



Prabuddha Bharata

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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"

मित्रो जनान् यातयति ब्रुवाणो
मित्रो दाधार पृथिवीमुत द्याम् ।
मित्रः कृष्टीरनिमिषाभि चष्टे
मित्राय हव्यं घृतवज्जुहोत ॥

प्र स मित्र मर्तो अस्तु प्रयस्वान्
यस्त आदित्य शिक्षति व्रतेन ।
न हन्यते न जीयते त्वोतो नैन-
मंहो अश्नोत्यंतितो न दूरात् ॥

मित्रस्य चर्षणीधृतोऽवो देवस्य सानसि ।
द्युम्नं चित्रश्रवस्तमं ॥

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

1. The Lord¹ by His utterance² directs human beings in various actions. He sustains both earth and heaven and looks upon all beings with unwinking eyes.³ Let us offer rich oblations to Him.

Rg-Veda 3.59.1

2. O Lord, may he who presents Thee [offerings] as a sacrifice enjoy prosperity! Protected by Thee, he is not harmed, is not overpowered by any calamity; sin does not reach him from near or far.

Rg-Veda 3.59.2

3. [I worship] the Lord who supports all and whose food and renowned wealth⁴ are to be sought by all.

Rg-Veda 3.59.6

4. We meditate on the adorable effulgence of the self-luminous Divine. May He awaken our *dhī*.⁵

Rg-Veda 3.62.10

* This month's selection of Vedic mantras are about Mitra, the Sun God. They are widely used in twilight devotions (*sandhyā*). The first three mantras are connected with the morning ritual while the last one is the celebrated Gāyatrī, the most sacred of Hindu prayers repeated by millions since the dawn of civilization. All these mantras were revealed to the well-known Vedic sage Visvāmītra.

1. According to Sāyana, Sūrya is called Mitra because he 'measures' or knows everything or because he 'saves' all beings by giving rain, etc.

2. It is the primordial divine Word that is the source of all thoughts. According to Sāyana, 'bruvāṇo' also may mean 'being praised'.

3. Sāyana says, the Lord's look is His blessing.

4. Love and spiritual knowledge are the food and wealth of God.

5. *Dhī* is the intuitive faculty lying dormant in the majority of people. It is the inner light by which one realizes spiritual truths.

TO OUR READERS

With this issue *Prabuddha Bharata* is entering the eighty-fifth year of its publication. On this happy occasion we send our warm greetings and best wishes to our readers, friends and sympathizers all over the world.

This is one of the oldest existing religious journals in India. It saw the two World Wars and the agonizing struggle for freedom of the people of India. By constantly reminding the Indian people of their great spiritual heritage, by guiding and awakening their minds to the social problems and their remedies, and by providing a means for the expression of the creative will of the people, this journal played a significant role in national integration and spiritual renaissance during those turbulent days. It has served as a source of inspiration and information on religious matters for more than three generations of people in India and abroad.

A nonprofit, nonsectarian cultural monthly of this type cannot thrive long unless it has its roots in selflessness and truth and is open to change. *Prabuddha Bharata* is the official monthly organ of the Ramakrishna Order whose members are wedded to the vow of selfless service. It is an important channel through which the broad-based Ramakrishna Movement, consisting of lay devotees, friends and supporters, reaches out to the people. The journal stands for Truth—the eternal truths of Vedanta which are universally true and beneficial. These truths, as re-interpreted by Swami Vivekananda, are: the potential divinity of man, spiritual fulfilment through direct experience, and the harmony of religious paths. This journal founded by Swamiji embodies his vision about the spiritual awakening and solidarity of mankind. Another distinctive feature of the journal is its modern and progressive outlook. It has always aimed at

contemporary relevance, and has been growing with the rapidly changing society and trying to meet its fluctuating needs and condition. Year after year the journal has been unfolding itself petal by petal.

During the days before Independence, the needs of the people in India were mainly social—awakening of political consciousness, cultural integration and uplift of the masses. These needs still exist. But it has to be admitted that more than thirty years of self-government and economic growth have altered the moods and needs of the people. Democracy, education and industrialization have brought about three great changes in Indian society.

