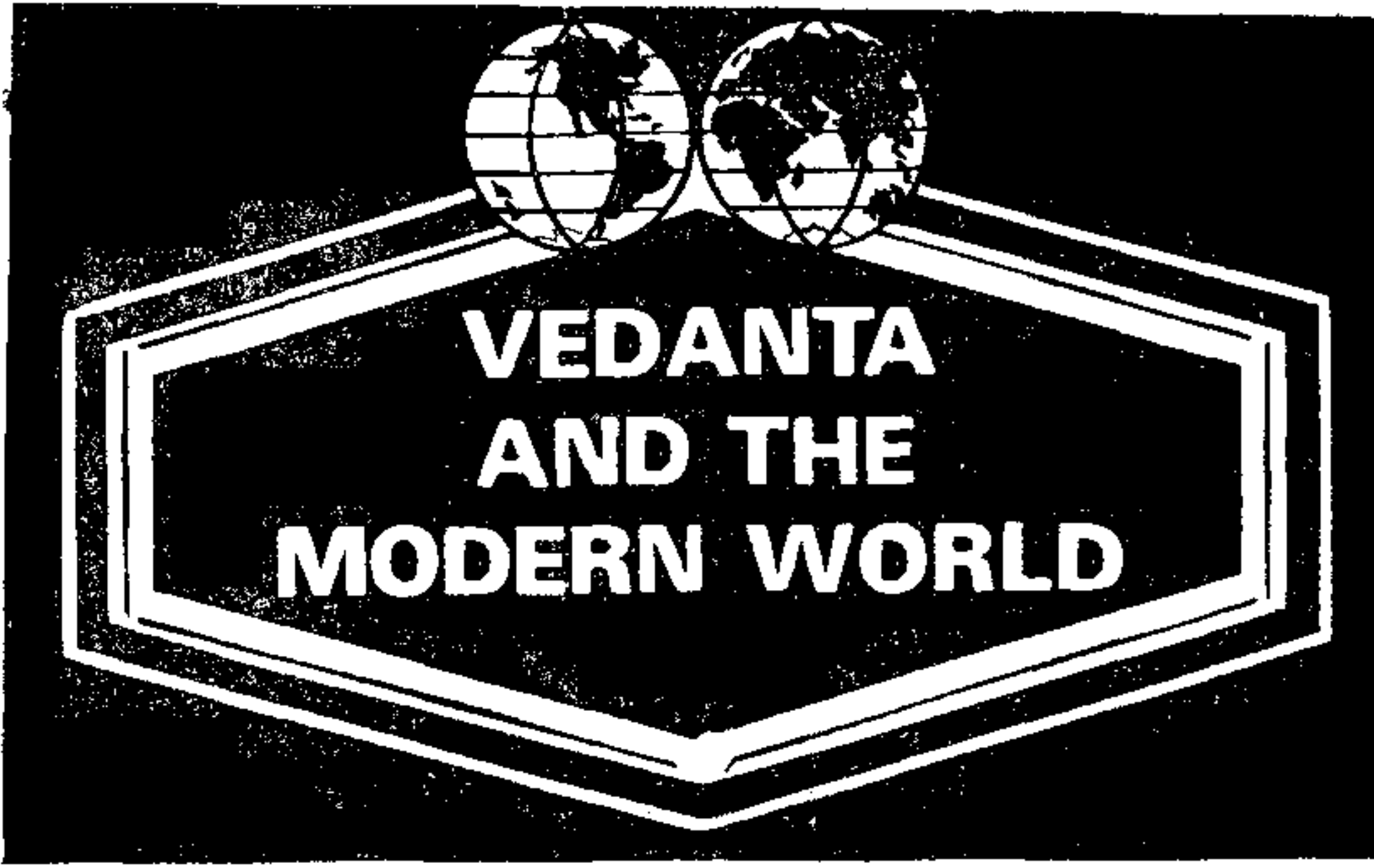
Unfortunately, however, our human language—even scientific language—is analytical, functioning through discrete categories. How can it grasp the cosmic whole? Even the tiny electron cannot be described in analytical human language. We must describe it as a particle and a wave at the same time—a blatant contradiction of logic. Physicists therefore use only mathematical methods for predicting its behaviour—even then it is not its actual but its probable behaviour. It is no wonder then, that science has not been able so far to describe the whole of nature, whether on the plane of matter, life or mind. Is there one unified field or more? Do the facts of evolution and parapsychology make it obligatory to assume two more fields as well? Gardner Murphy postulated a psychological field as early as 1959.¹⁶ At any rate, the concept of an isolated individual ego alienated from the rest of the cosmos appears to be distinctly foreign to the general trend of physics, evolutionary biology, psychology and parapsychology.

Thus egoism is not only socially and morally wrong, it is not only a curse because of the psychosomatic diseases it causes, it is not only a grave danger to world peace, but it is also wrong from the standpoint of truth. Scientists find no support for it. They affirm that egoism seems incompatible with the very design of nature itself. It is man-made. This had been predicted in the Upaniṣads which declared that the individual does not exist in reality. A venerable text of Jñāna-yoga—the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* (ca. sixth century A.D.)—is never tired of repeating that ‘this individuality and this multiplicity of the world never existed, nor do they exist at present; and they will never exist hereafter.’

Albert Einstein, perhaps the greatest scientist of the modern age, once said: ‘A human being is a part of the Whole, called by us the universe. A part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of *optical delusion of consciousness*. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires, and to affections for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion; to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty... Nobody is able to achieve this completely; but the striving for this achievement is in itself a part of this liberation and a foundation for inner security.’¹⁷

16. Gardner Murphy, ‘Field Theory’, *Indian Journal of Psychology*, September 1959.

17. Quoted in A. F. Cantor, *How to Turn on the Power of Your Mind with Alpha Theta Unitrol* (New York: Hippocrates Press, 1974), p. 87.



IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE—VIII

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

PESSIMISM AND ITS CAUSES (continued)*

Pessimism and historical factors

It might be profitable to turn attention to certain historical factors at this point. In the Vedānta literature the Upaniṣadic anti-hedonism appears in the form of pessimism. This is counteracted and corrected by the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Purāṇas and the Dharma-Śāstras, in which the claims of the world are not neglected but reconciled with the claims of the spirit. Hence optimism and pessimism are well balanced. In the Vedāntic Prasthāna karma clearly rules the world. But man's ultimate destiny is immortality (*amṛtasya putrah*), which testifies to his dignity. Emphasis is on man's power to attain the highest, and the way is that of moral effort, truth and yoga, which are essential for *mokṣa*.

It was only at the end of the Gupta period, when the dynasty was breaking up under foreign invasions that signs of growing pessimism began to appear. Internal stresses and strains led to cultural decline, conservatism and exclusiveness in orthodox circles; loss of political and religious freedom gave rise to defeatism, decline of faith and weakness. In spite of religious and religio-social reform movements there was

a serious decline in philosophical thinking. This situation prevailed from the tenth century till modern times and gave rise to views on God, man and the world different from that of the Vedāntic scriptures. Thus God appeared as the determiner of man's fate, having the power to do, undo or not to do.¹ The conception of man's evil nature² was connected with the idea of his weakness and utter dependence on God's grace. Humility, devotion and surrender became the means to attain God. Karma was no longer the moral law governing all,³ but appeared as fate or the will of God or destiny.⁴

* In the previous instalment, 'pessimism and intellectualism' and 'pessimism and the doctrines of *karma* and *punarjanma*' were discussed.

1. कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथा कर्तुं समर्थः ।

2. पापोऽहं पापकर्ताहं पापी ।

3. See *Rāmcarit-Mānas*:

करमप्रधान बिश्व करि राखा ।

जो जस करइ सो तस फलु चाखा ॥

Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, 218.4

4. See *Ibid.* :

होइहि सोइ जो राम रचि राखा ।

को करि तर्क बढावै साखा ॥

Bāla Kāṇḍa, 51.7

Some historians interpret the Bhakti movement as the only possible reaction to a situation of defeat and moral and social weakness in which political subjugation found its counterpart in subjugation to an omnipotent divine Ruler, the determiner of man's fate, to whom no other approach save that of abject devotion and resignation was possible.⁵ Sometimes escapism is dictated by the necessity of socio-logical survival, being the only alternative to the destruction of a people or a culture.

But the interpretation of the Medieval Vedāntic Bhakti movement purely in terms of political and social escape from Muslim subjection may be questioned. For that is 'to miss the social implication of a nationwide mass upsurge, a movement of inner integration which, true to the genius of Indian civilization, abolished barriers of caste, creed, ritual, form and etiquette. It represented a characteristic way of combating the religious and social challenge of Islam.'⁶ The subjectivism, world negation, lack of originality and scepticism of post-Aristotelian philosophy in Greece is explained in terms of political, social, religious and artistic decline;⁷ but it is noteworthy that the period of decline in India produced a philosophy not confined to a few, but operating on a mass scale, neither sceptical nor unoriginal, since Bhakti was a sublimation of philosophical energies in a new direction, necessitated by the limitations of *karma-* and pure *jñāna-mārgas*. It is also noteworthy that though theistic Vedānta constituted the popular faith, throughout this period of political and social depression

the conception of Advaita continued to influence the philosophical thinking as well as the devotional mysticism of the medieval saints. Historical and political crises have produced a dual reaction in the Indian mind; for example, the reaction to attacks on the spiritual and cultural values in the medieval period was not merely pessimistic world-negation but also positivistic and realistic in the form of the rise of Sikh and Maratha nationalism and militancy. Similarly, an initial pessimism and depression under the advent of Western power was succeeded by the awakening of national pride and the reassertion of ancient philosophical values. 'On the one hand, the Vedāntic absolute has not always been combined with the doctrine of illusion and misery [pessimism]; and on the other hand, a period of depression [pessimistic situation] does not lead to loss of faith in the absolute: this is the evidence of history.'⁸

VEDANTIC OPTIMISM

In this background, it is possible to understand the nature of Vedāntic optimism. Pessimism is the foil of its doctrine of salvation. Without a lessening of the feeling of evil there is a hope of overcoming it; this is not shallow optimism which ignores the power of evil with resulting frivolity and hardness of heart, nor a despondent pessimism which despairs of the victory of good and paralyses the power to struggle and make effort, with consequent indifference of heart.⁹ It overcomes pessimism with the idea of the Kingdom of God, not as a distant ideal but as a present reality in the hearts

5. Cf. B. G. Tilak, *Gītā Rahasya*, p. 704: The prowess of the country began to decline during the Muslim period and onesided emphasis on the emotionalism of Bhakti, which was inactivist and world-negating, developed.

6. R. K. Mukherjee, *A History of Indian Civilization*, vol. 1, p. 51.

7. W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*, pp. 339-43.

8. B. C. Gokhale, *Indian Thought Through the Ages*, p. 145.

9. These and the following remarks about Christian pessimism-optimism by Otto Pfeinderr in *Philosophy and Development of Religion*, pp. 312 ff and 321, apply to Vedānta in toto.

of men. Without denying the opposition of the real to the ideal, this is understood as only one side of the truth which culminates in unity. That pessimism which declares the world and life as the worst possible without any hope or chance of relief is out of place in Vedānta, because the world-scheme is thought of as one in which remedies for suffering and evil are also available, both at the empirical and the philosophical levels. The world is a place where perfect happiness is not only a theoretical probability but a practical possibility. From this point of view Vedānta is highly practical and hopeful. By pointing to a way out of evil and illusion into union with truth, it saves man from ultimate despair.¹⁰ The charge of pessimism comes as a surprise to the Vedāntin who sees God everywhere, who sees his own identity with God, who derives supreme bliss and peace from the knowledge that no more wants remain to be satisfied and who is freed from all sense of deficiency, pain, regret, and fear.

Keeping in mind the distinction made previously of higher and lower pessimism, we find that, according to the definition of William James, Vedānta provides a religious and philosophical worldview which is complete and whole, not one-eyed and superficial. Its basic realism and robustness is seen in the steady facing of the facts of life and its determination to overcome suffering by self-effort.¹¹ One might aptly quote

Bosanquet: 'I believe in optimism, but I add that no optimism is worth its salt that does not go all the way with pessimism and arrive at a point beyond it.'¹² Or it might be remarked that to Vedānta it is no more pessimistic to cognize that whatever is other than self is sadness, than it is optimistic to recognize that when there is no other there is literally nothing to be feared. 'Let those, however, who wish to find sorrow in the Upaniṣads find sorrow, and those who wish to find bliss, find bliss.'¹³

At this point another objection is raised from the psychological and empirical point of view.¹⁴ It is said that the value of life is not to be determined on the ground of its supplying or not supplying conditions for the attainment of absolute truth; for the search after the Absolute may not be a permanent factor of intellectual life: man may be satisfied with exact knowledge of phenomena. On the other hand, the prospect of possessing the ultimate secret of the universe does not of itself lead one to accept existence as a happy condition. The question of pessimism ('the world is bad') or optimism ('the world is good') must be solved within the limits of experience, and the attempt to override experience by some metaphysical conception of the nature of reality is to be rejected.

Firstly, it may be pointed out to the objector that it is dogmatic to insist that empirical experience alone should be taken into account in order to determine whether a worldview is, in the last analysis, optimistic or pessimistic. Since some men do experience that which is more than the physical and mental and all men have vague

effort; however, that effort is not so much directed towards the 'illusory goods of life' as towards the real good or the spirit.

¹². *Social and International Ideals*, p. 43.

¹³. B. D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, p. 13.

¹⁴. James Sully, *Pessimism*, pp. 153-56.

¹⁰. Cf. Sydney Cave, *Redemption*, p. 64; Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. 2, p. 310.

¹¹. Cf. James Sully, *Pessimism*, pp. 398, 400: The scientific and speculative pessimism of Schopenhauer is faulty. Though Schopenhauer preaches quiescence, his pessimism does not paralyse effort. Pessimists do not abstain from seeking all illusory goods of life, which proves men to be wiser than their creeds.

