उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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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"

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि
तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः ।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति
तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति ।।

1. Speech is divided into four parts. Sages endowed with intuition know them. Three parts, hidden in the cave, do not move. Men speak only the fourth division of speech.[1]

Rg-Veda 1.164.45

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो
दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।
एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्य-
ग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ।।

2. They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni and the celestial Bird with beautiful wings. Reality is one : sages call It by various names—Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan, etc.[2]

Ṛg-Veda 1.164.46

यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवा-
स्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन् ।
ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त
यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ।।

3. The gods performed sacrifice by their self-sacrifice. Thus were born the first *dharmas* (moral laws). Through this self-sacrifice the great ones attained heaven where the ancient gods called Sādhyas dwell.[3]

Ṛg-Veda 1.164.50

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* Three more well-known verses from the *Asya vāmasya* hymn attributed to the great poet-philosopher Dīrghatamas.

1. Sāyaṇa mentions six or seven interpretations of this verse. The most acceptable view is that the four parts refer to the four stages in the rise of thought in mind known as *parā, pasyantī, madhyamā, vaikharī*. Of these the first three stages occur in the depths of consciousness. Only the fourth comes out through the mouth as spoken word.

2. An oft-quoted verse which represents the earliest attempt to find nnity in diversity. The celestial bird may refer to one of the 'two beautiful birds united in friendship' (cf. *Ṛg-Veda* 1.164.20) and may thus mean the Supreme Self.

3. This verse forms the concluding stanza of *Puruṣa Sūkta*. For gods self-sacrifice is the only sacrifice. It is the highest virtue. According to Sāyaṇa, Sādhyas are a class of gods known as Karma-Devas.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The problem of concentration may be understood in two ways: by studying the structure and functions of the mind and by studying its energy dynamics. The first one was attempted in some of the previous editorials. The second one is the theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

Humanism is interest in man and concern for the welfare of mankind. It is of two types: secular and religious. Swami Vivekananda was one of the first to attempt a synthesis of these two types into a 'science of total human development'. In the article SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS HUMANISM Swami Ranganathanandaji, President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, presents a magnificent panorama of Vivekananda's stupendous vision of mankind. The article which is a mature product of great erudition, deep insight into the modern human predicament, and vast personal experience, is based on a lecture delivered by the author before a distinguished audience at the Moscow State University in 1977.

In the second instalment of NOTES ON A CHINESE MONASTERY William Page, an American scholar now residing in Luxembourg, continues his interesting account of the day-to-day life of Buddhist monks and nuns in a Taiwanese monastery.

In the ninth instalment of IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE Dr. Vinita Wanchoo examines different aspects of world denial, a favourite charge against Vedanta for its critics.

Among the fundamental theological premises which separate Christianity from other world religions the most important is its doctrine of original sin. How far this compares with the Vedantic concept of original ignorance is the theme of the article SIN AND IGNORANCE by Srimati Sabujkoli Sen, a research fellow in the Department of Philosophy, Visvabharati.

Swami Atmarupananda describes the last years of ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN and thus concludes his brilliant biographical sketch of one of the greatest mystics and outstanding religious personalities of the world.

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION—V

(EDITORIAL)

Prāṇa and saṁskāra

Knowledge originates in two ways. One is direct perception in which the senses receive energy from the external world. The other is memory which is the result of the sprouting of *saṁskāras* or latent impressions of past experience lying buried in the mind. Just as a tape-record when played back reproduces the original sounds, so also latent impressions in the mind when activated recreate the original experience.

Most of our thoughts are memories. Meditation deals with memory alone. It is a technique of controlling and fixing memory.

Every form of work needs the expenditure of energy. Memory is also a kind of work. It needs energy to activate the *saṁskāras*. What is the power that activates latent impressions? *Prāṇa* or psychic energy.

Where does this psychic energy come from? From the inexhaustible reserves of the *mahat* or cosmic mind. Just as physical energy comes from the physical universe around us, so also psychic energy comes from the vast mental universe. The way this inflow of *prāṇa* is regulated and manipulated within the mind determines the mental condition of the person.

In studying mental life two factors are to be taken into account: *saṁskāras* and the *prāṇa* which activates them. Even when the *saṁskāras* are good, if the movement of *prāṇa* is defective, the mind becomes either restless or dull and thus unfit for meditation. But if the *saṁskāras* are bad, control of *prāṇa* is of very little use. In meditative life both *saṁskāras* and *prāṇa* are important. The nature of *saṁskāras* and how they change into *vṛttis*, and the related mental transformations were discussed earlier. Now we take up the role of *prāṇa* in psycho-dynamics.

Channels of psychic energy

Prāṇa has two aspects: the cosmic and the individual. Here we are concerned only with the latter. In the individual there are three main pathways for the movement of *prāṇa* which are situated in the subtle body. These are the two narrow side-channels called *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* and the central larger one called the *suṣumnā*. In normal life only the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* remain active. Every time you think, a little *prāṇa* moves along these side channels rousing the *saṁskāras*. In meditation also only these two channels are involved.

In ordinary thinking only a small quantity of psychic energy is utilized. The rest of the *prāṇa* lies 'coiled' or dormant as a store of reserve energy called the *kuṇḍalinī*. The central main channel called the *suṣumnā* is meant to carry the *kuṇḍalinī*. But in the vast majority of people the *suṣumnā* remains closed or inactive, and hence the major portion of the psychic energy remains untapped. Along the *suṣumnā* are situated six special centres called *cakras* described as lotuses.

Prāṇa mediates between the mind and the body. It is through *prāṇa* that the mind exercises control over the body. A good deal of psychosomatic disorders are caused by the faulty movement of *prāṇa*. By regulating the flow of *prāṇa* through the exercises of Haṭha-yoga, the yogis keep their body healthy. Here our interest is only in the effects of *prāṇa* on the mind.

Normal mental life depends upon the activity of the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā*. When they work in harmony the mind remains alert, when they are overactive the mind becomes restless, when they slow down the mind becomes sluggish. Finally, when their activity totally stops the mind enters into deep sleep. Again during dreaming the channels become active.

Every time we think or imagine something, a little *prāṇa* flows along these channels and activates the *saṁskāras*. When both the channels are clear and working harmoniously, the mind remains calm and there is a steady flow of thoughts in it. This is the condition necessary for meditation. But owing to conflicts, strong desires and other internal and external causes, the two channels seldom work in harmony: one will be more active than the other. Irregular working of *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* results in irregular thinking and restlessness.

The working of these two side channels seems to be coupled to biorhythms. Scientists have found astonishing cases of periodicity —often called 'biological clocks'—in the physiological activities of plants and animals. In man blood pressure, body temperature, metabolism, sleep, etc. have been found to follow a cyclic pattern known as biorhythm. Most of these are daily cycles but some are monthly. These

rhythms affect the mind profoundly. In some people the peak of mental alertness and work efficiency is reached early in the morning and decreases as the day advances; others hit the peak at noon or night. Studying this phenomenon at a deeper level, yogis have found that it is related to the movement of *prāṇa* and the activity of the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā*. During the *sandhyā* (the junction of day and night) these two channels work in harmony and the mind then attains a natural calmness.

These channels can be controlled and harmonized through *prāṇāyāma*. The lung is one of the few organs which are under the control of both the voluntary and involuntary nervous systems. By controlling the breathing voluntarily, one gains control over the autonomous nervous system and, through that, the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā*. When the *prāṇa* is controlled, the sprouting of *saṁskāras* will be reduced and the mind become calm. The same effect can be obtained through intense devotion, self-inquiry or rhythmic repetition of a *mantra*. In fact rhythmic *japa* may be regarded as 'verbal *prāṇāyāma*' which is as effective as physical *prāṇāyāma*—though slower, but safer, than it. Says Swami Brahmananda: 'Practice *japa*, and your breathing will become finer and finer, and you will gain control of the vital energy in a natural way.'[1]

Prāṇa goes up through the *iḍā* and comes down through the *piṅgalā*, thus forming a closed circuit. The *iḍā* acts as the negative current and, in yogic terminology, is described as the female or lunar current. The *piṅgalā* acts as the positive current and is described as the male or solar current. Normal mental life—conscious and unconscious—is maintained by the energy supplied by these currents, a part of which is also used up in physiological activities. A major cause for the drain of *prāṇa* is sex. It is impossible to make the mind calm or practise intense meditation as long as sex is active. When *brahmacarya* is observed, more psychic energy gets stored at the base, more energy is made available for higher mental life and more energy flows into the brain. This extra energy, which is the transmuted sex energy, is called *ojas*. It imparts a new retentive and grasping power to the brain known as *medhā*. More important, it adds to the spiritual reserves of the aspirant and ultimately enables him to gain supersensuous perception.[2]

Granthis or knots

The *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā* go up spirally, alternating from left to right and from right to left, forming a loop around each *cakra*. They originate from the common centre of *mūlādhāra* at the base of the spine, but at the top their ends are free. However, there are three points called *granthis* or knots where they seem to anastamose or conjoin. These knots, which act as barriers to the free flow of *prāṇa*, represent three levels of psychophysical life. The first knot is below the navel and is called *brahma-granthi*. When the flow of energy is restricted to this region, instinctive drives like hunger, thirst and sense-pleasure dominate the mind. The second knot is below the heart and is called *viṣṇu-granthi*. This is the region of the emotional life of man. The third knot is below the eyebrows and is called *rudra-granthi*. This is the area of intellectual activity.

When lower desires and appetites become strong, *prāṇa* gets as it were short-circuited at the first knot, and very little energy

1. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1971), pp. 299-300.

2. For Swamiji's views on this see *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), vol. 6, pp. 130-31.

reaches the higher centres. When the mind becomes restless it usually activates the lower centres first. Even when a person does not consciously indulge in sensual pleasures, a restless mind is enough to rouse the lower centres, especially the sex-centre. If one wants to be freed from the attack of lower thoughts, the first step is to attain a deep calmness of mind. A calm mind is the best safeguard against evil thoughts.

The second step is to activate the higher centres. Deep studies and thinking stimulate the higher centres. Intense prayer and meditation lift up more psychic energy through the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā* to higher centres, and thus make the lower centres less active.

The three *granthis* restrict man's life to instinctive, emotional and intellectual levels. Spiritual life lies beyond these three levels. Therefore an important task before the spiritual aspirant is to loosen these knots and make the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā* function smoothly. When instinctive drives, emotional conflicts and intellectual obsessions are overcome, the two side channels become clear for the free flow of *prāṇa*. Only then can the aspirant detect and deal with he *suṣumnā*.

The cakras

If the two side channels are concerned with normal mental life, the central main channel called the *suṣumnā* is concerned with supersensuous and superconscious experiences.

Along the *suṣumnā* lie six *cakras* or centres usually represented as lotuses with varying number of petals. Each *cakra* is a centre of higher (supersensuous) consciousness and acts as a door to a new world of experience. Each petal of the lotus stands for a particular psychic power available at each centre. The whole phenomenal existence consists of worlds within worlds and, in order to attain each world, we must attain a particular level of consciousness. The *cakras* are these levels of consciousness. These doors open only when the full force of *kuṇḍalinī* strikes them. Without the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* the *cakras* and the supersensuous world that they open to remain unknown.

The six cakras, arranged in the ascending order from the base, are *mūlādhāra* (4 petals), *svādhiṣṭhāna* (6 petals), *maṇipura* (10 petals), *anāhata* (12 petals), *viśuddha* (16 petals) and *ājñā* (2 petals). According to Sri Ramakrishna, these *cakras* correspond to the seven *bhumis* or worlds mentioned in the Vedas: *bhūḥ, bhuvaḥ, svaḥ, mahaḥ, janaḥ, tapaḥ, satyam.* They may also be taken to represent the five *kośas* or sheaths mentioned in the Upaniṣads.

As already mentioned, before the awakening of the *suṣumnā* the side channels must be purified and made to work in harmony. Along with this the loss of energy through restlessness and passions must be checked, and more energy must be lifted to higher centres through prayer, worship, meditation and other forms of spiritual practice. Energy lifted to higher centres gets transmuted into spiritual energy called *ojas* and gets stored at the base. This is true sublimation. When this process is carried on for some time, maybe for several years, the awakening of the *suṣumnā* takes place.

In books on Yoga and Tantra are described special exercises which are said to be capable of awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* quickly. But if the mind is not purified and the psychic system not made ready, this premature awakening may lead to mental and physical disorders. Nor are such exercises necessary. There are other safer traditional forms of spiritual practice which are equally effective. Sri Ramakrishna assures us that intense prayer alone is enough for

the awakening. 'One's spiritual consciousness is not awakened by the mere reading of books. One should also pray to God. The *kuṇḍalinī* is roused if the aspirant feels restless for god.'[3] According to Swami Brahmananda *japa,* meditation and constant remembrance of God are the best means for spiritual awakening. In reply to a question he says: 'According to some there are special exercises by which the *kuṇḍalinī* can be awakened, but I believe it can best be awakened by the practice of *japa* and meditation. The practice of *japa* is specially suited to this present age ; and there is no spiritual practice easier than this, but meditation must accompany the repetition of the *mantra.*'[4]

When the *suṣumnā* opens it becomes the main channel for the flow of energy. In advanced stages of awakening energy is completely withdrawn from the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā* which become inactive. When this happens, the person loses physical consciousness and all vital functions slow down. In deep sleep also the *iḍā* and the *piṅgalā* remain inactive but then the *suṣumnā* remains dormant. This is the basic difference between deep sleep and higher *samādhi* from the standpoint of Yoga.

Kuṇḍalinī and intuition

It is important to keep in mind the relationship between *kuṇḍalinī* and consciousness. Pure consciousness belongs to the Ātman, the witnessing self. According to Yoga philosophy Puruṣa as pure consciousness is totally different from Prakṛti. *Prāṇa* is the power animating prakṛti, and *kuṇḍalini* is only the individual aspect of this *praṇā* lying dormant in ordinary people. The Tantras, however, look upon Prakṛti only as a Śakti or power emanating from Cit or consciousness. *Kuṇḍalinī,* according to this view, is a higher, refined aspect of Cit-śakti known as intuition.

There are three main views about intuition in Indian philosophy. The Sāṁkhya-Yoga view is that it is the removal of *rajas* and *tamas* from the *buddhi* which is the determining faculty. Similar to this is the Advaita view which regards intuition as the removal of veils covering the Ātman. A second view, held by the Tantras, is that intuition is the awakening and growth of a dormant power known as *kuṇḍalinī.* There is a third view which may be regarded as a reconciliation of the first two views. According to this view, held by Viśiṣṭādvaita, intuition is the gradual expansion of consciousness which follows the progressive removal of *karma saṁskāras* from the mind.