The first is the rise of the middle class as a dominant and influential group in the body-politic. Freed from socio-economic shackles, a large number of people in India, as else where in the world, are seeking spiritual fulfilment and a new orientation to life and Reality. The sudden increase in the number of religious teachers, organizations, books and periodicals is indicative of the growing hunger for spiritual food. The second change is the spreading influence of science and Western rationalism. Vedanta has now to be re-interpreted in the modern idiom in a way young people can understand and appreciate. Lastly, religious pluralism has become an important factor in social harmony and cultural integration, and the continual outbreak of communal riots, religious fanaticism and sectarianism are a sign that inter-religious understanding and dialogue have become an urgent social necessity.

All this calls for changes in designing the contents and presentation of reading material in *Prabuddha Bharata*. We are giving greater importance to spiritual themes in editorials, and have already started two new

features on the lives and teachings of saints, in addition to Swami Budhananda's serial on 'applied religion'. In a couple of months we propose to start two more new serials: one on inter-religious understanding, and the other on Vedanta and the modern world. We believe our readers and well-wishers will appreciate these changes and continue their support, and will try to

popularize the journal among their friends and acquaintances as a service for a noble cause.

Owing to power shortage in Calcutta and other difficulties, we have not been able to bring out the journal in the first week of every month. We request our readers to bear with us for this. We, however, hope to regularize the publishing very soon.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the nature of Karma and some fundamental principles on which Karma-yoga is based.

In the fifth instalment of JOY OF THE ILLUMINED, Swami Budhananda draws our attention to the undeniable evidence of supernal bliss in the lives of the disciples of St. Francis of Assisi, and in the ecstatic experiences of St. Teresa.

Sri Ramakrishna had two disciples by name Nityagopal. One of them (who figures prominently in the Gospel) later on renounced the world and became famous as Jnanananda Avadhut. The second one (not so well known) was Nityagopal Goswami. This second Nityagopal's life and its transformation under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna are the subject of a fascinating article FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA by Swami Prabhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia.

How has religion influenced society? Is religion responsible for the ills of society? Where can man find happiness? What is the meaning of life? Swami Mukhyananda, Acarya, Probationers' Training Centre, Belur Math, tries to find answers to these basic questions of life in RELIGION AND SOCIETY. The article is based on a talk given at the Kingsway Hall, London, in 1959 by the author when he was an Assistant Minister of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Centre, London.

In this month's HOW THEY WALKED ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE Swami Atmarupananda gives an interesting account of Richard Rolle, one of the best known saints of England whose independent and bracing life and experiences come so close to those of Indian saints.

Some rare teachings of Swami Brahmananda, one of the greatest among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, are presented in HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD.

WORK AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE—II

(EDITORIAL)

What is Karma?

'Karma' is usually translated as 'work', but the two words do not always mean the same. Any movement that involves transfer or transformation of energy is work. A motor-car does work, and so does a waterfall; but do we call this work 'Karma'? No, because it is only mechanical work done by non-living systems. Work to become Karma must be done by a living being.

However, all life-activities are not called Karma. There are millions of cells in our body doing their work silently, but they cannot be said to be doing Karma. Circulation of blood, digestion of food, breathing and other activities going on in our body without our notice can be called Karma only in so far as they pertain to an agent who integrates them and feels them to be his. So the second characteristic of Karma is *kartr̥tva*, consciousness of 'I' as the agent. In the absence of this active 'I'-consciousness, the work of cells, organs and lower forms of life can only be regarded as parts of the vast universal stream of life, and as participating in the collective Karma of the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Cosmic Person, about whom the *Gītā* speaks in several places.

The agent engages himself in work with the intention of experiencing some result. Every form of Karma is based on an expectation of enjoyment. This is called *bhoktr̥tva* and is another characteristic of Karma. It is desires which create this kind of expectation, and mind is the seat of all desires. In fact, all normal human activities are only the outer manifestations of the mind.

Again, Karma involves moral obligation.