It need hardly be pointed out that no such inconsistency marks the philosophical pessimism of Vedānta. Its pessimism does not paralyse

intimations of the infinite in their nature and experience, the ancient search for the Absolute cannot be dismissed as mere primitive unenlightenment or superstition. It must be conceded, of course, that the majority of men in the present and future may be satisfied with phenomenal knowledge alone, but that was true also of the past. This, however, did not prevent the search for the noumenon on the part of some rare natures, who became thereby the spiritual guides of mankind. It is also true that the formulation of some metaphysical notion of the Absolute and the ultimate nature of good and evil only on theoretical lines (as in Western absolutism), divorced from attempts to realize it in practice, leaves the question of suffering and evil in the actual world unresolved. But the Vedāntic Brahman is no product of abstract ratiocination alone; rather is it the eternal reality living in the heart of the Vedāntin, inspiring him to ever higher moral and spiritual effort.¹⁵ The influence of such a metaphysical reality on the empirical life of man cannot be denied and must be taken into account in resolving the question of optimism and pessimism. It has also been noted that it is not on empirical grounds (where a man may legitimately pursue pleasure and avoid suffering) but on transcendental ground that Vedānta becomes pessimistic, that is, rejects the ultimate value of *kāma* or pleasure, etc., and bases its life on the supreme value of moral discipline, etc.¹⁶

It would not be irrelevant to point out that the conviction about the ultimacy or non-ultimacy of the empirical world and what constitutes its good or evil nature is a matter of temperament, after all. It is not

¹⁵. Cf. S. N. Dasgupta, *Indian Mysticism*, p. 66: The doctrine of transcendental self arose only after the actual practice of liberation of the true self from bondage.

¹⁶. Cf. James Sully, *Pessimism*, p. 168.

inconceivable that there may be men, regardless of race or clime, who are not satisfied only with the empirical world and who therefore set up a different ideal, in the light of which they try to live even in this world.¹⁷ However difficult it may be for modern man to understand the Vedāntic sages, who were men of few wants and disinclined towards the world, it must be granted that their pessimism was no ordinary or shallow judgement and that their dissatisfaction with the world arose because of their urgent desire for the highest good, so great that no compromise with other desires was tolerable to them.¹⁸

Lastly, it must be noted that Vedānta does not treat the matter of optimism and pessimism by contrasting the happiness of *mokṣa* with the suffering of *saṃsāra*, but by opposing the perfection of *mokṣa* to the imperfection of *saṃsāra*. The Vedāntic term '*sat*' means both reality and perfection. The real is also the supremely valuable.¹⁹ The imperfection of the phenomenal is the present condition and knowledge of man,

¹⁷. Cf. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. 2, pp. lx-lxi: Indian thought does not really go much further in pessimism than Christianity, but its pessimism is intellectual rather than emotional; the fundamental contrast is rather between India and the New Testament on the one hand and on the other the rooted conviction of the European race that this world is all important. This conviction finds expression not only in the avowed pursuit of pleasure and ambition, but in such sayings as that the best religion is the one which does most good and such ideals as self-realization or full development of one's nature and powers. The great majority of Europeans instinctively disbelieve in asceticism and the contemplative life; they demand a religion which theoretically justifies the strenuous life. All this is a matter of temperament. The other temperament which rejects this world as unsatisfactory and sets up another ideal is understood and honoured there [India] more than elsewhere.

¹⁸. S. N. Dasgupta, *Indian Mysticism*, p. 66.

¹⁹. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 50.

while the perfection of the noumenal or Absolute is the ideal impelling the Vedāntin to effort. The objector must grant the propriety of the Vedāntic attempt to judge the world in the light of its standard of perfection, and if its conclusion is not favourable to the world, such 'pessimism' is not only perfectly justified, but is the 'basis of all optimism.'

WORLD AND LIFE DENIAL AND ITS CAUSES

As a metaphysical doctrine Vedānta is based on the acceptance of traditional values and the ideals of individual and social life implied therein. It carries itself forward from the point up to which those ideals bring man, though not stopping to speculate separately and for long on the first three ends of life (*dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma*, the fourth being *mokṣa*). The systematic and comprehensive character of life with the four interests succeeding each other at the proper time and place, is a negation of the charge of the exclusive or other-worldly direction of life in Vedānta. The acceptance of the four ends of human life as perfectly legitimate is an indication of affirmation of life, its instincts and motives of action. It is true that the distinction of the pleasant and the good, *preya* and *śreya*, leads Vedānta to subordinate the *trivarga* (the first three ends) to *paramārtha* (*mokṣa*) on the understanding that man's nature is ultimately spiritual and cannot find full satisfaction in merely worldly experiences, such as correct social behaviour, economic security, political

success or artistic creation; all such experiences still leave man wanting to know how to acquire inner peace. But it is important to note that the Vedāntic conception of the superiority of *mokṣa* over *artha*, *dharma* and *kāma* did not detract from the importance in practical life of ethics, law, society, politics, science, arts and crafts.

Vedānta makes a distinction between *Ātmavidyā* and all other knowledges. The latter or phenomenal sciences (*vikāra-jñāna*) such as mathematics, logic and ethics, are to be distinguished from the science of the thing-in-itself (*tattva-jñāna*). They are not condemned but only held inadequate as means for attaining the ultimate goal of life. At the same time, Vedānta would admit *Ātma-* or *Brahma-vidyā* to be equally inadequate as a substitute for the other sciences.

Tranquillity of mind and body is indispensable for the attainment of the Vedāntic goal; the fact that *sannyāsa* is the means to achieve such tranquillity is read by the critic as the rejection of life and the world. But this co-existed with the genius for system and order in the Vedāntic intellect. Therefore, the ignoring of the phenomenal in the higher reaches of both Advaita and Vaiṣṇava Vedānta must be understood, not as due to its intrinsic unimportance, but as due to its being outside the sphere of investigation. Vedānta declares itself to be a *Mokṣa-Śāstra* and not a *Dharma-* or *Ārtha-Śāstra*; therefore its attention is necessarily given to the ultimate goal.

(to be continued)

ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Through her humility and unpretentious affection Teresa succeeded in allaying the worst of the fears of the Incarnation nuns—that the new prioress might enforce her austere Reform on them. This accomplished, Teresa set herself to feeding the convent. For hunger was at the root of many of the evils there. Then she began to pay off their debts and straighten their accounts. Once they were free from the shadow of starvation, their restlessness was subdued, and Teresa began to tighten the discipline. But with what tact! Eighty of the nuns were poor; they had come to the convent without an inheritance, and held a position of inferiority to the nuns from well-to-do families. To them Teresa gave a small monetary allowance each week; this was enough to give them back a sense of self-respect and independence. Soon those who had been most rebellious had become the most pleased with Teresa, and discipline was restored naturally. Could there be any greater proof of her balanced wisdom?

In the summer of 1572 Teresa took one more giant step towards reforming the Incarnation: she called Fray John of the Cross to be their spiritual director. This saint was unparalleled for his psychological insight and ability to guide others. Patiently but relentlessly he formed these frivolous nuns into spiritual aspirants.