The concept of *kuṇḍalinī* and the three channels is only one of the several ways of understanding mental life. There are other ways of picturing mental life. Patañjali in his Yoga aphorisms has discussed almost everything about the mind and its functions without mentioning the *kuṇḍalinī* or the three channels. Nor do the major Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* contain clear references to them, though some of the minor Upaniṣads discuss them in detail. In the recorded experiences of innumerable saints in the East and the West also there is no indication of *kuṇḍalinī.*

This, however, does not invalidate the principle of *kuṇḍalinī* power. One may use electricity in heating, lighting or in running a machine without bothering about the generation and transmission of electricity which are the concern of only the electrical engineer. In the same way, it is possible to use and control the mind without caring to know its hidden energy distribution system. When *kuṇḍalinī* awakens, it does not go up like a rocket with a terrific

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3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), p. 814.

4. *The Eternal Companion,* p. 275.

explosion. Except in the case of a few who follow the path of Yoga, its action is not detected and can only be inferred from the experience it produces. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'Thus the rousing of the *kuṇḍalinī* is the one and only way of attaining divine wisdom, superconscious perception, realization of the Spirit. The rousing may come in various ways, through love for God, through the mercy of perfected sages, or through the power of the analytic will of the philosopher. Wherever there was any manifestation of what is ordinarily called supernatural power or wisdom, there a little current of *kuṇḍalinī* must have found its way into the *suṣumnā*.'[5] What is really important is the attainment of higher spiritual intuition. It does not matter whether one understands this as the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* or not.

Recent researches in para-psychology, Kirlian phenomenon, acupuncture, bio-energy, etc. have lent greater credence to the theory of *prāṇa* and the three channels. One major difficulty about *kuṇḍalinī* is its location. According to medical science, the brain is the controlling centre of all physiological activities, whereas the base of the spinal column where *kuṇḍalinī* is supposed to reside could be surgically removed without impairing the normal physiology of the body. But it is interesting to know that the region corresponding to the base of the spine is the seat of vital activities in the embryo. In the gastrula stage of the embryo this region is known as the 'dorsal lip' or 'primitive knot'. The nerve cord (as well as the notochord) originates here and grows forward as a tube, the anterior end of which bulges into the brain. The brain takes over charge only later on.

Prāṇa and concentration

The Vedic sages saw every object in the universe informed and animated by the life-principle *prāṇa* which they visualized as *agni* or fire. All life-activities were believed to be done by *prāṇa*. For that reason, before taking food it was offered to *prāṇa* (*prāṇāhuti*). At least twice a day everyone practised *prāṇāyāma* or breath control. The body was looked upon as the first means of practising religion (*śarīram ādyam khalu dharma-sādhanam*). In other words, there was an integral psychophysical approach to spiritual life.

The integration of the forces of body and mind is one of the significant characteristics of Indian spirituality. Effort and struggle are no doubt unavoidable in spiritual life. But at least a part of the aspirant's difficulties comes from the wrong understanding of his energy system. This creates a wrong attitude towards his body. If the body is treated only as the seat of passions, a burden on the soul, a stumbling block on the path to God, and hence as something to be punished or fiercely dealt with, then it will only add to the troubles he already has. The body must be given its proper place in *sādhanā*.

Says Swami Vivekananda, 'How to transcend the senses without disturbing health is what we want to learn.'[6] This is precisely what Yoga teaches. Yoga treats the personality as one whole and tries to harmonize the functions of the body, mind and spirit. It is a unified discipline in which every value from bodily health to superconscious experience finds its respective place.

This integration of the forces of the body and mind is achieved by controlling *prāṇa*. This is based on the insight that though a living being consists of different layers—the physical body, unconscious mind, subconscious mind, conscious mind, etc.—there is one energy system, the *prāṇa*, run-

5. *Complete Works* (1977), vol. 1, p. 165.

6. *Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 129.

ning through all these. Hence *prāṇa* is also called the *sūtra* or thread. There is of course the Ātman behind all this; it provides the static base. *Prāṇa* provides the dynamic unity, though *prāṇa* itself originates from the Ātman and is connected to it like spokes to the hub in a wheel.[7] Says Swami Vivekananda, 'Mind is the great instrument for using *prāṇa*. Mind is material. Behind the mind is the Ātman which takes hold of *prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* is the driving power of the world and can be seen in every manifestation of life. The body is mortal and the mind is mortal, both being compounds, must die. Behind all is the Ātman which never dies. The Ātman is pure intelligence controlling and directing *prāṇa*.'[8]

Health is a state of the body and mind in which *prāṇa* flows freely and harmoniously through the systems. When this flow is disturbed disease results. Swami Vivekananda says, 'Sometimes in your own body the supply of *prāṇa* gravitates more or less to one part; the balance is disturbed, and when the balance of *prāṇa* is disturbed, what we call disease is produced.'[9] The so-called faith-healing, Swamiji points out, is actually effected by *prāṇa*. 'There is a mistake constantly made by faith-healers: they think that faith directly heals a man. But faith alone does not cover all the ground.... It is by the *prāṇa* that real curing comes. The pure man who has controlled *prāṇa* has the power of bringing it into a certain state of vibration, which can be conveyed to others arousing in them a similar vibration.'[10]

Even love, according to Swami Vivekananda, is a manifestation of *prāṇa*. He says, 'The last and highest manifestation of *prāṇa* is love. The moment you have succeeded in manufacturing love out of *prāṇa*, you are free. It is the hardest and the greatest thing to gain.'[11] In human love *prāṇa* is directed towards other people; in Bhakti *prāṇa* is directed towards God. Either way, love is a flow, a giving, a sharing, of the very essence of life. From a saint or a sage love in the form of *prāṇa* radiates in all directions and elevates the minds of all who come into touch with it. When you love you give, similarly when you are loved, you receive the *prāṇa* of others. Even if the other person lives hundreds of miles away, his love can sustain and enrich you. When the flow of love is broken, unhappiness results. That is how at least half the unhappiness in the world is caused. Through love man overcomes sorrow. Love is an important factor in establishing harmony not only between man and man but also within every man. And since meditation is impossible without inner harmony, spiritual aspirants should pay particular attention to the problem of love.

We thus see that *prāṇa* is a universal energy principle governing every kind of life activity. Part of this energy is utilized in physical work and another part in mental work. The rest is stored up as a reserve force known as the *kuṇḍalinī*. It is not necessary for the average spiritual aspirant to know the complex, and often contradictory, details about *kuṇḍalinī*. But he should have some understanding of *prāṇa*, for ignorance in this field could create many obstacles.

Meditation is not an exercise restricted to a small part of the mind. It involves not only the whole mind but also the whole body. When you concentrate your conscious mind, your unconscious mind and nervous system and all parts of the body feel its effect. That means concentration affects the whole energy system. Concen-

7. Cf. *Prasna Upaniṣad*, 3.3 and 6.6. Also cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.13.1.
8. *Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 128.
9. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 155.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
11. *Complete Works*. vol. 6, p. 129.

tration need not be on higher things; in fact it seldom is. When a person is watching a movie or listening to a song or when he is roused by anger or greed he is in a state of high degree of concentration.

There are two problems arising from lower types of concentration. One is that it dissipates psychic energy. Physical work and exercise normally involve only the use of energy got from food and are necessary for health. But worry, strong feelings and restlessness dissipate psychic energy. The second problem is that every time a person concentrates, he creates a new channel for the flow of *prāṇa* in him. As a result *prāṇa* tends to flow in that way, and thus a habit is created. The channels created by wrong concentration produced by hatred, selfishness and greed are not straight. Wrong concentration creates eddies and whirlpools in the mind and body which obstruct the free flow of *prāṇa*.

Meditation is higher concentration—concentration on a higher reality beyond body and mind. By its sheer power and magnitude it clears the eddies and whirlpools within. Moreover meditation takes one to the core of one's being, the very source of *prāṇa*, and thus restores the psychic-energy balance. In other words, it counteracts the bad effects of wrong concentration knowingly or unknowingly practised in day-to-day life.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS HUMANISM *

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

1. *Introductory*

I am very thankful to you for inviting me to the USSR and to address you this morning. I am on a brief five-day visit to Moscow after completing my five-day lecture tour of Teheran. Day after tomorrow I shall be flying to Amsterdam on my annual three-week lecture tour of Holland and Belgium and Australia, with the annual two-week tour of the USA in between, and a three-day tour of Singapore.

I spent nine days in the USSR in August 1961, during my four-month lecture tour of seventeen European countries, including Poland and Czechoslovakia, and visited on that occasion Moscow, Leningrad, and Count Leo Tolstoy's birthplace—Yasnaya Palyana. I have made some modest study of Marxist literature, including works by and on Lenin, and also of the unique political and social experiment of the USSR in the field of human development that is being worked out in this part of the world in the modern age in the light of the Marxist ideology.

When I was about fourteen years old, I read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and the works of Vivekananda by chance, which inspired me to dedicate my life to the love and service of God in man in India and everywhere; and, accordingly, I joined the Ramakrishna Order of monks, started by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in 1886, at the age of seventeen and a half, and have been working in its various

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* Based on the tape record of the lecture delivered by Swami Ranganathananda at a special meeting of the students, professors, and research scholars at the Moscow State University on 10 October 1977, during the Swami's five-day lecture tour of Moscow.

fields and in its various centres in India and abroad these fifty-one years.

My life and work in the Ramakrishna Order has taken me to all parts of India and to many parts of the world, to about fifty-one countries, including the USA where I spent a year and a half in 1968-69, again eight months in 1971-72, and again two months in 1976, addressing its universities, colleges, churches, and cultural institutions. These tours have covered also countries like Cuba, Yugoslavia, Japan, and many Central and South American states. Many of these tours have been sponsored by the countries concerned and the government of India. That is, briefly, my background.

So when I come here, I feel intellectually and culturally at home, as I feel when I visit the USA, France, Holland, Australia, Japan, or other countries, because I have a feeling of belonging to the whole world of man and not to any particular segment of it. This mankind awareness came to me through my study of Swami Vivekananda. I am, therefore, thankful to you for suggesting to me to speak to you on this fascinating theme of *Swmai Vivekananda : His Humanism.*

2. *Vivekananda: a universal phenomenon*

This is certainly not only a fascinating theme but also a very relevant theme; Vivekananda was an extraordinary personality and a modern personality. When we speak of him, we are not dealing with some ancient mythical god or legendary hero, but with one who lived in our own time and acted and reacted with the modern world with all its problems and prospects. He was not only intensely modern but had also assimilated the past historical human developments and was at home both in the Orient and in the Occident. He combined in himself high idealism with intense practicality. These traits of his personality, along with his rational and universal teachings make the study of Vivekananda very inspiring and rewarding for people in all parts of the world.

The Americans study Vivekananda because of his intimate association with their country for over four years, in the last decade of the last century, in an intense and dynamic human and thought situation, which has left its indelible mark upon the American mind and spirit. He worked also actively in England and visited Germany and some other European countries, including Greece. His writings began to be studied here in Russia within three years of his passing away in 1902. Among Russian thinkers, Tolstoy experienced Vivekananda's influence most, and that of his Master Sri Ramakrishna too, and has given expression to the same in various notings in his copy books and in the books about them in his library.

Vivekananda thus is a universal phenomenon and, when we study him, we are amazed to find his tremendous grasp of contemporary human problems and aspirations. He lived only a very brief life of thirty-nine years and seven months, from 1863 to 1902; but within that brief period, he lived an intense life, first inwardly and then outwardly, which has left an indelible mark on human history, Eastern as well as Western. None can remain unimpressed at the tremendous energy and dynamism manifested in his life, which affected the thinking of millions of people in India and in the Western world while he was alive, and continues to inspire millions of people everywhere since his passing away. He, along with the greatest Indian philosopher Śaṁkarācārya of the ninth century of the Christian era, who also lived only a brief life of thirty-two years, illustrated the *Mahābhārata* dictum (*Udyogaparvan*

131.13, Bhandarkar edition):

Muhūrtam jvalitam sreyo
na tu dhūmāyitum ciram—
It is better to *flame forth* for one instant than to *smoke away* for ages !

With his keen interest as a youth in physical culture, such as boxing, and with his vast intellectual and spiritual and aesthetic interests and attainments, there was a many-sidedness to his personality which elicited the wholehearted appreciation of his Master Sri Ramakrishna, who recommended this trait in him to his other disciples.

3. *Vivekananda's interest in total human development everywhere*

What was unique about him as a spiritual teacher of mankind, however, was his deep interest in man and his untiring work for total human development and fulfilment everywhere. And this interest and work, we should not fail to note, was not just religious in the narrow sense of that word—just helping men and women to secure the salvation of their souls, as all other spiritual teachers have done—but covered all aspects of human life, as much economic and social as moral and religious. In fact, this all-round human interest formed the central theme of Swami Vivekananda's life and work.

After his discipleship at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, followed by his wanderings through the length and breadth of his vast motherland as a wandering monk, as a *parivrājaka,* when he sat down to meditate on the rock which rises from the sea off Kanyākumārī at the southern extremity of India where the three oceans meet, and which is now known as the Vivekananda Rock bearing a magnificent memorial to him, the main subject of his meditation was not, as it was in the case of all past religious teachers, a god sitting above or in one's own heart, or any transcendental reality, but man below on earth, his problems and prospects, and how to restore him to his dignity and glory as man, as a 'child of immortal bliss'—*amṛtasya putraḥ*—as the Indian sages had realized and experienced the truth about man.

It is this that makes Vivekananda a vast and deep and challenging subject of human interest for study and research by modern man everywhere. I shall, however, restrict myself, during the brief fifty minutes available for my speech, with the remaining ten minutes for questions, to deal with the salient aspects of this theme of Vivekananda's humanism. I have seen keen interest in the theme of Vivekananda among the students and staff of the universities in India, USA, Japan, Central and South America, Australia, and Indonesia.

4. *'The splendid symphony of the Universal Soul'*

Among the great biographers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda was Monsieur Romain Rolland, a Nobel Prize winner for literature. In his famous books : *Life of Ramakrishna* and *Life of Vivekananda,* which are systematic, critical, and insightful studies, published during the crisis-ridden inter-war years, Rolland presented these two outstanding teachers to his Western readers as *the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul.* They exemplified man in his universal aspect, and not in the narrow racial, national, or sectarian aspects. That universal dimension expressed itself in a deep concern for man everywhere and in every field of his life ; it made them the exponents and exemplars of a humanism, as much deep as wide, as much intellectually stimulating as spiritually inspiring. And behind that exposition of humanism lie their deep penetration into the depth of the human spirit and their experience of the true great-

ness and glory of man as the ever-free, ever-awake, and ever-pure Ātman, the infinite Self behind his tiny and fleeting ego, revealing the infinite possibilities that lie hidden in every human being and that need to be unfolded and manifested in the course of man's life and work.

5. *Vivekananda's humanism derives from India's Adhyātma-vidyā*

It was this philosophy of man in depth, *Adhyātma-vidyā* as Vedānta calls it, this *science of human possibilities*, to use a fine phrase that biologist and humanist, the late Sir Julian Huxley, coined to express what he wanted modern Western physical science to develop into, that Vivekananda made the core of his humanism. It is a science of man that India investigated and developed over three thousand years ago in her immortal literature, the Upaniṣads. The creators of this unique science were great sages, among whom were men, women, and even children, intellectuals, kings and students, whose only passion was truth and human welfare ; their attitude, outlook, and temper bear a close kinship with the physical scientists of the modern age, except that our modern Western scientists explore the outer world of physical nature while these ancient Indian sages explored the mysterious world of the inner nature of man, but with the same thoroughness and critical spirit. They penetrated into the human personality to the very depths and revealed, behind his physical body, behind his nervous system, behind his psychic system, a spiritual focus of an infinite and immortal dimension, forming its *pure science*, and the technique of its manifestation in life and work, forming its *applied science*. Out of these discoveries they developed their great philosophy, the Vedānta. The line of investigation of these sages of the Upaniṣads can be briefly described thus :

Here is a new-born baby, so weak and tender physically that a little extra heat or cold can destory it. But we suspect many possibilities hidden within that baby and many dimensions of energies. Unlike the eyes of a doll-baby which show up only its blank surface and no depth, the eyes of any living baby reveals some depth dimensions to its personality. How shall we discover them and help the baby to manifest those possibilities and energies, and how to process them so as to humanize them ? This is the main problem before man, the problem of the education of the human baby, so as to help it to achieve maximum growth, development, and fulfilment.

All human development is based upon the discovery of some or more of these profound possibilities hidden within every human child and of the methods and techniques adopted to bring them out. Behind those eyes of the child lurk energies and talents that will come out later as an Olympic champion, a great scientist, a wise statesman, a creative artist, or a great saint. But none of these possibilities can be detected or felt by our sensory system, or by our mind dependent on that system. They exist in a dimension beyond man's sensory verification, just like the possibilities of a big tree lying beyond our sensory grasp in the depth of its tiny seed where they remain hidden, 'coiled up' as India's *kuṇḍalinī yoga* expresses it. But they manifest steadily to our sensory verification from the first appearance of the sprout, and thereafter, as it grows into a large tree.

Similarly, all the human possibilities, including the spiritual, lie hidden, lie asleep as it were, in the child. We want to help the child to bring out these enormous possibilities, says Vedānta. In the words of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* which Vivekananda loved most among Upaniṣads (3.12):

Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu
gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate ;

Dṛsyate tvagryayā buddhyā
sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darsibhih—
This [infinite] Atman is present in every being, but lies hidden and [therefore] is not manifest; but It can be realized by the subtle and penetrating reason of those who are trained to perceive subtler and subtler truths.

6. *Education as the science and technique of total human unfoldment*

In dealing with this profound truth about man, Vedānta, therefore, prefers to use the term *unfoldment*; and that, says Vedānta, is the true meaning of education, secular as well as spiritual—education in *aparā vidyā*, or ordinary knowledge, and education in *parā vidyā*, or extraordinary knowledge, in the terminology of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. Vedānta does not see any gulf or break between the two; it is a continuous unfoldment, unless one stops at a particular point and stagnates there. Secular education continued to our deeper dimensions is spiritual education, says Vedānta. That is how Vivekananda defines the roles of the physical sciences, politics, and economics, on the one side, and of art, ethics, and religion, on the other. He would even say that all human education is spiritual, since all such education is designed to bring out the spiritual possibilities within man: *they constitute the science and technique of total human development.*

Broadly speaking, these possibilities belong to three categories: First, there are the physical possibilities which find manifestation in the development of the muscles and the nervous system, and which produce physically strong and well-built men and women. The second, which is more subtle and more deep, constitutes the mental possibilities, which find expression in the development of the power of thought, reason, will, and feeling, producing an intelligent and sensitive human being who understands the world around, has a grip on it, and uses it for further human development. And the third, which is most subtle and deep, constitutes the divine possibilities in man centred in his infinite and immortal dimension, with its own unique and enormous energy resources; and this finds expression in the taming and creative use of the other energy resources, so that he does not use his strong body, or trained mind, or powerful will, to exploit others or to harm others, but to love them and serve them and help them to achieve life fulfilment.

That third attainment is the highest growth of man, crowning his physical and mental growths, not contradictory to them or opposed to them, as in some systems of philosophy and theology, but consummating them, so that man liberates himself from external dependence and achieves peace and integration within and radiates the same around him. Vedānta warns man, and Vivekananda emphasizes the same today, that if man grows only physically and mentally, but does not side by side grow also spiritually, he will actually use his strength to exploit others, to express himself in violence and war, to harm and destroy others, and to harm and destroy even himself. But when he grows spiritually also, and manifests his ever-present divine dimension, he becomes capable to express himself in love and compassion, becomes capable to radiate humanistic impulses towards not only other human beings but also animals. That is the type of spiritual energy manifestation that the world witnessed in a Buddha, in a Jesus, in a Sri Ramakrishna and a Vivekananda. They conquered hatred through love and gave peace to the peaceless and joy to the grief-stricken; and they gave these to people out of their abundance.

7. *Need for knowledge to mature into wisdom*

Today, the whole world is seeking for, is in need of, this kind of spiritual growth

which releases that type of divine energy resource to match with, and to digest, the energy resources released by modern physical science and technology. The latter has annihilated physical distances between man and man, but the problem of annihilating the mental and emotional distances between man and man remains to be solved. On the other hand, that mental distance is increasing, not diminishing, in spite of scientific knowledge and technical power. This is revealed in the ever-increasing violence, crime, and delinquency, even juvenile delinquency, in all parts of the world, and in the sex and drug explosions rocking modern society.

What is the reason for these highly disturbing social phenomena? Certainly these are not physical maladies. Modern man has better physical bodies and health than in past ages, thanks to his knowledge of the science of nutrition and his vastly improved techniques for increased food production. He is also immensely nourished mentally and intellectually compared to his predecessors, thanks to the explosive output of scientific knowledge; and yet, we find modern man getting increasingly alienated both from himself and form others. He is unhappy, tense, peaceless, given often to inflicting violence on others or suicide on himself.

Vivekananda spent four intense years in the West preaching Vedānta and helping to broaden and deepen its religion and interhuman relations. He saw the above tragic situation developing even in his time, towards the end of the last century; and he warned of its intensification in the decades ahead, and emphasized the need for modern civilization to change its direction from human sensuality to human spirituality. And he preached the philosophy of Vedantic humanism, with its vision of the infinite divine possibilities in man, and man's organic capacity to realize these in his life. This is wisdom, this is knowledge maturing into wisdom, that India developed in her ancient Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and which got retested and re-authenticated in succeeding ages by Buddha, Śaṁkarācārya, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and many other luminous sages, possessed of brilliant intellects and universal hearts. They never thought or taught in norrow terms of sects or creeds or races or nationalities. They saw man as man, saw his infinite divine possibilities, felt compassion for the tragedy of his creatureliness and unfulfilments. They thus became the bearers of a luminous philosophy of humanism, at once rational, universal, practical, and dynamic. And Vivekananda expounded that Vedantic humanism in India and in the West, in the context of modern thought and modern needs.

The late Bertrand Russell emphasized the need for knowledge to rise into, to mature into, wisdom and warned modern man (*Impact of Science on Society*, pp. 120-21): We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends. Given sufficient folly as to ends, every increase in the skill required to achieve them is to the bad. The human race has survived hitherto owing to ignorance and incompetence; but given knowledge and competence combined with folly, there can be no certainty of survival. Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil as much as for good. It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.

8. *Humanism in Western history*

The history of Western humanism makes an interesting study in the light of the above-discussed Vedantic humanism. Western humanism traces its ancestry to the

ancient Greeks and Romans. Greek humanism was limited to its own citizens and excluded the non-Greeks and the slaves from its blessings. Roman humanism was broader, but did not also extend to the slaves. Both were secular and non-religious. Then came Christianity, preaching its own humanism, based on its narrow theology, first to the peoples of the Roman Empire and, later, to peoples of Europe as a whole. But this Christian humanism also was exclusive ; it was limited to the believers in its own narrow creed and dogma ; it did not extend not only to non-Christians, but also to its own dissidents in creed and to all scientists and rationalists.

Western humanism in general, and Christian humanism in particular, received their most serious shock from the very violent Thirty-Years' War between the Protestants and Catholics in Germany. Man killed man in the name of a common god and religion, reducing the population of Germany, according to historians, from 25 to 5 million. This was a traumatic experience for all thinking Europeans who said to themselves and to each other : We believed in the Christian god and creed ; and yet, how could we fight such a devastating war with each other in the name of that one god sitting in his kingdom of heaven far way ? We shall not believe in that god hereafter ; we shall not need him either ; we shall become completely secular and put our faith *in man below* instead of *a god above*. As remarked by historian Arnold Toynbee (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 184) :

> In the eyes of Western Man in the later decades of the seventeenth century, to try to create an earthly Paradise looked like a more practicable objective than to try to bring a Kingdom of Heaven down to Earth. Recent Western experience had shown that the specifications for a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth were a subject of acrimonious and interminable dispute between rival schools of theologians. On the other hand, the differences of opinion between practical technicians or between experimental scientists would be likely to be cleard up, before long, by the findings of observation, and of reasoning about the results of observation, on which there would be no disagreement.

This shift of faith from god to man was helped by the European's discovery of Greek humanism, in the wake of its contact with the thought and culture and literature of classical Greece in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ; this modern Western humanism, strengthened by physical sciences and technology, held out melioristic hopes of full human development in peace and plenty all over the world. It steadily gained strength and prestige for three hundred years, up to 1914. Then came the devastating First World War, when Western man hated and killed brother Western man to an extent unprecedented in history. This was followed by the continuous tensions of the post-war years, to culminate in the more devastating Second World War, with its additional Nazi brutalities and gruesome murder of millions of Jews. These traumatic experiences shook to the very foundations Western man's faith even in man, just as the Thirty Years' War earlier had destroyed his faith in god. They shattered his faith even in humanism itself.

The Second World War has left Western man with no focus of faith and loyalty either to a god above or man below, breeding in him a cynical attitude with respect to all values—religious and other-worldly, or human and this-worldly, or ethical and moral ; and it has led him to opt for a plunge into a crude materialism and to bend his efficient technology for the satisfaction of his organic cravings during the short span of his physical existence. This has, in turn, resulted in generating in him inner tensions, privations, and psychic distortions to an alarming degree.

Into this Western human context came a new challenge, in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution and the hope of a new human civilization led by the USSR promising peace and plenty round the world. After impressive achievements in the field of mass human developments during its first four decades, this new experiment also is showing severe inner tensions within the individual man and woman in the USSR in the form of increase in crime, drunkenness, and other psychic distortions, and intense conflicts between one Marxist state and another. Marxist humanism goes far, but not far enough, to ensure human fulfilment. Vedānta helps Marxism to carry its study of man into the depth of the human spirit and to base its undoubtedly promising human experiment on the rock of the divine in man and not on the sands of his physical and organic system.

9. *Status of materialism as a philosophy of life*

Whether it is Euro-American materialism or Marxist materialism, it is just materialism; and all materialism is only an intellectual tool useful in the study of physical nature. Even there, it is successful only in the short run when that study is concerned only with the surface aspects of nature, but breaks down completely, and becomes a distorting tool, when it deals with man and the human situation. It is futile to derive humanism from materialism. Even an agnostic like Thomas Huxley, the collaborator of Darwin, had discovered these limitations of materialism as a philosophy of life and uttered this warning a century earlier (*Methods and Results*, pp. 164-65):

> If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former, and no harm can accrue so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols. . . .

But the man of science who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the x's and y's, with which he works his problems, for real entities, and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyse the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.

Modern materialism, whether Euro-American or Marxist, according to Vedantic analysis, is only a reaction against the rigid anti-rational and anti-scientific theologies, and their organization in a long-established militant church, of the West. But when we turn to Vedānta, and to the long Indian experience of the inter-relations between physical sciences and religion, we do not find these conflicts. The Upaniṣads commence their inquiry into reality with matter as the starting point, and not with an extracosmic god in the sky. *Annam brahmeti vyajānāt*—'[The student] understood *annam* (food or matter) as Brahman [the highest Reality, as the meaning of the words of his teacher]'—says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.2). Deeper inquiry takes the student successively to *prāṇaḥ*, energy, *manaḥ*, mind, *vijñānam*, reason, and then *ānandam*, bliss (beyond the dualities of thought). Reality is finally realized by the student, with the help of the gentle hints and suggestions of the teacher, as the one undifferentiated Pure Consciousness-Field, out of which come all *annam*, all *prāṇaḥ*, all *manaḥ*, all *vijñānam* and all *ānandam*; and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* reveals the further profound truth (6.9.4):

> *Aitad ātmyamidam sarvam, tat satyam, sa ātma, tat tvam asi, Śvetaketo*—
> This whole manifested universe has this [Reality] as its Self; that is the Truth; that is the Atman (the Self); and thou art That, O Śvetaketu.

This is the vision of the One behind the Many, the One that never changes, that never dies, behind the Many that change and die. *Tat tvam asi* is the profound truth about man, the truth of the infinite possibilities lying behind him, just as $e = mc^2$ is the truth that modern physics conveys about the infinite energy possibilities lying behind any lump of matter. Marxian humanism as well as Euro-American humanism, says Vivekananda's Vedānta today, needs to take into account this profound Upanisadic truth of *tat tvam asi,* and the humanism developed in its light.

(*to be continued*)

NOTES ON A CHINESE MONASTERY

WILLIAM PAGE

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

The monastery I spent most of my time at was a large one near the summit of Shih-t'ou Shan. It was called Yuan Kuang Ssu, 'First-Light Hermitage', because, being so close to the summit, it was the first to receive the light of the rising sun. It had another, older name: Shih Yen Tung, 'Lion-Peak Cave'. Like many of the monasteries on Shih-t'ou Shan, Yuan Kuang Ssu had originally been a cave.