His influence on Teresa was no less important. Recognizing this, she used to refer to him as 'the Father of my soul'. Their temperaments were in many respects quite opposite to each other; their spiritual lives also followed different patterns; neverthe-

less, their influence on each other was profound, and their devotion to each other great.

To attain perfect union with the invisible, unthinkable God, one must not be attached to the joys of the senses, nor even to the joys of ecstasy, of visions, of any spiritual experiences. Thus freed of all attachment to the relative, one plunges into the Godhead. Fray John felt that Teresa was too attached to the joys of her spiritual experiences, so he determined to cut ruthlessly this bond of spiritual enjoyment. In all humility Teresa tried to cooperate, but what could she do? She never asked for ecstasies or visions; and even if she tried to resist them, God overpowered her and gave them anyway.

But finally, one day the last thin thread binding her was cut. Christ appeared to her in a vision in the very depths of her being:

He gave me his right hand and said to me: 'Look at this nail: it is the sign that from today you are my bride. Until now you had not merited that; in future you will be jealous for my honour not only because I am your Creator and your King, but as my bride. My honour is yours; your honour is mine.'

After Christ had thus explained what was happening, her being was swallowed up in the Being of God:

... it is like rain falling from the heavens into a river or a spring; there is nothing but water there and it is impossible to divide or separate the water belonging to the river from that which fell from the heavens. Or it is as if a tiny

streamlet enters the sea, from which it will find no way of separating itself, or as if in a room there were two large windows through which the light streamed in: it enters in different places but it all becomes one.

Such was Teresa's spiritual fruition. So powerful was its effect 'that I remained out of my senses. . . . I spent that day in a state of inebriation.' Henceforth she was eternally united in spiritual wedlock with the Sun who illumines the world. No more was there to be any asking, for it had been given her; no more seeking, for she had found; no more knocking, for the door had been opened and she had entered. She was united to a Bridegroom from whom she could never be separated.

Previously she had been overwhelmed with such love for God that she had eagerly sought death in order to be with Him forever; now she said that it mattered not in the least whether she died this instant or in a thousand years. Life was transcended, death was conquered, and she lived in the realm in which life and death melt into each other and have no relevance, the realm from which the world and spirit are viewed together and without contradiction. Ecstasies became very rare and her tears of devotion were dried, for unity with God had become her natural state.

There she stands above us like the glorious newly risen sun, drawing the mind and heart to gaze in silent adoration. . . . And yet, here she moves among us, a simple woman, unaffected, practical, with both feet set firmly on this earth of ours. A twinkle plays in her eye—a twinkle betraying a keen sense of humour as well as down-to-earth business sense . . . or is it the clear, unobstructed light of the Spirit within, which is seen in the eyes of the illumined? Her natural beauty has become ethereal through her never-ending illnesses and years of austerity . . . or is it that through her intense purity she has become a heavenly

being even while walking the earth? In her, humanity and divinity have become so interwoven that such distinctions lose their significance. Down to earth, practical, unaffected, never pretending to be anything but herself; but what a grand self she is! Outwardly she is almost masculine in her strength of mind and determination; inwardly she is possessed of the heart of a mother which accepts all, which attracts all.

One man who knew her said that she was the 'world's magnet', irresistibly attracting all who came close to her.

'When the soul has reached this state of loving union,' says Fray John of the Cross, 'it is not fitting that she should busy herself with external actions even for God's service, for this may fetter her in this life of love in Him'; for Fray John, to love was to contemplate. But for Teresa, to love was to serve; after her union with the Heavenly Sun she asked, 'And what can I do for my Bridegroom?'

* * *

Though officially prioress of the Incarnation until October 1574, by August 1573 Teresa had restored sufficient discipline at the Incarnation that she could take leave in order to continue her role as Mother Foundress.

In the spring of 1574 she was in Segovia, seeing to the transfer of her nuns from the village of Pastrana where in 1569 she had founded a convent under the most inauspicious auspices of the Princess of Eboli. This terror of a woman was as imperious as she was beautiful, and it had been with great misgivings that Teresa had consented to found a convent with her help. In 1573 the Prince had died, and the Princess left her palace and ten children to enter, or rather impose herself on, 'her' convent in Pastrana. When the prioress learned of her arrival in the middle of the night she exclaimed, 'The Princess in the convent! This house is lost!'

The Princess not only brought her maid-servants, who entered the novitiate in order to continue her service, but she considered the other nuns and the prioress as born for her service. She had her cell made to open onto the street: enclosure wasn't to her liking. Rules were ruled out, bells didn't exist; all that existed was her own sweet will. Finally one day the prioress had to tell her politely but firmly, 'It is too great an honour for this poor house to host Your Grace; the royal court alone is worthy of such honour.' The Princess caught the hint only too well. In order to amuse herself after returning to the court, she began to persecute the Pastrana nuns: among various other means adopted, she stopped their revenue, which meant starvation in that remote village.

So in the spring of 1574 Teresa had the nuns secreted by night to the new foundation at Segovia. But the Princess of Eboli's revengeful nature was all the more inflamed. She had procured a copy of the manuscript of Teresa's autobiography which had been written at the command of the latter's spiritual directors. Because of its highly personal and intimate nature, it had been closely guarded from public notice. This the Princess denounced to the dreaded Inquisition. Then at the height of its power, this historical perversion was 'purifying' Catholicism of all heretics, false mystics and other 'dangerous elements', it being the sole judge of who fell into these categories, and the sole arbiter of their fate: public confession, imprisonment, 'the stake' ...

This potentially disastrous situation Teresa faced with perfect calmness and resignation. Wasn't she in possession of God Himself? And 'God knows with what sincerity I have written what is true.' On her way from Segovia to Avila, she visited the cave in which St. Dominic had dwelt. There, after remaining long in prayer, she

had the vision of St. Dominic, who promised to help her in every way with her work. Now there could be no question of fear, for the Inquisition was led by Dominicans. As it happened, the Grand Inquisitor liked the book so much that he said he would keep it for reading until he got tired of it. He returned it only after several years with the words:

I am very glad to make your acquaintance for I have been greatly wanting to do so: look upon me as your chaplain, I will help you as much as ever is necessary... I have read [your book] all through and I maintain that its teaching is very safe, very true and very profitable ... I beg you to pray to God for me always.

Though out of sequence it may be mentioned here that in 1579 the Princess of Eboli was arrested and imprisoned for complicity in an assassination. More than once Teresa urged Gracian (of whom, more in a moment) to visit and cheer this woman who had tried her utmost to work her ruin.

In 1575 Teresa founded a convent at Beas, and it was here in the same year that she first met Fray Jeronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios, or simply Gracian as he was known. The thirty-year-old Discalced Carmelite friar already held an important post in the Order when Teresa met him. One cannot improve on the 'personality-sketch given by Marcelle Auclair:

Very learned, gifted with persuasive eloquence, with childlike gaiety and austere as a desert father, he 'charmed' by his perfect manners, gentle and kindly ways, while his even temper made relations with him easy and pleasant... He had always had a most tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and christened a statue of Mary which he frequently visited as a young man in one of the Madrid churches, *mi enamorada*, my sweetheart. It was this gift of pious gallantry that predestined him to be Teresa of Jesus' 'dear son'... He was tender-hearted and had great delicacy and, although possessed of all the qualities which make for success in the

world, was so little made for the world that nothing ever cured him of his ingenuousness....