The monastery was situated in a bowl-shaped ridge of the mountain, with a wooded hillock rising to the left and running around the back. The temple, with its upswept, yellow-tiled roof, faced onto a broad, paved courtyard offering a splendid view of the green-forested hills and valleys falling away to the south. To the left of the courtyard rose a two-story dormitory which constituted living quarters for the nuns and female guests, with one room on the ground floor used as a *chiang-t'ang,* or 'preaching hall'. To the right of the courtyard rose another two-story dormitory, reserved for male guests; on the ground floor was *k'e-t'ang,* or 'guest hall', for receiving visitors. Attached to the rear of this building were a kitchen, a dining room, and toilet and bathing facilities, all on the ground floor. The whole complex was thus shaped roughly like a square horseshoe, with the courtyard occupying the space between the two sides.

The monks lived in outbuildings set apart from the main complex, on the hillock that rose behind the monastery. The abbot and a few of the senior monks lived in a cottage off in the woods; the other monks occupied a two-story dormitory. Between these two buildings rose a small pagoda, surrounded by vegetable and flower gardens. Thick woods surrounded the monastery on all sides, interspersed with vegetable gardens and tea groves.

As in Hindu monasteries, the Chinese monastics rose at what, to the slothful and irreverent layman, seemed like an ungodly hour: three in the morning in summer, four in winter. After morning ablutions, a worship service was held in the temple. This consisted mainly of choral chanting, accompanied, at various times, by the rhythmic booming of a huge overhead drum, the bonging of a gong beside the altar, the tinkling of a hand-bell, and the bok-bok-bok of a wooden mallet upon a large,

hollow, wooden device before the altar known as a 'wood fish'. All of these percussion instruments provided a stately rhythm to the sonorous but rather nasal chanting, which rose and fell in a sing-song pattern, with occasional shifts in tempo.* The chanting was interspersed with bowing and prostrations, mainly by the abbot, who faced the altar while the majority of the worshippers stood in two groups, one on either side of the altar, facing each other. While chanting, the worshippers stood with palms pressed together before their chests in the traditional Hindu-Buddhist invocation of blessing.

After the morning worship, the monastics retired to their rooms, while the nuns prepared breakfast, served usually at 6.30. Then they went about their daily routine till 11.00, when there was usually another worship service, followed by lunch. A third worship service was held about 5.30 or 6.00 in the evening, before supper.

One of the most striking features of life on Shih-t'ou Shan was the role of the nuns. Some of the smaller monasteries seemed to be populated exclusively by nuns; even in the larger ones, the nuns far outnumbered the monks. At Yuan Kuang Ssu, there must have been at least twenty of them, some of them exceedingly old. By contrast, there were, at most, only six or seven monks. The nuns did most of the work in the monastery. They cleaned the dormitories, temple, and grounds; cooked the food and washed the dishes; made trips to the base of the mountain to purchase supplies (mostly rice, soap, and medicine), which they then hauled back to the summit in baskets fastened to coolie-poles; cultivated tea in the groves surrounding the monastery; farmed the vegetable gardens; did the laundry; and dried vegetables in the courtyard. Except for the oldest among them, some of whom were incapacitated by age, they worked like Trojans.

The nuns were mostly illiterate, I discovered: old ladies, for the most part, who had become nuns for a variety of reasons, but mainly because it was a custom among the Hakkas who inhabited this part of Taiwan. Almost all the nuns, and many of the monks, were Hakkas, a people originally from Kwangtung Province on the Mainland who had settled on Taiwan over a hundred years ago. They were regarded, by themselves and by others, as different from both the Taiwanese, who came originally from Fukien Province, and the Mainland Chinese, most of whom arrived with Chiang K'ai-shek in 1949. The Hakkas had a reputation, at least among the Taiwanese, as being clannish, quarrelsome, and difficult to get along with.

Whether this reputation had any validity or not, I cannot say; but I soon perceived the wisdom of the monks in segregating themselves physically from the nuns. It seemed as if the nuns were always quarreling. Maybe they weren't, but it certainly sounded like it. The din of their cackling and jabbering filled the courtyard with the sounds of strife. It seemed that they were incapable of communicating at decibels below the level of a scream. Not knowing their dialect, I could never tell what the commotion was all about; but whatever it was, it was at maximum volume. Often the monastery sounded like a very noisy henyard.

My wife, who is Taiwanese, understands the Hakka dialect somewhat, and many of the nuns also spoke Taiwanese. They accepted my wife as one of their own, and

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* Interestingly, I have heard the same type of of chanting at Kardang Gompa, a Tibetan monastery of the Kargyupta sect, near Keylong, in the Lahaul Valley of Himachal Pradesh. While the ritual and the words were different, the 'tune' and the rhythm of the chanting were exactly the same.

communicated to her all their grievances. It seems that much of the cacophony was indeed quarreling, and most often over trifles: Nun X had borrowed something of Nun Y's and hadn't returned it. Rather than adopt the simple expedient of asking for its return, Nun Y would complain bitterly, loudly, and at interminable length to Nuns A through W, trying to get them to gang up on Nun X. My wife heroically attempted to resolve their quarrels, occasionally even with some success. But soon she found that she had become, against her will, the judge and arbiter of all their disputes, continually besieged by complainants, and getting headaches instead of the peace of mind for which we had both come to Shih-t'ou Shan.

Eventually she approached the abbot on this issue. He was circumspect in his reply. 'Well, they are uneducated, they quarel all the time, it can't be helped.'

'But you should tell them that Shih-chia-mou-ni Fo [Śākyamuni Buddha] advocated Right Speech, which means no gossipping, no backbiting, no quarreling.'

'Yes, yes, I have told them many times, but you see, they are old. It is hard for them to change.'

And in fact it was hard to blame them. They were indeed old, for the most part; they worked like heroes doing all the hard labour of the monastery; mostly illiterate, they could not read the scriptures, and probably did not even understand the meaning of the rituals they recited thrice daily. They were also lonesome for outside companionship, as evidenced by the screams of joy that rent the air whenever my wife made her appearance on one of our visits. Gossipping and quarreling were the only release they had from the tedium of their lives.

By contrast, the monks were rarely seen. They spent most of their time isolated in their rooms in the outbuildings up behind the temple, studying scripture, chanting, and practising meditation. Since visitors were discouraged from penetrating their precincts, they were free from external distractions. They came down to the temple mainly for the worship services and for meals; occasionally one of them could be seen trudging down the hillock with his thermos bottle to get hot water for tea. Often they would come down in mid-afternoon to see if the mail and the newspaper had arrived. Since their lives were externally quite monotonous, the arrival of mail and the newspaper seemed to be the subject of eager anticipation; indeed, the most frequently heard question I heard at Yuan Kuang Ssu was 'Pao-chih yu mei-yu lai?' ('Has the newspaper come yet?')

Most of them were educated; thanks to the newspaper, many of them were quite well-versed on international affairs; a few even spoke a little English. Occasionally one or two of them would go off to visit other temples in other parts of Taiwan, or on preaching and fundraising tours. Later on, when part of the temple was renovated, I saw some of them supervising the nuns and the hired workmen, and sometimes pitching in on the work.

Nevertheless, American devotees of the cult of Women's Liberation who visited Yuan Kuang Ssu usually departed frothing at the mouth because of the inequities in the division of labour. 'These monks lead the lives of mandarin gentlemen,' one of them grumbled. 'The nuns are nothing but slaves.'

The presence of the nuns, in overwhelming numbers, was the most striking external difference between Chinese monasteries and the Indian monasteries I have visited, but there were several other differences as well.

Whereas Indians customarily bathe in the morning, the Chinese bathe at night. At

Yuan Kuang Ssu, monks, nuns, and guests alike bathed in shifts, late in the afternoon, before the evening worship. Water was heated in a giant cauldron in the bathing area behind the men's dormitory. One would take a bucket and fill it, half with hot water and half with cold, and repair to one of a series of ramshackle wooden stalls, each with a drain in the floor. These stalls were completely closed off, with no ventilation, so that in the summertime, when it was stiflingly humid, one would frequently emerge sweatier than when he went in. Being a pampered Westerner, and unaccustomed to the intricacies of bucket-bathing, I could never manage with just one bucket, but had to take two. When the nuns protested, in incomprehensible Hakkanese, at this profligacy on my part, I pleaded that I required two buckets to get myself clean; because, being a foreigner and a barbarian, I was uncommonly filthy. Eventually they came to accept this logic, and thanks to my pioneering efforts, I have no doubt that nowadays when foreigners visit Yuan Kuang Ssu, the nuns urge two buckets upon them.

The dress of Chinese monastics varied from that of their Indian counterparts. For some reason, they wore gray clothing. I have heard two explanations for this. One holds that, in the early days of Buddhism in China, only the emperor was allowed to were yellow, this being the imperial colour. Another is that the Chinese did not feel worthy to wear yellow, orange, or any variation thereof, as this was a colour associated with Buddha himself and, by implication, with fully-realized souls. Be the reason as it may, the Chinese wore gray.

Both monks and nuns wore the same kind of clothing. The working uniform consisted of a pair of baggy gray cotton pajama pants, bound at each calf with a cord, and a gray jacket with a Y-shaped collar. Usually this jacket had two pockets, one at each side of the waist; sometimes it was fastened by buttons, otherwise by knots, as with traditional Chinese jackets. For ceremonial occasions, they wore a long gray robe, and during the worship service they would wear over it a voluminous dark-brown ritual cloak, fastened at the left shoulder with an ivory clasp. On their feet they wore slippers made of stiff black, gray, or brown cloth, covering the toes and heels but open at the sides. In winter they would bundle up in gray or black sweaters under their usual clothes, and protect their shaven heads with knitted black caps. In accordance with the Buddhist precept against taking life, they avoided using animal products, such as leather, in their clothing.

Such were the garments worn by the monks and nuns of Shih-t'ou Shan. But I have seen other Chinese monks, probably of high rank, dressed in long yellow robes, with the ritual cloak of bright red, and sometimes with orange or yellow slippers. Generally this outfit, which is quite splendid, and smites the eye like a sunburst, is worn only on ritual occasions.

Both monks and nuns shaved their heads, usually once every two weeks. Often it was difficult to tell a monk from a nun, except for a tell-tale trace of stubble on the face of the former, and in the beginning it seemed odd to see bald-headed nuns scurrying around the courtyard.

The food and eating arrangements differed considerably from those in Indian monasteries, and provide an interesting cultural contrast. As the reader doubtless knows, in Hindu monasteries one generally gets rice, chapattis, dal, various curried vegetables, yogurt, and sweets and fruit for dessert. Ordinarily this is eaten with the fingers, while squatting cross-legged on the floor, from a brass plate filled at intervals by the server from various pots he carries as he patrols the dining room.

Like Hindu monks, the Chinese monastics were vegetarians; but there the similarity ends. They ate rice, of course, but they had never heard of chapattis, and dal was unknown. Yogurt they would have regarded as an abomination, and the first time my old Chinese mother-in-law saw me eat curry, she dismissed it as 'pig food'. (Whether this was a reflection on the curry or on me, I leave to the discriminating reader to decide.) The Chinese would have regarded with horror the practice of eating with the fingers, and from a squatting position on the floor. If informed that Buddha probably ate thus, they would have reacted with profound bemusement. They ate at tables, sitting on stools, and used chopsticks. Generally there would be six to eight people at each table, with the monks sitting at a separate table from the nuns.

They ate Chinese-style, which any orthodox Hindu would also regard with horror. Each person has a rice-bowl, a pair of chopsticks, and a soupspoon. He takes his rice-bowl to a big wooden tub of boiled rice in the middle of the dining room, and fills it, using a wooden scoop. Everybody takes rice from the same tub, using the same scoop. Then they all return to the tables and take their seats. After grace is chanted, they begin to eat.

In the middle of the table is a large tureen of soup, usually a clear broth flavoured with green vegetables, vermicelli, perhaps bamboo shoots or winter melon, and often beancurd. With his soupspoon, each diner ladels out some soup into his rice, to moisten it. Also in the middle of the table are several large plates of vegetarian food, from which everybody eats in common. With his chopsticks, our diner plucks vegetables from the plate and mixes them with the rice in his bowl. Then he holds the bowl up near his mouth with his left hand and shovels in the rice and vegetables with his chopsticks. Occasionally, if he wishes to be polite, he plucks a morsel from a plate with his chopsticks and deposits it in the rice-bowl of his neighbour. It is primarily this eating from common plates which would horrify an orthodox Hindu.

The vegetables were almost always fried in peanut oil; for this reason, most people unaccustomed to Chinese food regard it as too greasy. The vegetables were often fresh from the monastery garden, and delicious: cabbage, cauliflower, celery, string beans, bamboo shoots, cucumber, broccoli, and several leafy green vegetables whose English names I do not know.

In addition there was one of the finest inventions of the Chinese mind: beancurd. One could write a book on the exquisite varieties of beancurd cookery. In its raw state, beancurd is made from soybeans, resembles a white custard in looks and texture, and is nearly tasteless. But the Chinese, and especially the Buddhists, have wrought ingenious variations on this dreary norm. They can cook it, usually by deep-frying it in peanut oil, so as to produce a variety of tastes and textures, from meaty to rubbery to crunchy-crisp. They cook it in such a way that it often tastes like meat. So, in Buddhist vegetarian restaurants, they have dishes known as 'vegetarian pork', 'vegetarian chicken', 'vegetarian duck'; they even have 'vegetarian meatballs'! One acquaintance of mine, dining at Yuan Kuang Ssu, swore he was eating fried chicken: plump, crisp, meaty-looking morsels of deepfried beancurd, brown and juicy, and dripping of peanut oil. It is beancurd which provides Chinese monastics with the protein which Indians get from dairy produots and dal. Sometimes an ailing Chinese monk or nun would drink powdered milk; otherwise, they never touched dairy products.

The monks and nuns never ate dessert, although they would take fruits, and occa-

sionally sweets, separate from the main meal, as a snack. Usually after a meal they would drink several cups of hot tea, to wash down the grease.

At breakfast, one always had a choice between regular boiled rice and *hsi-fan,* a sort of rice gruel or soup which Westerners call congee. Breakfast was a lighter meal than that described above: usually, in addition to the soup, the plates on the table contained salted peanuts, pickled cucumbers, perhaps some fried vegetables—and fermented beancurd, the Chinese answer to mango pickle.