The sixty-year-old Teresa seemed like a young woman again after this meeting. In him she found sympathy and understanding; in him, one of similar tastes and ideas. Having lived for so many years under such constraint, with no genuine understanding and sympathy from any quarter, no words could now express her joy at having found the one whom she called 'my Paul'. And her expressions of love for him were so strong that only one of her absolute purity could have used them without being misunderstood: 'You amused me so much when you wrote *Your dear son!* And I immediately said to myself that you were perfectly right!'

Teresa had been in need of someone to lead the Reform for the Discalced friars, which she as a woman couldn't directly do. But why was she so charmed by Gracian? Wasn't Fray John of the Cross a much greater saint than he? Indeed. But Gracian understood and appreciated her spiritual experiences, whereas Fray John was made of such different stuff that he couldn't—he thought them a form of spiritual gluttony. And Gracian was perfect for her work, whereas Fray John couldn't reconcile his contemplative spirit with the labour needed for carrying out the Reform. Furthermore, Teresa could control Gracian but not the independent Fray John who was a saint in his own right. And finally, Gracian made her laugh, she felt relaxed in his company; whereas she said of Fray John: 'There's no way of talking of God with Fray John of the Cross because he immediately falls into ecstasy and you with him.'

One day she saw in a vision Gracian glorified in heaven, and she heard a voice saying, 'This man is worthy to be among you.' Her love for Gracian, which thus had heavenly sanction, was in reality an imper-

sonal love: 'It's a curious thing, I'm no more concerned about loving him so much than if he were not a person at all.' In fact, he wasn't a person to her, but a God-given instrument with which to accomplish the divine work to which her life was totally dedicated.

In May 1575 Teresa proceeded to Seville to found a convent. Here in August she met after many years her brothers Lorenzo and Pedro, who had just returned from Spanish America. One day when her brothers came to see her she lifted her veil, as the nuns were allowed to do in the case of very close relatives. When they had last seen her she was a young and beautiful woman torn between the call of God and the attraction of the world. Now as they looked on her radiant face it seemed that time had only enhanced and transfigured her beauty, so that it drew one no longer to itself but to its Source. Lorenzo's eight-year-old daughter Teresita was amazed. Her father's piety was a bit frightening in its humourlessness, but in her Aunt Teresa, the reformer of an already austere monastic Order, Teresita saw a gaiety, an open and warm-hearted love which attracted one to God. The little girl refused to leave, and could only be taken home by promising her that in a few days she could return to Aunt Teresa. Thus, Teresita, returned shortly to stay, dressed in a tiny habit, adding an extra touch of innocence and cheer to the convent. While Lorenzo became his sister's disciple.

The foundation in Seville turned out to be difficult from the very beginning. The Archbishop was an obstacle and the townspeople were frivolous and untrustworthy. Problems had to be faced by Teresa at every turn—once she was even denounced to the Inquisition there—and it wasn't until May 1576, a year after her arrival, that the inaugural ceremony of the new house took place. But by this time, what an impression

Teresa had made on the local people! The streets were all decorated by them and a huge procession wended its way to the convent, led by the Archbishop himself. Reaching the convent, Teresa knelt before the Archbishop, asking his blessings, which he gave. As she rose to her feet the dignified Archbishop of Seville knelt on his knees, in front of the huge crowd, and asked Teresa for *her* blessings. Indeed, Teresa was now known as *la santa Madre*, 'the holy Mother'. An Avilan gentleman—years before, the leader of the party of spiritual advisors who thought Teresa's spiritual experiences came from the devil—was nowadays heard to say, 'If they were to tell me that St. John the Baptist was at the gates of Avila and Mother Teresa in some other part of the town, I would throw away the opportunity of seeing St. John the Baptist to cast myself at Mother Teresa's feet and ask her blessings.'

But dark clouds had gathered on the horizon. Such success on the part of Teresa's Reform had created the inevitable jealousy among the Mitigated Carmelites, who were afraid that they would be disgraced by the sanctity of the Reform, or what was worse, that they would also be reformed. Towards the end of 1575, while Teresa had been struggling with the Sevillian foundation, the Mitigated Carmelite friars had launched a persecution against the Discalced which was to continue until the spring of 1579 when the Discalced were finally separated from the jurisdiction of the Mitigated and given independent status.

This three-and-a-half-year period was terrible for the Discalced, and to make matters worse, Teresa was ordered to confine herself to a convent in Castile, which amounted almost to imprisonment. Immediately after the inauguration of the Sevillian Carmel in May of 1576 she left for Toledo, and until the end of the persecution she divided her time between the Carmel there

and St. Joseph's in Avila. Throughout these years of confinement she kept in touch with her children through correspondence—guiding, inspiring, admonishing. As always, her main defence was God: she asked her nuns to pray for strength and light, and to remain true to the ideal as the best way of counteracting unrighteousness.

She had to witness helplessly the kidnapping and imprisonment of Fray John of the Cross. She had to suffer the most horrible rumours spread deliberately by the Mitigated friars in order to spoil her saintly reputation. Much of her correspondence was spent in alternately bolstering the failing courage of Gracian and trying to moderate his excessive enthusiasm. At the beginning of the persecution when Gracian and Antonio de Jesus told her that they had seen a terrifying octopus-like monster outside their window which they took for an ill omen, she broke into laughter, to see her two commanders afraid of ghosts. Later when Gracian complained of his difficulties (his very life was actually in danger) she gently scolded him: 'If you are as sad as that when your life is not such a bad one, what would you have done had you been Fray John?'—referring to the imprisonment and torture the latter had endured silently.

Besides being a veteran of many past battles, Teresa now lived in constant union with God and could thus meet all difficulties unperturbed. She saw herself as it were divided: in the depths of her soul she enjoyed the constant bliss and peace of perfect union with God, while her mind and body were incessantly busy in their role as God's servant. Moreover, she was utterly detached; her amazing labour on behalf of the Reform had been only in the service of God: there was no trace of self-interest in it. Though the fruits of her superhuman labours of the past few years were about to be destroyed by the Mitigated, she never lost her balance, never stooped to weakness.

About her confinement to Toledo and Avila she wrote: 'Not only did I experience no sense of trouble, but a joy so unusual that obviously it didn't come from myself alone ...' One man who knew her well said that difficulties were to her 'like the spark which

falls into the sea only to be extinguished, like the wave which beats the rock only to be broken on it, like the blows which strike the diamond without dulling or injuring it.'

(to be continued)

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE CONDENSED GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA: M'S OWN ENGLISH VERSION. Published by: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 11 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras 600 004. 1979 (subsidized edition). Pp. 322. Rs. 5/-.