Traditionally, Buddhism prescribes that monks should take no solid food after noon, and this rule is rigorously followed in the Theravada countries of Southeast Asia. Traditionally, too, Buddhist monks were not forbidden to eat meat, so long as the animal had not been killed specifically for them. Chinese Buddhism both tightened and relaxed these rules: it has tightened them by forbidding the consumption of meat products, including fish and eggs, and by adhering to a strictly vegetarian diet ; and relaxed them by permitting three meals a day. This latter practice is justified by appealing to differences in climate: in colder countries, the argument goes, one needs three meals a day. At Yuan Kuang Ssu, several of the monks had reverted to the Theravada practice of not eating after noon, and absented themselves from the evening meals. Certainly they all agreed that meditation should not be practised on a full stomach.

On the more profound aspects of Chinese monastic life I have little first-hand knowledge. The monks were generally pretty close-mouthed about their spiritual practices. I could not find out, for example, how they meditated. One old monk intimated that it was a continual struggle to keep the mind blank. The Ch'an or Zen sect, which is still alive on Taiwan, though not as popular as the Pure Land sect, prescribes meditation on koans (Chinese *kung-an*), riddle-like mantras such as 'Shih shei nien Fo ?' ('Who is it that recites the Buddha's name ?') But I never met a monk who claimed to practise this. It is certain that *japa,* in the form of repeating the mantra 'Nan-wu O-mi-t'o Fo', played an important role in their spiritual lives.

Sometimes a monk would undertake a custom known as *pi-kuan,* which I believe means 'to close the wall'. He would lock himself up in a room for a specified time —sometimes three months, sometimes six months, sometimes a year, occasionally for three, six, nine, or even twelve years. The door to his room would be sealed, to be opened when the requisite time-span had elapsed. During that time, he would study the scriptures and meditate, and have no communication with the outside world. The sealed door would have a smaller door cut into it, and through this he would receive his meals. Sometimes he would communicate in writing through the smaller door. Presumably the room contained facilities for bathing and for performing the natural functions. I believe a similar custom used to be observed in Tibet. Monks who undertake *pi-kuan* are usually regarded thereafter as possessing uncommon sanctity, their reputations increasing in proportion to the amount of time they spent walled up.

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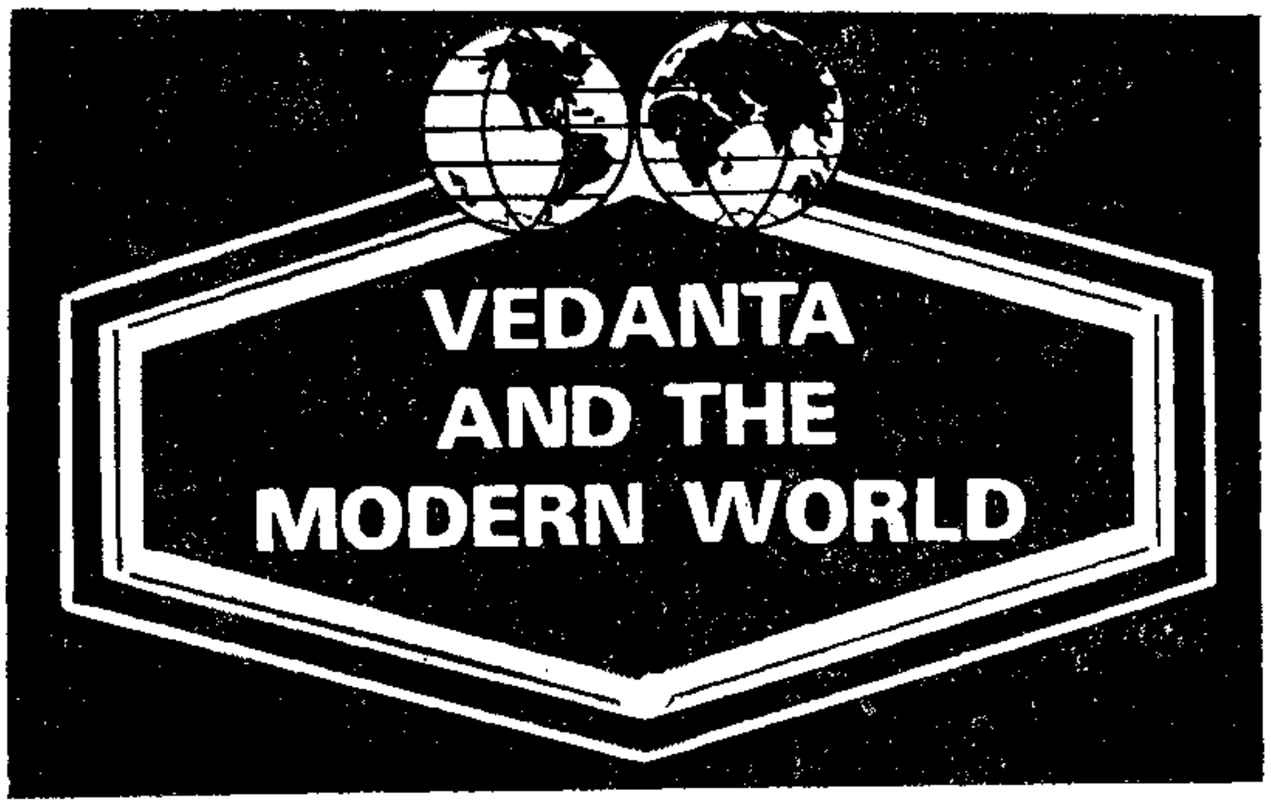

IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE—IX

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

WORLD AND LIFE DENIAL AND ITS CAUSES (*continued*)*

Denial and intellectualism

An objection is made against the procedure in Advaita of cancelling the lower knowledge in the higher which, it is said, is wasteful and productive of intellectual despondency. Since the experience of *vyavahāra* is falsified in the experience or *paramārtha*, it is assumed that there is no one standard of truth in Vedānta. But this objection does not hold, because from the epistemological angle Advaita defines true knowledge or *pramā* as that in which there is the identity of pure consciousness underlying both the knower and the known. Similarly there is identity of 'that' and 'thou' (*tat tvam asi*) in transcendental experience.* Hence there is a single standard, and only the false aspects of *vyavahāra* are sublated in *paramārtha*. 'Śaṁkara declares that the former is a combination of true and false[1]...so the element of truth does survive from the lower in the higher knowledge.'[2] The objection that Vedānta makes too abrupt a transition from one to the other sphere is due to the failure on the part of the critic to take into account the whole process of *sādhanā*, which is slow and gradual, though the dawning of *jñāna* itself may be immediate.

Even the critic admits that 'denial' in itself is not necessarily to be interpreted as pessimistic rejection of life and its gifts, for in the loftiest moral and spiritual planes it sometimes happens that man attains his freedom only by sacrificing some lesser values or even life itself for the sake of some higher value or end.[3] This is not the negation which consists in disregard for any realizable purpose or improvement of the world-condition, but the highest affirmation, according to the spiritual paradox that one can live only by dying. All true spirituality, in fact, requires a radical renunciation of certain aspects of life and the world for the sake of other aspects.[4] Vedānta was not misunderstood by the common people when it demanded the denial of lesser values (*artha* etc.) for the sake of true affirmation of the Self. The Vedantic attitude of negation was fully correlated to the consciousness

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* In the previous instalment this subject was introduced.

1. सत्यानृते मिथुनीकृत्य . . . नैसर्गिकोऽयं लोकव्यवहारः ।

2. S. K. Belvalkar, *Vedanta Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 18.

3. Albert Schweitzer *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p. 6.

4. Cf. Rudolf Otto, *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity compared and contrasted*, p. 72.

that life must pass through a phase of no life in order to reach a fuller life.[5]

The objection is made that Vedānta denies the worth of the world by not providing any goal for the world as a whole in its doctrine of *līlā*. However, Vedantic pantheism does not fail to accord theoretical value to life and the world as the finite expressions of the infinite. Theistic Vedānta (except Madhvācārya) understands *abhinnanimittopādāna kāraṇavāda* as literally true, while even Advaita concurs with the doctrine as long as the world remains 'real' for man. On the practical level, the value of the world is not denied by any Vedāntin, since it is the only field of opportunity for *sādhanā* by which one reaches the goal. Scripture speaks of human birth as precious (*durlabha*), and Vedānta insists that man not waste his life but utilize all its goods in their proper sphere for the realization of the highest purpose. It is true that Vedānta pictures no final utopian goal of world evolution, but neither does it deny the value of life, since it sets for each man the highest goal of idealistic perfection, to be achieved only through human existence and effort in the world. There is no lack of interest in this purpose of human life, nor any misgiving about the improvement of the human condition, though Vedānta does not have anything to say about improvement of the world condition.[6]

That Vedānta has been able to maintain a proper balance of negative and positive attitudes towards life is testified to by many modern scholars as well as by the facts of history. It was systems like Sāṅkhya and the heterodox philosophies which were unable to maintain the correct balance of negation and affirmation.[7] The struggle of orthodoxy and heterodoxy finally ended with the banishment of Buddhism, and this has had significant implications.

> On the practical side the triumph of Vedānta has meant the triumph of the positive ideal of life. This is not only shown by the social basis of ethical discipline which Vedānta as an orthodox doctrine commends, but also by its conception of the highest good which consists, not only in isolating the self from the environment as it does for the heterodox schools, but in overcoming the opposition between the two by identifying the interests of self with those of the world.[8]

The strong influence of Vedānta on the social life of the earlier and later medieval period did not, in fact, lead to wholesale renunciation of the world by the populace, as occurred earlier under the Buddhist influence. Vedantic sects were the great teachers of a pure and elevated social and ethical life to the masses.

Neither do the Vedantic canons lack in zest for life and enthusiasm for active life. The Smṛti Prasthāna preaches a positive attitude to the world.

> The usual attitude of the *Gītā* is definitely opposed to world denial; it seeks to justify participation in normal worldly life, though with qualifications. ... Teaching moderation in all things as the characteristic of a disciplined yogī, it gives a complete religious justification for the continuation of normal human life.[9]

It might be said with confidence that among the three Prasthānas Vedānta the *Gītā* alone has had any religious significance

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5. W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 18.

6. The conception of *sarvamukti* is not more than hinted at and hence cannot serve as the end of world or social evolution.

7. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40; A. B. Keith, *Philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads*, vol. 2, p. 521; M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, pp. 262, 264.

8. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 25-26.

9. Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, p. 29.

for the non-philosophical public, and they have learned from it the lesson of living and acting in the spirit of devout piety. As for the philosophers of Vedānta, they too have discovered in it the philosophy of activism in the wordly sphere. And if the critic now objects that this is merely an illogical compromise imposed upon Vedānta by the force of the reality-principle, then it must be repeated that the foundation of Vedānta philosophy and life is laid in the *varṇāśramadharma*, in the entire scheme of *saṁskāras* culminating in the initiation ceremony, in the life of the householder requiring the performance of the five great sacrifices. In accepting this programme of duties Vedānta shows recognition of the fact that the naturalistic and social selves of man cannot be neglected; he can grow into a wider sphere only by fulfilling all human needs. There must be sublimation and not suppression of man's lower capacities before he qualifies (*adhikāra*) for the study of Vedānta. And on this point Vedānta has not left its position ambiguous.

If a just arrangement of society is one promoting the ideal life of its members, such an order is upheld by Vedānta. But it is an arrangement enforceable only to a limited extent by law and sanctions. The norm of institutions, duties and virtues being laid down, the appropriation of that social arrangement depends upon the rationality, goodwill and discipline of the natural instincts in its members. By allowing the individual the freedom to undergo the discipline of each stage of social arrangement as and when he is ready for it, Vedānta has tried to safeguard the principle of free development of individual life.

Denial and pantheistic mysticism

Another criticism is that pantheistic mysticism of Vedānta—ending as it does in an abstract, empty, impersonal reality—can neither explain the meaning nor the value of life. Pursuit of such an ideal merely negates diversity and change and is productive of depression.

Students of mysticism are divided over the nature of mystical unity. On the one hand is the opinion that mysticism always ends in an impersonal immortality;[10] and on the other is the opinion that, though the unity of being is a grand idea, it should not be the resting place for the mystic, who should rise to absolute reason, will and self-consciousness.[11] A distinction is made between a natural state of imageless emptiness in which there is feeling of peace and rest without emphasis on love or the grace of God, which is supposed to characterize Vedantic mysticism,[12] and a higher state of true supernatural union with God in which love is all important, as in Christian mysticism. Apart from the fact that the long controversy between the believers in the Saguṇa and the Nirguṇa testifies to the fact that the above characterization of Vedantic unity as purely impersonal and abstract is too sweeping, the difference of opinion between the critics proves that mystic unity has as many manifestations and phases as there are mystics, and it is not a justifiable procedure to take a particular experience as the standard of normality and to judge others by it.[13]

The purpose here is neither to prove nor to disprove the correctness of either experience but to assess the effect of the supposedly abstract reality on life. The Upanisadic mystics describe the ineffable

10. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 162.
11. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 8.
12. Cf. S. N. Dasgupta, *Indian Mysticism*, p. 42.
13. Cf. W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 97. Both experiences are similar, and different cultures and also individuals have different emotional reactions.

reality as being beyond the finest values of life. This 'plenitude of experience' is wrongly called an 'infinite blank' by critics. Failure of conceptual thought or language is not negation of that which is beyond the phenomenal. In mystic experience one passes from ordinary consciousness into a vast reconciling consciousness in which the very denial of adjectives points to that nature of truth which is super-everything, and negation is higher affirmation having a correlated counterpart in personal will; mystic consciousness is 'on the whole pantheistic and optimistic, or at least the opposite of pessimistic.'[14] Without committing oneself to any judgement about the logical consequences of pantheistic mysticism in terms of optimism or pessimism, it must at least be noted that Vedānta does not display any superficial and easy optimism in regard to the bliss of absorption or 'escape' from evil, as charged against it, nor does it display black pessimism due to the contrast between the ideal reality to which it aspires and the actual fulfilment of it in life; this is a matter of historical fact. Pantheistic unity, far from having a depressing effect on the Indian mind, has been a great source of consolation, a sustainer in times of difficulty and conflict. The popularity of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* is evidence of the solace drawn from the pantheistic unity of Ātman.