No one can deny the unique part played by the great book *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* in spreading the message of the Great Master throughout the world. And no one can help paying a high tribute to the unassuming and faithful recorder of these conversations. When we go through this book a deep feeling of gratitude to 'M' wells up in our heart and leaves its indelible impression upon the mind. The numerous editions and translations of the book bear witness to its profundity and popularity. The present compact edition, *The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, is a great contribution to the dissemination of the universal message of Sri Ramakrishna.

This book has got its own uniqueness. It is not a mere translation of the original work; the author, M, has taken the freedom of presenting some of the ideas of the Master in his own way. It was first published in 1907 with the title, *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna or The Ideal Man for India and for the World*, by the Brahmavadin Press, Madras. Its second edition, revised by the author himself, was published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, in 1911. Subsequently, several editions were published by the Madras Math, and it was in circulation till 1942 when the full English translation of the Gospel by Swami Nikhilananda came out. Now the authorities of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, have done a laudable service by bringing it out again under a new title, at a subsidized price, enabling the average man to possess this precious gem.

Though the title of the book is 'The Condensed Gospel', ideas are presented more elaborately in it than in the original. What the author has done is to select a few chapters from his original Bengali work for translation and elaborate the ideas in them while translating. For example, on page 209 the six steps leading to realization of

God, which are only implicit in the original, are discussed at length, giving Vedantic terms for them in the footnote. Some of the parables are presented with their implications in greater detail than in the original, as for example, the parable of the Homa bird on page 47.

In some places we find M's own interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings rather than the actual translation of the Master's words. In this regard Section II is very significant. Here we find a lengthy discussion on some of the fundamental conceptions of Vedanta, such as God the Absolute, the Personal and the Impersonal, Maya, the state of Vijnana, relation between the individual soul and Brahman, etc. These ideas are presented in a speculative manner. In fact, here Sri Ramakrishna appears as a philosopher! The truth is, Sri Ramakrishna never tried to philosophize. But he is made to do that, as for instance on page 81. Because of this, the original simplicity of his words is sometimes lost. But we have to appreciate the author's greatness as a thinker. The Master's remark about him that 'he is like the river Phalgu with an apparently dried-up bed, but with an active, invisible current underneath', is proved in this book. 'The distinction between Brahman ... and Sakti ... is a distinction without a difference.' 'The undifferentiated alone realizes the undifferentiated. This is the true meaning of the expression "God is unknown and unknowable".' Passages like these can be cited as illustrative of his deep insight. However, some passages seem to be controversial, as for example on pp. 81-82.

Here and there he gives expression to his profound love for his Master through poetic imagery which has got its own uniqueness in this book. Speaking about the Master on page 92, he exclaims: 'Verily a lightning sent down to set ablaze into life the dead bones of a dry work-a-day world! Embodied love like the dew of heaven falling on the thirsty heart of man! A voice crying unto sunken, self-weary man, *Thou must be born again and love!* A healer from another clime, of this strange disease of

modern man ! A man among men eager to solve for them the enigma of this universe !'

Some of the examples which Sri Ramakrishna gives to illustrate certain points, have been slightly modified in this book ; and some examples also have been added which are not in the original. One such beautiful example can be found on page 208: 'There is that unique composite light which may be called the luni-solar light—a light made up both of the light of the moon and of the light of the sun. To this composite light may be compared the unique wisdom of incarnations like Chaitanya Deva, who are marked alike by wisdom and love, strictly so called.'

Small interpretative captions have been added here and there, as in the original, which are helpful for clear understanding of the ideas discussed.

Sri Surath Chandra Chakravarti, who brought out in 1975 a new arrangement of the first (1907) edition of this book, reorganizing the contents according to different topics, aptly remarks in his Introduction to the book, 'In Sri M's rendering of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, we find the rare touch of introspection flavoured with a rich analytical approach.' He further claims that *something new*, which is not revealed in any other literature connected with Sri Ramakrishna, can be found in this book, 'if carefully examined in its own light.' It is left to the reader to see for himself whether this claim can be justified or not.

The present edition of the book is beautifully got up. Spiritually sensitive people in general and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna in particular can hardly afford to miss having their own copy of it.

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA
Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore

MAYA DIVINE AND HUMAN: BY TEUN GOUDRIAAN. Publishers: Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1978. Pp. xiv+516. Rs. 100/-.

Māyā Divine and Human is a remarkable book which owes its origin to the desire of the author to reflect upon the Sanskrit fragment edited as No. 450 and called 'Mahamaya' in the collection of Balinese hymns entitled *Stuti and Stava*. This fragment of twenty-one *slokas* interspersed by prose *mantras* describes the supernormal effects of a meditation upon Viṣṇu's Māyā. The word 'Māyā' is usually associated with Śamkara's Advaita. The book under review is not a treatise on this system of philosophy. It is rather a

detailed study of Māyā as a mysterious phenomenon and power.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the definition of Māyā as a neutral power which can be utilized by gods as well as countergoods called Asuras. Chapters II and III deal with Māyā in relation to Viṣṇu and Indra. In the second chapter the author fallaciously condemns Lord Kṛṣṇa as tricky for misleading Arjuna by wrong advice, and looks down upon him for employing unethical methods to achieve material ends. The author overlooks the truth that ethical laws are man-made and have contradictory interpretations in different cultures. What may be virtue in one place may be looked upon as vice in another. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been worshipped as a Divine Incarnation by the sages and saints of India for ages. To judge his actions by ever-changing human standards is unreasonable. The author's interpretation of Māyā as magical power is also defective.

The second chapter, 'Worship as Sādhanā' is a faithful and authentic exposition in detail of all steps employed in *sādhanā*. The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the technicality of particular colours, peculiar to the worship of special divinities, and is very informative and illuminating. The sixth chapter is entitled 'The Six Acts'. The 'Mahamaya' fragment contains six Sanskrit terms which denote standard acts of magic commonly known as the 'Six Acts'. In the stanzas 1 to 17 occur five of these terms. They are *vasīkaraṇa* (subjugation), *stambhana* (immobilization), *ucchātana* (eradication), and *prāyascitta* (pacification). The closing stanzas, however, contain along with these five Acts the sixth term or Act called *māraṇam* (liquidation).

The author, Teun Goudriaan, regards the Six Acts as a comparatively neglected part of Tantric achievement. These Six Acts are common human motives and peoples of several cultures have treatises on how to effectuate them for good or evil in human life. The author has utilised various sources in this connection. Most important among them are the Buddhist and Jaina treatises, and Hindu Purāṇas and Tantras. The learned author has explained each Karma or Act in detail, has drawn relevant references supported by appropriate illustrations from popular literature of the East and occasionally of the West. As a matter of fact, all six chapters are full of harmonious references and examples from several sources. The book *Māyā Human and Divine* is a classic of its kind containing a comprehensive treatment of the subject. The profound

scholarship and immense labour of the author are exemplary.

But this great work suffers from one important defect. The learned author has mistakenly fallen in line with the view of modern orientalists that the Vedic religion was primitive and Vedic Ṛṣis were nature worshippers. So Māyā was to Vedic seers a magic, and Vedic sacrifice was employed by them for magical purposes generally described as the Six Acts. Objections to this theory are manifold and some of them overwhelming. If we assume that the Vedic Ṛṣis were savages overpowered by a terror of the darkness which they peopled with goblins, ignorant of the natural law of the succession of night and day which is yet beautifully hymned in many of the Suktas, and that they believed that it was only because of their prayers and sacrifices that the sun rose in the heavens and the Dawn emerged from the embrace of her sister Night, how then do we explain the fact that they speak of the un-deviating rule of the action of the gods, and of the Dawn always following the path of the eternal Law of Truth? And what are we to make of the constant assertion of the discovery of the light by the Fathers? 'Our Fathers found out the hidden light, and by the truth of these thoughts they brought to birth the Dawn' (*Rg-Veda* 7.78.4). If we found such a verse in any collection of poems in any literature, we would at once give it a psychological or spiritual sense; there is no just reason for a different treatment of the Veda.

We know that the *Rg-Veda* is a scripture of sacred *mantras* and its composers were called Ṛṣis. Ṛṣi Dīrghatamas in 1.164.39 speaks of the Ṛks as 'existing in a supreme ether, imperishable and immutable in which all the gods are seated'. We have to remember how the sages of the Upaniṣads whose mysticism is never in doubt, frequently appealed to the *Rg-Veda* authority for the truths they themselves announced. The Vedic Sun-God, Sūrya, is invoked in the *Īsa Upaniṣad* as a God of revelatory knowledge whose action leads us to the highest truth. And the same function of Sūrya is found in the sacred *Gāyatrī mantra*—a verse from the *Rg-Veda* itself—which for thousands of years has been in the mouth of every brahmin during his daily meditation.

The life of the Vedic Aryans was every moment a ceaseless effort to live up to the ideal of sacrifice. For the initiates, it was an inner esoteric discipline to ascend to divine life. For the layman the Vedic sacrifice took the form of

rituals and rites by performing which they might acquire their needs of material existence.

As ages passed, the esoteric meaning went into oblivion and Vedic Samhitās came to be looked upon as Karma Kāṇḍa or books of ritual sacrifices. Māyā was once regarded as the self-aware and self-effectuating power of the Supreme Reality, but during later times it came to mean inscrutable, mysterious, we may say magical, power. Magic is, however, a false appearance of a true Reality and has no substantial existence. Surely the Vedic and Upaniṣadic seers, through direct intuition, regarded the Divine Māyā as an inherent, real and not phenomenal power of the Supreme, and as eternal and inseparable from Brahman.

One need not be sceptical about the efficacy of *mantras* and *yantras* referred to in the Purāṇas and Tantra literature as it is vouchsafed by the actual experience of devout worshippers even now. At the basis of the science of the *mantra-japa* is the ancient perception of sages all over the world that creation proceeds from Sound or from Brahman as Sound. When a *mantra* is uttered effectively it sets in motion vibrations that evoke the corresponding Deity into the atmosphere where it is uttered. That sound has form is a truth which is being confirmed, starting from the opposite side, by science today.

The book under review is well documented and is beautifully got up.

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SANSKRIT

BHAKTIRATNAVALI OR A NECKLACE OF DEVOTIONAL GEMS: AN ANTHOLOGY FROM BHAGAVATA BY VISHNU PURI, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION, INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY BY SWAMI TAPAŚYANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. 1979. Pp. 256. Ordinary: Rs. 11/-; deluxe Rs. 21/-.

The name of this remarkable anthology from the great *bhakti* scripture *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* has been appropriately rendered by the translator as 'A Necklace of Devotional Gems'. The original compilation was made by Viṣṇu Puri, said to be a sannyasin (probably of Advaitic persuasion) of Tirhut in Mithilā. He has been placed by scholars between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. Probably he was a contemporary of Śrī Caitanya at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In some verses prefixed to the anthology, he explains that it is intended to help those who are unable to study the whole of the *Bhāgavata* with its many stories. He compares himself to a diver who salvages precious gems of *bhakti* from the nectarine ocean of the great Purāṇa. At the conclusion, he modestly admits that he may be poor in intelligence and imperfectly equipped for this great task. Yet his work can be relished, even as the honey gathered by dull, uneducated and unethical bees is. Moreover, he is convinced that his work was prompted by the Lord Himself.

The anthology more than justifies these claims. Viṣṇu Puri seems to have read, reread and digested the *Bhāgavata* so well that the whole Purāṇa, both in its entirety and in detail, stood clearly before his mind. He could quote at will from any part of the vast work, bring together stanzas on the same theme from its different sections and see the golden thread of unity running through them all. Generally, stanzas are picked up in linear order, but occasionally this is violated. The principle of selection is not one of linear succession, but one of thematic succession so as to contribute to emotional enrichment. (In this connection, one recalls the unique mode of arrangement adopted by Palgrave in compiling his *Golden Treasury of English Lyrics*.) The anthologist has chosen 405 out of the about 18,000 stanzas of the original; and by way of prologue and epilogue, he has contributed seven composed by himself; Swam Tapasyananda has added eleven more *slokas* from the original. So this edition has in all 423 stanzas.

Viṣṇu Puri's work is divided into thirteen sections or, as he calls them, *viracanas* (strands). The first of these is devoted to general reflections on *bhakti*. It is followed by one on the value of *sādhusanga* or companionship of the good and devout. Then the principal theme is taken up: the division of *bhakti* into nine modes. Sections 4 to 12 deal with them, one in each section. Very fittingly, an account of *saraṇāgati* or seeking refuge with the Lord, concludes the work.

The choice made by the anthologist is discerning. Few important passages are left out. Almost everything said in the *Bhāgavata* about *bhakti* is found here. Since the theme of the *Bhāgavata* is *bhakti*, we have here the essential teachings of the Purāṇa, stripped of story and description and made easily available to the ordinary reader who may find it difficult to read through this fascinating but challenging Purāṇa.

The English translation, meant for the general reader, is free rather than literal. This makes for

easy reading and comprehension. Practically every stanza gets an explanatory note from the translator. Such notes do not bother about grammar or abstruse metaphysics, but bring out points of interest to the lay students of religion and philosophy. Every stanza has also a small prefatory note, setting out its purport and identifying very briefly the context and the speaker. The bulk of these notes appear to have been written by the anthologist. The quoted stanzas have been traced to their sources in the *Bhāgavata*, and under every one of them the *skandha*, chapter and verse number are indicated.

This edition of the anthology has been enriched by a valuable introduction running to eighty pages. It deals broadly with the philosophy of *bhakti* as developed in the *Bhāgavata*. There are fifteen sections. The first two are concerned with the origin and nature of the Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas. Then the place of the *Bhāgavata* among them is discussed. An attempt is made to settle the date of the *Bhāgavata* which gives a fair account of the many views held on this controversial subject. The two following sections (5 and 6) deal with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his historicity, his relation to the conception of Viṣṇu, his dominant position in the *Bhāgavata*, the way in which he is portrayed in the Purāṇas and the right approach to study the subject. In the seventh section the Bhagavān as He is described in the *Bhāgavata* is sketched, and the principles of interpreting symbolism in such a description are outlined. The theology of the Purāṇa is then taken up. Here some of the contentions of the followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are examined, such as that the Brahman is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa who is the Primal Reality. Incidentally, the suggestion of Dr. Siddheshwar Bhattacharya that the *Bhāgavata* owes its primary concepts to the *Tripadvibhuti Mahanarayana Upaniṣad* is outlined and commented on. The theory of *vyūhas* and *avatāras* is the next theme. Swami Tapasyananda then discusses the metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata*, and the concept of *Bhakti* and its various types. *Bhakti* as the fifth *puruṣārtha* (in addition to *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*) also claims attention after an interesting examination of the relations between the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa as related in the *Bhāgavata*. The devotional discipline in the *Bhāgavata* and its ninefold division are next dealt with. The Introduction concludes with an exposition of the glory of the Divine Name.