The negation of worldly life, its duties and laws, and even of religion, resulting from mystic realization of Ātman, was not objected to by the Indian people as it has been by the critic, because the people understood the sannyāsī's rejection of organized social life and religion as an outcome of intensification of spirituality. It was perfectly intelligible to them that to the discerner of truth, external conventionalities might become matters of indifference. And the actual lives of many mystics of deep learning, with their pure and strong and purposeful characters, and specially their engagement in the upholding of *dharma*, reconciled the Indian people to their philosophical denial of the world.

According to another interpretation,[15] Vedantic mysticism far from being a negation of life and the world, is expressive of the philosopher's closeness to life. An original unity (*vidyā*) is to be discerned under all Vedantic ideas. The basis of its mysticism is not remoteness from actual facts but nearness to life and the concrete empirical observation that all things in nature are associated. The urge to mysticism is the result of induction and *pratyakṣa* or contact with objects and the likeness of objects.

To conclude that naturalism or atheism is the outcome of Vedantic pantheism is deliberately to misunderstand its letter and its spirit.[16] Pantheism which sees God alone is not to be equated to the atheism which denies God beyond what it perceives. The Vedāntin does not say that the world as it is in each particular thing is God.[17] He looks to the underlying divine reality, and his 'All is God' is the opposite of atheism

14. Betty Heimann, *Indian and Western Philosophy*, pp. 95-96.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Here the critic is falling into self-contradiction because atheism and naturalism, far from being life and world negating, are life and world affirming.

17. Cf. J. Allonson Picton, *Pantheism*, pp. 8-10. No pantheist has ever held that everything is God any more than teachers of physiology, emphasizing to their students the unity of the human organism, would insist that every toe and finger is the man. Thus those who hold that the mind and body are one man—one altogether—but at the same time deny that the toe or the finger or the stomach or the heart is the man, are bound, in consistency, to recognize that if pantheism affirms God to be All in All, it does not follow that pantheism must hold a man or a tree or a tiger to be God.

or naturalism, and is the true spirit of religious piety.[18]

Denial and mokṣa

An examination of the charge that Vedantic *mokṣa* is a lapse into 'nothingness', a negation of everything positive, is in order here. Speech fails when all that is denoted by Brahman has to be expressed, hence negative descriptions or unknowability are resorted to.[19] As stated before, this means negation of all limitations and determinations. The terms *sat, cit* and *ānanda* which are used to describe Brahman are all known terms; though Vedānta, even in its theistic form, does not dare to assert that it knows Brahman in His perfect state, this does not nullify the knowledge indicated in these three terms of description. 'Vedānta is not reduced to absurdity by: "the mind of man can form no notion of matter or spirit apart from its properties or attributes," for there still remains the One after abstraction of all human mental processes.'[20] From the standpoint of logic the Advaita position is this very union of opposites, though the nearest possible descriptions are inadequate, and we do not improve the conception of reality by limiting ourselves to one side of the opposition (that is, to giving positive predication). States of the indefinite are not specific negations or counterparts of specific positive states, and hence are not negations. Or, to put it in another way, Advaita argues that every negative judgement implies a positive, but all positive judgements do not imply a significant negative. Negation has significant validity only because it leads to a positive real.[21]

This statement of the Advaita position in regard to the negative description of *mokṣa* will help in evaluating the charge that an empty goal or 'nothingness', in any empirical sense, cannot be of any attraction to man, and his motive becomes mere escape from life's misery. It is true that a certain disillusionment with the world (*vairāgya*) is the starting point of *sādhanā*, but the incentive to continue it is derived from the joy of newer and newer stages of self-conquest or deepening of devotion to God.

The charge that pessimism and world denial are inherent in the ideal of *mokṣa* rests on the general disvaluation of the ideal of spiritual salvation. 'The notion of immortality has vanished and is chiefly reserved for consolation in bereavement. (With the idea of eternal punishment vanished the idea of eternal life.) Hope is no longer religious but secular.'[22] That *mokṣa* has not been regarded by Vedānta or the common man as negation of life, but the very fulfilment of life, can be understood only if we can set aside the modern viewpoint, which is essentially secular and material and relies on planning, technology, education, opportunities, relentless activity, change, etc. as means of salvation or redemption, though a purely empirical salvation. In the context of Vedānta philosophy, *mokṣa* is a force impressing itself on every feature and discipline of Vedantic life, shaping the entire scale of values. Not a refutation but the final flowering of the success of the

(*Continued on page* 470)

18. Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 203. The Upaniṣads are not pantheistic in the bad sense of the term. Things are not thrown together into a heap called God, without unity, purpose or distinction of values. They are pantheistic, if it is pantheistic to say that God is the fundamental reality of our lives, and we cannot live without Him, the indwelling Divine. Pantheism in this sense is an essential feature of all true religion.

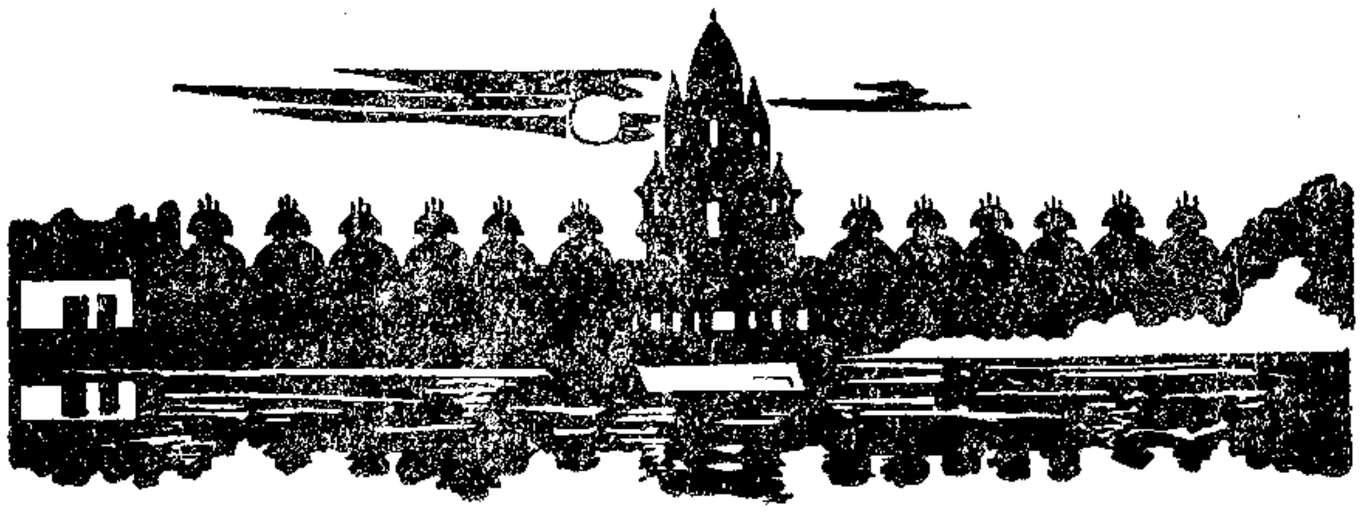
19. See Śamkara Bhāṣya on *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*, 1.9.

20. James R. Ballantyne, *Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy*, p. 45; cf. *Vivekacūdāmani*, 214, 218.

21. Cf. *Upadesa Sāhasrī*, 18.125-26.

22. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 68.

धर्म समन्वय
A FORUM FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING



SIN AND IGNORANCE: A COMPARATIVE NOTE

SABUJKOLI SEN

The question how the phenomenon of human suffering can be reconciled with the omnipotence of an all-perfect, merciful God has troubled the minds of great religious thinkers in all ages. An answer to this perplexing question has been sought in the Upaniṣadic Hinduism and in Christianity in quite different ways. The way of the Hindus is predominantly epistemological, because they try to explain the world of suffering by the principle of ignorance (*avidyā or māyā*) which, being the negation of right knowledge, is primarily an epistemological concept, though it has its ontological and moral implications too. But the Christians try to account for human suffering by the principle of sin which is primarily a moral or religious concept. We shall first discuss the Hindu concept of ignorance and the Christian concept of sin separately and then try to show in what ways these concepts compare and contrast with each other.

According to the Upaniṣads the entire universe is enveloped by Brahman (*sarvam khalvidaṁ brahma*). Brahman or God is said to be one (*ekam*), undivided (*advitīyam*), pure knowledge, pure existence and pure bliss (*saccidānanda*). If this is so, how does this phenomenal world which is characterized by multiplicity and innumerable sufferings come into existence? The answer to this question has been suggested in the Upaniṣads themselves, a suggestion which was carried to its logical conclusion by Śaṁkara at a later age. According to Śaṁkara, the root cause of the phenomenal world and of human suffering can be attributed to our sense of distinction (*bheda*) between the self and not-self, which, in turn, is produced by ignorance or want of right knowledge. This ignorance in its cosmic aspect is termed *māyā*, but it is usually called *ajñāna* or *avidyā* in its individual aspect. It is supposed to function in a double way—negative and positive. Its negative function consists in concealing (*āvaraṇa*) the real nature of an object from our view, while its positive function is to distort (*vikṣepa*) the object and make it appear what it really is not. In the well-known example of snake-rope illusion, ignorance does not allow us to see the rope as a rope, and it also makes the rope appear as a snake. In the same way ignorance (*māyā*) in its cosmic act of creation covers up the real nature of Brahman as one, undivided and blissful and makes It appear as the phenomenal world characterized by the distinction between 'I' (*asmad*) and 'thou' (*yuṣmad*) or the self and the not-self. In the language of Śaṁkara, the whole world of distinction is superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the distinctionless unity of

Brahman. The false notion of individuality created by ignorance is said to be the cause of human sufferings, because it produces selfish thoughts of 'me' and 'mine' resulting in attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*) and all sorts of personal conflicts. The empirical world containing these sufferings vanishes forever as soon as the individual soul (*jīva*) realizes his essential identity with Brahman by an act of intuitive knowledge (*aparokṣa jñāna*). Various methods called 'Yogas' have been prescribed in different Hindu scriptures to bring about this intuitive knowledge of our identity with Brahman.

Māyā has been conceived in the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta as the creative power of God which is indistinguishable from God Himself, just as the burning power of fire is indistinguishable from fire itself. But how can Brahman which is pure knowledge be the seat of ignorance which, by definition, is the negation of knowledge? As an answer to this question it is said that God is a great magician who conjures up the world-show with all its various objects. When a magician by sleight of hand makes one object appear as many to us, it is an illusion for us the spectators, but not for the magician. In the same way, from the standpoint of the *jīvas*, *avidyā* is illusion or ignorance, but from the standpoint of God, *avidyā* is only a conjuring will of His by which the *jīvas* are deceived but not God. The ignorance of the *jīvas* terminates as soon as they realize their essential identity with God.

So far we have given a very rough sketch of the Hindu concept of ignorance. Let us now discuss in brief the Christian concept of sin. Sin, according to Christianity, originated in the abuse of freedom initially granted to man by God. Adam, the first creature of God, disobeyed a certain order of God, as a result of which sin crept into his being and he fell down from paradise where he was living in blissful communion with God. Stripped of its metaphorical language, it means that sin consists in acting against the will of God and in living a life independent of God. This Godlessness or God-forgetfulness in the life of a man is called sin in Christianity. An act of sin invariably brings suffering to human life. According to St. Paul, sin is the universal heritage of mankind and he proves its universality by the compelling power of flesh which is radically antagonistic to God. But it should be borne in mind that God has created the flesh also and that there are spiritual sins which do not originate from flesh. Thus the Pauline doctrine of sin should be interpreted to mean that flesh produces sin not because it *is* sin in itself, but because sin, seated in the flesh as an alien power, utilizes it as its organ and instrument.

According to St. Augustine, sin is not a positive fact but a privation of virtue or good. It is a loss or lack of being. So it needs no efficient but a deficient cause. This privative conception of sin was probably meant by Augustine to guard against the mistake of viewing sin as essential to human nature and *eo ipso* created by God. Man can get redemption from sin only by the grace of God which descends on him through his faith in Jesus Christ who is believed to be the Son of God.

We are now in a position to compare the Hindu concept of ignorance (*avidyā*) with the Christian concept of sin. These two seemingly distinct concepts appear to agree on the following points: (1) Both of them are resorted to to account for the origin of suffering in the phenomenal world. (2) The privative conception of sin as upheld by Augustine comes very close to the negative function of ignorance termed as *āvaraṇa* by *Śaṁkara*. Both sin and ignorance are conceived as the privation or

concealment of the real nature of God who is the ultimate source of all values and being of the world. (3) Though sin is essentially a moral or religious concept, it ultimately coincides with the epistemological concept of ignorance (*avidyā*); because sin in its final analysis means ignorance or forgetfulness of God and living a Godless life, putting something else as an ideal in His place.

But despite these agreements, there are some fundamental differences between these two concepts which should not be lost sight of. Sin, according to Christianity, really corrupts the nature of man and brings him the Fall. When a man is redeemed of his sin by God's grace, his corrupted nature becomes reconstituted and he gets back his lost harmony with God. The state of Fall thus means a state of degeneration on the part of human nature and Redemption implies a real transition from this degenerate condition of the soul to a plane of ideal existence. Redemption in Christianity stands for a kind of spiritual rebirth ; a redeemed man is a totally transformed human personality living in blissful communion with God. But in Upaniṣadic Hinduism, when ignorance (*avidyā*) is supposed to affect an individual, it does not really degrade or destroy his inner nature which, in essence, is identical with God, just as a dark patch of cloud hovering before the sun cannot destroy the inner brilliance of the sun but only temporarily obstructs its manifestation. In like manner when the knowledge of God dispels the darkness of ignorance from the mind of man and he attains liberation (*mokṣa*) by realizing his essential identity with God, no intrinsic change takes place within his inner nature. A liberated soul is not a really transformed soul, but one who has transcended an inherent limitation. The so-called transformation that seems to occur within an individual in the process of liberation is only epistemic, that is, a sublation of false knowledge of duality (*bheda*) between the self and the not-self by a true knowledge of the soul's identity with God. But this epistemic change should not be confused with the ontological metamorphosis of soul as it is in the case of Christianity.

(*Contiuned from page* 467)

successful man.'[23] It is true that *mokṣa* is not a mere extension of the possibilities of the human order, consisting in an indefinite prolongation of life under different conditions, but a state beyond all change ; yet optimism is not dampened by this ideal since it is conceived as attainment of a complete and harmonious life and not merely getting rid of undesirable attachments to the self. *Mokṣa* is known by the happiness it produces in the individual ; freedom, love, illumination and power, rather than depression and dejection, are its characteristics.

23. Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, p. 43.

(*to be continued*)

ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

It was during the midst of the persecution by the Mitigated friars that Teresa wrote her spiritual masterpiece, *Interior Castle*. One day in Toledo as she was speaking of prayer with Gracian, she couldn't find the proper words to express herself: 'Oh, how well the matter was explained in the *Autobiography* which is with the Inquisition!' Seizing the opportunity, Gracian asked her to write another book on prayer 'and expound the teaching in a general way, without saying to whom the things that you describe have happened.'

Teresa was now sixty-two and ill; she heard constant noises in her aching head--'many torrential rivers falling down into cataracts, many little birds and sounds of whistling'. She was busy with the problems of her Reform until one or two o'clock every morning, though she always rose with the five-o'clock bell. Yet she smiled as she complained:

> How do they expect me to write? Let the theologians do it. They have studied, whereas I am only an ignorant woman. What is there that I could say? I shall use the wrong words and there is a danger of my doing harm. There are so many books on prayer already! For the love of God, let me turn my spinning-wheel, go to choir and follow the Rule like the other sisters: I am not made for writing; for that I have neither health nor head....

But out of obedience she agreed to try. The result of the attempt is one of the greatest works of its kind in the history of Christian mystical literature. This woman of very limited education, who knew no Latin and who had never studied theology and whose experience of life was limited to say the least, produced a book which revolutionized Christian mystical thought. All subsequent Catholic thought on mysticism and prayer shows the impact of her genius. No one before her had ever analysed the states of prayer--from beginning efforts to spiritual marriage--with such psychological precision and depth. And none after her has improved on her basic analysis of at the least the mystical states--from the Prayer of Quiet to the Spiritual Marriage. Many have tried to subdivide or otherwise improve on the stages of mystical union she recognized, but such efforts have never been as satisfactory as her basic structure.

In spite of her illness and the worries and problems constantly arising from the persecution by the Mitigated friars, in spite of the large demands made on her time by the convent Rule and her various duties, Teresa finished this remarkable book in less than three months in neat handwriting with no erasures. According to one of her daughters at Toledo. 'At the time when our holy Mother was writing the book of the *Mansions* at Toledo, I often saw her as she wrote, which was generally after Communion. She was very radiant and wrote with great rapidity, and as a rule she was so absorbed in her work that even if we made a noise she would never stop, or so much as say that we were disturbing her.' This same nun once found Teresa writing in a state of ecstasy.

On Christmas night, 1577, a month after completing *Interior Castle,* Teresa was going down the staircase to the chapel when a sudden burst of wind blew out her candle. In the darkness she fell and broke her arm. From this time on she had to have help even to get dressed, so Ana de San Bartolomé, the little lay-sister whom we met as a novice at Avila, became her constant attendant. The good nun would sometimes kneel outside Teresa's cell for hours waiting for a chance to serve.

* * *

Philip II, King of Spain, was an admirer of Teresa. So when the persecution of the Reform had begun in 1575, Teresa had written to him asking him to use his influence to separate the Reform from the Mitigated Carmelites. During the course of the persecution she wrote more letters, but it wasn't until April 1579 that the Discalced Reform was freed through his help from the tyranny of the Mitigated. Finally the clouds were dispersed, and the Discalced friars who were in prison and those in hiding could move freely. And the Mother Foundress was able to resume her work.

All trials were to Teresa a form of austerity which she turned to spiritual advantage. Her sufferings during the persecution had been no exception, and she gave expression to the purification she experienced after they had ended : 'When it comes to exercising government, I am no longer the same person that I was before : now it is all done through love. I don't know whether this is because nobody now gives me cause to be angry or whether perhaps I've come to understand that that kind of action is more efficacious.' Now as she re-entered the field of action in the last phase of her life, it was with a character perfected both by a vast treasure of spiritual experience and by a long record of battles suffered and won for the glory of God.

On 25 June 1579 Teresa set out once again as Carmel's Mother Foundress. The difficulties and discomforts of travel in that age were horrendous. But did the sixty-four-year-old invalid nun feel sorry for herself ? 'Look at her, poor little old woman ! Setting off for Medina del Campo, Valladolid, Malagon, Alba de Tormes, Salamanca ! I tell you that makes me laugh, for I feel I have the courage to do much more than that !' As she travelled from convent to convent she received a triumphant welcome by the nuns who had not seen her since the persecution had begun several years before.

Indeed, all of her travels now became occasions for rejoicing among local religious, gentry, and peasantry alike. For instance, in February 1580 Teresa started out from Malagon for Villanueva de la Jara to found a new convent. The journey of eighty miles turned into a triumphal procession, as villagers all along the way pressed to see *la santa Madre,* 'the holy Mother'. Constables had to be posted to protect her from the crowds when she stopped for the night at Robledo. And though she started again at three in the morning to avoid another crowd, she was swamped by people waiting in the darkness and cold for her blessings. The friars of La Roda came and met her on her way, giving her two small but beautiful statues, one of the Virgin Mary, smiling, and the other of the Child Jesus. The last part of the journey was through a road gaily decorated with festoons and greenery, past beautiful altars set up for the occasion. All the people for miles around joined the procession. Ana de San Bartolomé and Ana de San Agustin saw the statue of the Child Jesus come to life and play joyfully around Teresa, though Teresa showed no surprise at this. Ana de San Agustin was about to exclaim aloud in excitement when Teresa turned to her and said : 'Silly little child, be

quiet !' Thus, together with the Child of God, Teresa entered Villanueva amidst singing, shouting and the chiming of bells. Such was the respect she now commanded in Castile.

* * *

In 1580 an influenza epidemic swept through Europe, and in Spain killed several of Teresa's friends. In Toledo the sixty-five-year-old nun herself came down with it. An invalid from the time of her 'death' and subsequent paralysis at the age of twenty-four, Teresa had at the same time been endowed all these years with a remarkable physical resilience, youthfulness and inner strength. But she never really recovered from this bout with the flu. It left her an old woman. At Valladolid she had a relapse ; her heart seemed to be giving way, and her tongue was partially paralyzed, endangering her power of speech. Her usual pains in the head and noises in the ear increased. For the first time this dame-errant who had fought and conquered so many times before, seemed to be giving up the struggle and passively resigning herself to death, a pitiful sight to those who had at one time been inspired with strength and courage just to see her.

Her superior, however, showed no compassion, and wrote to her, ordering her to go to the towns of Palencia and Burgos to make new foundations. It was an impossible order, but as always she sought God's will. One day after communion He said to her, 'What are you afraid of ? When have I failed you ? I am the same as I have always been. Dc not fail to make these two foundations.' Teresa exclaimed : 'O God Almighty ! How different are Your words from those of men ! They give me such courage and determination that the whole world would not stop me.' Once more her amazing virility carried her into the battlefield, despite her old and broken body.

Teresa reached Palencia in a state of collapse, but recovered enough to see to the foundation. Then to Soria for another foundation. Returning to Avila she was elected prioress of her beloved St. Joseph's. The nuns there were starving—as Spain's poverty increased, so did that of religious houses. So once again Teresa had to find food for a poor convent.

On 2 January 1582 Teresa set out for Burgos amidst the winter cold and incessant rain and snow. The roads were rivers of mud and water : no man in his right mind would have negotiated them. But Teresa had long ago given up her right mind. Though common sense and moderation in all things were typical Teresan virtues, she threw all prudence to the winds when it came time to obey the will of God, for she knew that nothing was more sure of accomplishment than that. At one point in the journey they came to a large river in flood. The current was fast and the pontoons barely wide enough to hold a carriage—the slightest deviation and nuns, carriages and horses would be swept away. But Teresa was not the one to turn back. The nuns asked for her blessings which she gave and said, 'Well, daughters ! What better thing can you want than to die as martyrs for the love of Our Lord ?' She had her carriage taken first. The carriage went a way and then swerved, hanging over the current. Teresa jumped out into knee-deep water, hurting herself in the process, and exclaimed : 'Lord, amid so many ills this comes on top of all the rest !'

God was heard to answer her, 'Teresa, that is how I treat My friends.'

'Yes, my God, and that is why You have so few of them !' she retorted.

All the carriages did make it across, however, and they made their way on to Burgos. There Teresa had another syncope ; her vomiting—which had been a regular part

of her life since her severe syncope at the age of twenty-four—increased; her throat was inflamed; and she was unable to move even to lift her head. While she was in this condition, the Archbishop of Burgos went back on his earlier promise and sent word to Teresa that Burgos needed no more nuns and that she could return to Avila! Nothing could have brought life back into Teresa of Jesus quicker than these words. She rose to her feet and carried on the fight for three months, ending in her seventeenth and last foundation for nuns.

One night in the new convent Teresa's attendant Ana de San Bartolomé was awakened by the sound of heavenly music: she realized that the angels were gladdening their beloved sister Teresa. In the morning Ana couldn't keep quiet: 'Mother! What an excellent night you've had!' Teresa, never at a loss, replied: 'Well, daughter, if you heard it, *your* night could not have been a bad one!'

Now Teresa saw Death before her. Her letters to her daughters showed this: 'Never forget certain of the things I tell you . . .', as if giving them her last instructions. 'After my death . . . I should like. . . .'

Before leaving Burgos, she asked: 'Lord, are You satisfied?'

'Go,' He replied, 'you must now suffer greater things still.'

She left Burgos on 26 July 1582 with her niece Teresita and Ana de San Bartolomé. Her destination was Avila. On the way she stopped at Valladolid. Her final instructions to the nuns there were characteristic: 'Do not perform your religious exercises mechanically, but let each one of them be a heroic act.' She who gave the advice had lived a life in which *every* deed, every word, every thought had been heroic, had been charged with power and spirit. Even sleep had been put to sleep now, and her nights were passed in ecstasy. One early morning Ana de San Bartolomé entered her room at Valladolid to awaken her, and found her still lying 'unconscious' in bed, her face radiating light like the sun.

She reached Medina del Campo on September 16 on her way back to Avila. Exhausted from the journey, she was greeted by the rather harsh prioress who, without even offering refreshments or rest, told her that Antonio de Jesus had come to meet her in the parlour. This her first friar whom she had met in this very town so many years before, had turned into a sulky old man, easily offended and jealous at the deferential treatment Teresa accorded Gracian. And when it came to grudges and insults—real or otherwise—he had a memory like an elephant. Even now he remembered with wounded pride the time he had set out to found the first Discalced monastery in Duruelo: in his zeal he had provided himself with five clocks but had forgotten the straw pallets, seeing which Teresa had gone into one of her fits of laughter.

So he was not in a mood to feel compassion for the sick old saint. 'Tomorrow you must set out for Alba de Tormes; the Duchess demands that you come to bless her daughter-in-law who is about to give birth.'

Teresa was overwhelmed. 'Never', said Ana de San Bartolomé, 'have I seen her suffer from an order given by a superior so much as this one.' Now Teresa knew she would never reach Avila.

That night she went to bed without supper —the prioress had not invited her.

Little did the prioress realize how far above the reach of such insults Teresa now dwelt. Nor did those who wished to capture Teresa with their love realize how senseless such attempts were. Her renunciation of self was absolute, so there was no one to be

offended, none to be caught. The servant who spent herself in God's cause was a mere instrument, while Teresa saw her essential being ever in union with God, ever immersed in the peace that passeth understanding. She had a pure and selfless and motherly love for others, wishing them more and better than she wished for herself; this, however, didn't conflict with but was a reflection of her love for God: 'The Lord wants deeds, He wants works! If you see a sick person whom you can comfort, do not hesitate to sacrifice your devotion, and attend to her; you should feel her pains as if they were your own; fast, if necessary, to procure food for her. Such is true union with God.' Yet she also said: 'I should rejoice if I saw others in greater glory than myself in heaven, but I could not bear for anyone to love God more than myself.'

To her there was no longer any distinction between suffering and loving, between action and adoration. Her very breath, her very heart moved in adoration of her Beloved. Teresita said that her Aunt showed the smiling and calm simplicity of a candid little girl. In rivers, in the sky, in trees, in tiny flowers Teresa exulted and exclaimed, 'Blessed be He who created thee!' Those who thought they could injure her with their insults, those who thought they could capture her with their love, understood little of her true spiritual greatness.

On the way to Alba the next morning, the journey was so rough that Teresa almost died. Once she asked for something to eat. The good Ana de San Bartolomé wept when not even two eggs could be found for her sick Mother. 'Don't weep, it is God's will it should be like that,' Teresa comforted her. As they were approaching Alba, a courrier came on horseback to tell them that the child whose mother Teresa was going to bless had already been born. 'God be praised! Now they will no longer need the saint!' Teresa exclaimed.

When she reached the Alba convent on the evening of September 20, she was greeted with singing by the nuns who were overjoyed to have her amongst them again. The prioress—one of the nuns who had left the Incarnation to join the Reform--had a very gentle and loving temperament. When Teresa claimed to be nothing but one of her subjects, the prioress took advantage of this and asked her to take rest, after having prepared a room as nicely as possible.

But the next morning Teresa was at Mass, and for a few days she resumed her normal activities. By the end of September, however, she was vomiting blood, and at times her tongue seemed to be paralyzed. She had to be confined to bed. Realizing that the end had come, her only concern now was to bless those who gathered round her. One young girl, not yet fifteen, was afraid that she wouldn't be allowed to take vows as a nun after coming of age. To her Teresa said, 'Don't fret, child, you will be professed here!' To one of the nuns Teresa said, 'I will come to fetch you when your turn comes.'

On October 2 she told Ana de San Bartolomé that death was near.

When Antonio de Jesus came to hear her confession, the true love and devotion he had always borne for her surfaced, and kneeling beside her bed he implored her like a child, 'Mother, ask our Lord not to take you away. Don't leave us so quickly!'

'Father, be quiet! Can it be you speaking like that? I am no longer necessary in this world.'

She told her daughters: 'My daughters and ladies, for the love of God I ask you to observe the Rule and Constitutions well; if you keep them strictly, no further miracle will be necessary for your canonization.

Don't imitate the bad example which this bad nun has given you, and forgive me.'

She was so weak that she couldn't even turn in bed by herself. But when the Blessed Sacrament was brought for her last communion, her face lit up with radiant joy; she sprang up and knelt on her knees to receive communion. 'My Bridegroom and my Saviour! The longed-for hour has come. It is time for our meeting, my Beloved, my Saviour. It is time for me to set out. Let us go, it is time.'

Antonio de Jesus asked her whether she wished to be buried in Avila. Smiling, the saint answered. 'Jesus! Is that a question one should ask, Father? Have I anything whatsoever of my own? Won't they give me the charity of a little earth here?'