In a long discussion of this kind, so wide-ranging and touching so many difficult problems,

it is only natural that there should be many opinions and conclusions with which all will not agree. For example, the modified type of Advaita which posits Saguna Brahman to be a somewhat real manifestation or projection of or a parallel to Nirguna Brahman and which is claimed to be taught by the *Bhāgavata* may not win universal assent from Advaitins. It will involve some logical and metaphysical difficulties. The reasons advanced for Rāmānuja not quoting from the *Bhāgavata* seem far-fetched and unconvincing. He was not an exclusive worshipper of Kṛṣṇa like the followers of some Vaiṣṇava sects in North India. One of the images he worshipped in his house and Math was of Kṛṣṇa according to tradition. The *caramasloka* of the *Gītā* (18.66) is quoted in his *Gadya*. Nor was he opposed to the Vaikhānasas as alleged. Most Viṣṇu temples in South India have been left under their control by him. The simple reason for Rāmānuja's hesitation to quote from the *Bhāgavata* must have been the need to convince the Advaitins and Bhedābheda-vādins of his stand,

relying on their own authorities, for they have not quoted from the *Bhāgavata*.

The Introduction has been written in such a way as to serve as a prolegomena to the *Bhāgavata* itself. It is stimulating and thought-provoking, giving valuable suggestions and insights. Swami Tapasyananda's views on the philosophy of the *Bhāgavata*, its conception of Kṛṣṇa and its treatment of Kṛṣṇa's childhood and boyhood deserve to be widely known and seriously considered. He has done ample justice to the theme of *bhakti* as viewed from many standpoints.

An index of the *slokas* in the anthology and another of their places in the *Bhāgavata* serially arranged would have been helpful to readers wondering whether some of the favourite stanzas are included.

For a volume of this size with such a good get-up, the price is very reasonable, almost nominal, in these days when books have been placed beyond the reach of the booklover. All lovers of the *Bhāgavata* should get this volume.

PROF. M. R. SAMPATKUMARAN

NEWS AND REPORTS

VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

The Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, was founded in 1914 by Swami Virajananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and later the seventh President of the Ramakrishna Order. Started as a centre for meditation and spiritual practices in the cloistered and serene surroundings of the Kumaoun range of the Himalayas at an altitude of 5,000 feet, Vivekananda Ashrama is now a well-developed institution with a spiritual retreat for monks and lay-devotees, a 15-bed indoor/outdoor hospital, a veterinary clinic, an apiary, a huge water reservoir with a capacity of 6 lakhs litres of water, and a large orchard and flower garden of wide repute.

The Ashrama retreat provides accommodation for some 35 persons at a time. There are arrangements for regular evening *arati* and for *Ram-nam Sankirtan* on every Ekadashi day, besides regular annual celebrations like the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother, in which the local people and villagers join and partake of *prasad*.

The hospital and the veterinary department are the only source of help within a range of 54 miles between Tanakpur and Champawat. Therefore patients come from long distances, taking

even 2 or 3 days to make the journey. Besides free treatment, patients are supplied free medicines and injections. Indoor patients are also supplied free diet, tea, milk and kerosene oil. During the year the hospital treated 48 indoor cases and 11,586 outdoor patients (of which 5,598 were new and 5,988 were repeated cases). The veterinary department treated 220 animals, including cows, buffaloes, bulls, calves, goats and dogs.

The Ashrama water reservoir supplies drinking water to the local villagers during summer and drought periods, as well as to the hospital.

Immediate requirements: (1) Needless to say, the hospital being an important source of aid in this poverty-stricken and inaccessible region of the Himalayas, it is receiving an increasing pressure of patients every year. The immediate needs of the hospital are free medicines, injections, rugs, utensils, and proper bedding for the wintry climate. (2) The Ashrama has got a small library which requires up-to-date books on socio-cultural and spiritual subjects. (3) The Ashrama itself has flourished almost entirely on donations from the public for the past sixty-years of its existence. The beneficent public is requested to continue its kind support of the Ashrama and hospital by sending generous contributions in cash and kind to: The President, Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal, P.O. Sukhidhang, Dist. Pithoragarh, U.P. 262 523.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

India's Space Shot

The blast-off of the SLV-3 rocket from Sriharikota, launching a small Rohini satellite into space, is a significant event in the history of post-Independent India. Though advanced countries like the U.S.A. and Russia are far ahead in this field, India's successful space shot is a shining achievement for a developing country with limited resources. What is really important is not the quantity of matter sent into space but mastering a difficult and jealously guarded technology.

In a country where the best men had for centuries explored only the inner space of higher consciousness (*cidākāśa*), this sudden interest in outer space (*mahākāśa*) should not be interpreted as a departure from its ancient spiritual traditions under the influence of Western materialism. For in India religion has from time immemorial worked in harmony with philosophy and science. Indeed, one of the chief characteristics of ancient Indian thought was its openness to nature. An understanding of time, space, matter and energy in their true vastness had become a part of man's outlook on life. It was this openness to nature and cosmic perspective that India lost after the tenth century A.D. The present interest in science and technology is therefore only the restoration of a national characteristic and is to be welcomed.

But doubts have already been raised in India and abroad about the earthly uses of space research and the place assigned to it in the list of priorities. One possible justification could have been the spin-off benefits in the form of defence applications like long-range missiles. But the Government of India has ruled out the military option as it did in the case of nuclear research. The original objectives of space research like nationwide TV hook-up for education, remote sensing for meteorology and oceanography, etc. may not seem to justify the heavy financial outlay that it involves. In other words, the space programme is a luxury that this poor nation can hardly afford.

This, however, is a wrong view of things. In a rapidly changing world with an uncertain future, the acquisition of any technological capability is a great asset. India missed the Industrial Revolution and cannot afford to miss the new nuclear and space revolution. The agricultural and industrial deficiencies of the country are so huge that diversion of capital invested on space programmes into these fields will not produce any significant change. The idea that in order to test-fire a rocket India must wait until all its untold millions are raised to affluence is unreasonable. Money spent on scientific research is money saved from going down political drain-pipes.

No less than food and clothing, India needs to raise the intellectual level of the people, rouse them from age-old lethargy by making them face the challenge of the modern world, provide a channel for the creative will of her young scientists, and enhance the morale and self-confidence of the nation. Any investment which helps in the attainment of these goals cannot be a waste.