That night she passed in ecstatic joy, repeating over and over again a line from the Psalms: 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit....A humble and contrite heart Thou wilt not despise!'

At dawn on the next day, 4 October 1582, the feast day of St. Francis, the sixty-seven-year-old saint lay on her side, her face radiant, with all wrinkles gone! Her face was indeed so peaceful and bright that it looked to others like the full moon: as the moon basks in the light of her lover, the sun, so it seemed that Teresa, the Bride of the Heavenly Sun, was rejoicing in, being transformed into and consumed in the radiance of her Beloved. Only once was her ecstasy broken: in the evening Antonio de Jesus ordered Ana de San Bartolomé to go eat something—she had not eaten nor slept for several days, so anxious had she been to stay near her holy Mother. Teresa opened her eyes and seemed to be searching for someone. Teresita understood and called Ana back. Seeing the good little lay-sister again, Teresa's face reassumed its peaceful radiance. She took Ana by the hands and, with an ecstatic smile which lasted into death, laid her head to rest on Ana's arms, never to lift it again. At 9 p.m. Teresa, the Bride of the Sun, sighed gently three times as she made her departure to join her Bridegroom in the realm beyond all darkness, leaving behind her mortal frame, still calm, still smiling, still exquisitely and supernaturally beautiful, 'like a radiant sun'.

(Concluded)

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One man who manifests the ideal in his life is more powerful than legions whose words can paint it in the most beautiful colours and spin out the finest principles.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

INVITATION TO HOLY COMPANY : BY SWAMI JNANATMANANDA ; TRANSLATED BY PROF. J. N. DEY. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004. 1979. Pp. xi+131. Rs. 4/-.

The writer of this fine work is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the writing is his devotional offering to ten of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. It is an authorized translation in English of the original in Bengali carrying the appropriate title of *Punya-Smriti,* 'Sacred Memories'. The translation bears, by now the hackneyed, designation of an 'Invitation'. Swami Jnanatmananda was a university student keenly alive to and involved in the political activities of the times for ending the British rule in India. He suffered considerably in consequence ; and during this turmoil, national and private, he found himself gradually drawn to the inspiring orbit of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. The influence of Swami Premananda effected this decisive transformation in his life-plan.

The present work contains his devoted, ennobling and delightful memoirs of ten direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and it is a pity he could not meet and write about the other disciples—Swami Niranjanananda, Swami Advaitananda, Swami Trigunatita, Swami Ramakrishnananda and Swami Yogananda. He could not meet and write about the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda either.

His literary craft is gifted and feelingful and deals with each of his subjects with an appropriate adaptation of style and mood. There is vividness in narration and an unobstrusive communication of personal attitude. Roughly, his reminiscences of Swami Premananda, Swami Turiyananda, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Shivananda and Swami Saradananda belong to one class, and they all bear testimony to the loftiness of these personalities in spiritual power, intense humanity and clarity of perception. Their individual variations are also conveyed in subtle ways. The reminiscences of Swami Abhedananda bring out the uniqueness of his personality as a powerful and intellectual propagandist of Indian thought and the message of Ramakrishna, loaded with long and memorable achievements in the New World. His portrayal of Swami Vijnanananda and Swami Akhandananda is delightful, mixed with loving admiration and a great deal of Sattvic humour. He does full justice to the child-like saintliness of Swami Subodhananda. He concludes with a regret that though he saw Swami Adbhutananda, he denied himself the blessedness of closer communion.

The translation bears the character of almost an original writing, and flows smoothly and lucidly. There is only one anomaly and that is the wrong use of 'we' in many places. The following is a good example of it: 'At that time *we* were *a* worker at Dacca Asrama' (p. 123). On page 100, in Swami Vijnanananda's explanation, of worship, one sentence seems to be missing. Perhaps it should run as follows: 'Then the god or goddess must be transferred from the Ghata to the image to be worshipped.'

The book as a whole is a captivating and elevating contribution. Swami Tapasyananda's Introduction to the English edition is masterly, as could be expected, in point of both perspective and information.

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GOD AND SECULAR MAN : A STUDY OF NEWMAN'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF GOD AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SECULAR MAN : BY SEBASTIAN KAROTEMPREL, S.D.B. Published by KLM Private Ltd., 257 B, Bepin Behari Ganguli Street, Calcutta-700 012. 1977. Pp. xiii+226. Rs. 50/-.

John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890) was one of the outstanding minds of nineteenth-century Britain. He remains famous as a master of English prose and as a religious thinker of wide dimensions. As the—by no means exhaustive—bibliography appended to the work under review shows, Newman's own works and the books and articles written about him make up a library by themselves.

Newman's influence on the renewal of Christian, especially Roman Catholic, theological thinking has been immense. Rooted deeply in the knowledge of the early church, in the lives and works of the Fathers of the Church, Cardinal Newman has become himself, as it were, a modern Father of the Church. The direct and indirect impact of his theological thinking on Vatican Council II was such that he has aptly been called 'the absent Council Father'. This impact can be discerned mainly in three areas: the new place of the laity in the life and teaching of the Church, the Catholic concept of the development of doctrine and the character of dogma, and finally, the nature and claims of

conscience as the 'place' where God is experienced as a personal and practical moral guide.

Newman's stress on the role of the laity in Church life was a response to the democratic revolution taking place in the society of his day. His genetic understanding of doctrine and dogma took account of the rise of the historical method in the humanities. And his stress on the uniqueness of conscience was a reaction to the danger—in the wake of scientism—of overlooking the essential difference between man and subhuman reality. The present book illustrates, within the limits of its chosen subject, how Newman freed Catholic theology from the narrow neo-scholastic appoach and method, predominant in the Catholic Church of his day.

Part One depicts his teaching on the existence of God (1) in human conscience, (2) in the course of biblical revelation culminating in the Christ event, and finally (3) in and through the ecclesial community. Newman invites man to reach certainty about God on the basis of religious experience—closely heeded and critically analysed—rather than by deductive reasoning.

Part Two analyses the 'liberal humanism' prevalent in Newman's day. Outside the context of political and social theory, liberalism is seen by Newman as 'ultimately . . . absolute reliance upon reason'; in other words, as the view that man is the measure of all things (p. 126). Newman calls this overemphasis on reason 'an abuse of reason' (ibid.). He shows in contrast how man's recognition and acknowledgement of God, far from impeding his self-fulfilment, is the very condition of it.

The author finally depicts contemporary secular humanism as a radicalization of liberal humanism. In secular humanism the metaphysical realm not only is declared irrational in the sense of being inaccessible to reason, but simply non-existent or, if existent, only as a projection of man's as-yet-unfulfilled hopes. In contrast, man as conceived of in Newman's integral humanism is depicted as fulfilled and ennobled by relating to God in worship and service. Instead of being alienated and distracted from responsibility in this world by surrendering to God, man's engagement in his earthly tasks gains in fact in intensity and endurance by a genuine religious commitment to the God of creation.

The present study can help towards a deeper understanding not only of Newman's teaching on the God-man relationship, but thereby ipso facto of key areas of the teaching of Vatican Council II. Although Newman did not develop his thought in a situation of inter-religious dialogue, his teaching as eluciated in the present study can nevertheless contribute to deepening the dialogue between the various religious traditions in India, mainly in two areas: human experience as the source of our knowledge of God, and the importance of a religiously conceived humanism. In the face of a rapidly spreading mentality and attitude —here in India as elsewhere—that views the religious dimension of man as a source of alienation and distraction, Newman's teaching as exposed in this study may help theologians of the various religious groups in India to reflect together about a valid religious response to this new challenge.

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THE MYSTIC LADDER: BY DR. MOHAN SINGH UBEROI-DIWANA. Published by the author, Premjitniwas, 310 Sector 15-A, Chandigarh. 1979. Pp. viii+54. Price not mentioned.

This is an English rendering of *The Japu* by Guru Nanak Deva. Dr. Singh has also discussed the significance of the forty chapters of this book and tried to explain the philosophy and practice of Sikh religion.

The book is named *The Mystic Ladder* as thirty-eight of the forty chapters explain the gradual advancement of an aspirant in spiritual life. The first fifteen chapters help one to have firm faith in God. The next four chapters describe the plenitude and infinitude of His creation. Thereafter the aspirant should learn self-effort, sing His attributes, and see all creatures as streams flowing into God. He should give up all notions of limiting God with adjuncts and should try to feel everything as His activity. Then he should turn inward to realize that not only the external world but the internal world also is His being. At the thirty-fifth step he realizes Cosmic Awareness, and then he feels that he is now to help others in the spiritual sphere.

About the philosophy behind the work Dr. Singh writes, 'God, nature and man are one.... We must not separate good from evil, pleasure from pain.... All the opposites ... must be looked upon as one whole which whole is somehow a well-ordered whole, the parts or the opponents cooperating to achieve unity and universality.'

Dr. Singh's English translation and comments charm us, but the printing should have been done

in a better way. *The Japu* attracts not only Sikhs, but non-Sikhs as well. All sincere aspirants will be moved by Guru Nanak Deva's simple teaching, love for God, and compassion for humanity.

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA
Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, TRICHUR

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

The Trichur Ashrama began as a centre for Harijan relief, and was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, in 1929. Since then the institution has greatly expanded and diversified its services to include other sectors of the population as well.

Educational activities: The Gurukula is in a sense the nucleus of the institution. Run under the direct supervision of the monastic inmates and resident teachers, it comprises a High School, a Lower Primary School, and a Hostel. Its aim is to educate the children in the traditional ideals of Hindu life and conduct and to give them training in self-help. The boys attend daily worship in the temple, join in daily Bhajan and *Gita* chanting, and take part in the festivals on sacred days. During the year, the Hostel housed 96 boys: 73 paying boarders, 22 free and 1 concession holder (10 of the free boarders were Harijans). The High School had a strength of 1,147 boys; the Lower Primary had 814 students —404 boys and 410 girls.

Special classes in Sanskrit are held at the Ashrama, preparing students for the examinations conducted by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. In September, 1978 and March 1979, 134 students were sent for the examinations, all of whom finished successfully. All the boys of the Gurukula studied Sanskrit.

The Ashrama is an important publication centre for Malayalam religious and cultural literature. *Prabuddhakeralam,* a Malayalam monthly, entered its 64th year in 1979.

Religious: The Ashrama maintains three shrines: at the Gurukula, at the Harijan Welfare Centre, Adat, and at the Punkunnam Ashrama. During the year, daily worship and Bhajan were conducted at all three. A number of sacred days were observed with special Puja, Bhajan, discourses and Prasad distribution.

Swamis of the Ashrama gave a number of talks and classes in different parts of Trichur and Kerala, thus propagating the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and popularizing the teachings of the Hindu scriptures. Regular monthly retreats were conducted in the villages of the western part of Palghat District. The 23rd annual Spiritual Retreat was held in the Ashrama from the 24th to 29th December, 1978; about two hundred twenty-five devotees attended it daily.

Medical and Welfare: The total number of patients treated in the outdoor Dispensary during the year was 8,098, of which 3,462 were new and 4,636 repeated cases; 13 labour cases and 68 surgical operations were also conducted. The indoor Hospital can accommodate 18 patients; 691 were treated during the year.

The Ashrama conducts a Welfare Centre in the Harijan colony at Adat, mainly devoted to social education and relief work. Activities during the year included daily Bhajan in the shrine and a class every Friday on the lives and teachings of great sages. Nursery classes were also conducted, benefiting about 30 children, who were given free meals at noon.

Everyday except Sundays bread was distributed to 200 poor children. And on an average, three poor people were fed daily.

Vivekananda Vijnana Bhavanam, Punkunnam: This institution, started in 1945 for the promotion of education and cultural activities, is located on its own premises in the city of Trichur. Daily worship and prayers were conducted in the shrine and prayer hall during the period under review, and discourses and study classes were held from time to time. Free classes were conducted to coach students for various Sanskrit examinations of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Out of 267 students sent up for the examinations in October 1978, 251 came out successful. Competitive elocution and essay-writing examinations were held for the students and encouragement prizes were distributed to them on the occasion of the Sanskrit Day celebration in October and during the annual Jayanti Celebrations held from April 6 to 8, 1979. Lectures and discourses by eminent scholars and cultural entertainments including staging of Sanskrit dramas were also conducted to promote Sanskrit study.

Appeal: Generous sympathisers are requested to contribute according to their means, for it is only through such assistance that the Ashrama can continue its multifarious services. All donations may be sent to: The President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, P.O. Puranathukara, Trichur, Kerala-680 551.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Future of Indian Agriculture

The Statesman of July 15 carried a report about a study on 'population, food and land equality' sponsored by the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council of Social Research and Family Planning Foundation. According to it India has the capacity to produce as much grain as its estimated 950 million people will need in the year 2000 A.D.

This news should come as a surprise to those who have predicted a Malthusian doomsday for the nation. The Indian farmer works under the most unfavourable conditions—poor soil fertility, fragmented land holdings, primitive methods of cultivation, vagaries of monsoon and inadequate irrigation facilities. Most of them are too poor to make use of modern agricultural inputs like improved seed, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. In spite of all these handicaps if the farmer has demonstrated that he can provide adequate food for the nation, it is because through centuries of suffering his spirit has acquired great resilience, hardiness and independence.

The study made by Prof. Asok Mitra and Shekhar Mukherji reveals important truths about Indian agriculture. One is that food surpluses even now occur more as a result of greater human effort, irrigation, and natural endowments like fertile soil and moderate rains than on account of the use of fertilizers and other modern inputs. This means that only a part of the total potential of Indian agriculture has really been tapped.

The National Commission on Agriculture (NCA) has estimated an aggregate gross demand for grain at the turn of the century at between 205.3 million tonnes and 225.1 million tonnes. The aggregate consumer demand was projected at between 169.29 and 182.1 million tonnes. The Mitra-Mukherji study shows that the real problem is not production—for the Indian cultivator is competent enough to deliver the goods—but demand and offtake. 'Unless the demand steadily rises with the growing population supported in turn by steady increases in the income elasticity of demand, agricultural growth and productivity of the sort envisaged by the NCA will be fraught with serious uncertainties,' the study warns.

It further shows that whether there would be adequate demand for the produce depends on how fast and extensively employment increases. The rise in employment would be one of the surest guarantees of bringing the income elasticity of demand and price mechanism into full play.

Agriculture in India is getting a firm foundation and holds a bright promise for the future. But its growth depends on the overall growth of national economy. While the Government should continue to give priority to agriculture, it should pay equal attention to the enhancement of demand and offtake by channeling surplus production into other sectors of development.