The agent not only acts, but feels responsible for his actions. For the feeling of responsibility two conditions are necessary: freedom of choice and regulation by a set of universal moral laws. All our actions are linked to a web of moral codes and ideals, and every work we do, every thought we think, involves a moral choice, decision, willing—though we may not always be aware of this fact.

Morality in Semitic religions is based on the belief that there exists a covenant or contract between God and man which stipulates that God will protect man only if he obeys His moral commandments. On the other hand, morality in Indian religions is based on the Law of Karma according to which every action has a cosmic effect which returns to the doer as the *phala* or fruit which determines his birth, life and environment. Both the views, however, imply that every act of man has a far greater effect than his immediate vision.

Association with life, integration by an agent, influence of desires, moral obligation and the inevitability of cosmic result—these, then, are the characteristics that distinguish Karma from mechanical work. Śrī Kṛṣṇa refers to them as the fivefold cause of all actions: 'Whatever action, right or wrong, that a man does by his body, mind and speech, is caused by five factors, namely, the living base (body), the agent, the sense-organs, the movements of vital air and the supernatural factor.'¹ Any work which does not involve these five factors cannot be called Karma. This is an important point to note. For it is by negating these factors that Karma-yoga breaks the bonds and becomes a spiritual discipline.

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 18.14,15.

Karma and consciousness

Spiritual discipline is a struggle for higher spiritual or divine consciousness. In order to know how Karma-yoga helps us in this we must know the connection between work and consciousness. We have seen that Karma is an activity or movement of life. Are life and consciousness one and the same?

The present confusion between life and consciousness is due to the influence of Western thought and Zen Buddhism which regard them as one. But most of the Hindu philosophies hold that life and consciousness are distinct. The Hindu view of personality is that it is trichotomous, that is, it consists of body, mind and spirit or Atman. According to Vedanta, consciousness belongs only to the Supreme Spirit (Brahman) and the individual spirit (Atman). Everything else including the mind belongs to Prakṛti which is *jaḍa* or unconscious. Life is only a special manifestation of Prakṛti.

In the Upaniṣads the word used to denote life is *prāṇa*. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says, 'All this universe emerges out of, and vibrates in, *prāṇa*.'² It is pictured as a pipal tree hanging upside down with its roots in pure consciousness or Brahman. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* also speaks of *prāṇa* as the universal principle of life and pictures it as a huge wheel the spokes of which are fixed on the Supreme Self.³ The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* identifies *prāṇa* with Prajāpati or Hiraṇyagarbha, the Cosmic Soul, and states that the whole of the manifested universe consists of nothing but name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*) and karma. Like sparks from the fire, like the web from the spider, the whole universe emerges out of Brahman. *Prāṇa* is called the truth,

but Brahman is the Truth of truth (*satyasya satyam*).⁴

In the Tantras, *prāṇa* is considered to be the psychic energy flowing along the three channels, *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*. Most of this energy remains in the dormant form called *kuṇḍalinī* which, when awakened, flows through the *suṣumnā* rousing a new type of consciousness at each *cakra* or centre.

From the above discussion it is clear that life with all its manifestations, including Karma, is distinct from pure consciousness but in some way closely connected to it or supported by it. The involvement of the spirit in life is bondage and their separation is liberation.

Karma and bondage

How the spirit got bound in life in the first place is, however, not quite clear. The Advaita school solves the problem by regarding life as illusory. But to account for empirical experience, it posits two types of self: the *sākṣi* or witnessing self and the *kartā* or the agent. The witnessing self is the pure self-luminous Atman which is really ever free and infinite. This true self when covered or limited by the Buddhi or the intellect appears as the empirical self and becomes the agent of actions. Bondage applies only to this empirical self.

Śrī Rāmānuja and some other Vedantic teachers hold that there is only one self which is the witness and the agent at the same time. Though intrinsically pure and self-luminous, and a part of Brahman, its light is obscured by the impurities in the mind which envelops it, and it gets bound to action.

All Hindu systems, however, are unanimous in holding that the self is immutable,

². 2.3.2.

³. 2.6; 3.3; 6.6.

⁴. 1.6.1; 2.1.20.

and that change, movement, action belong not to the soul but to the mind and body which are only modifications of Prakṛti. So Karma is actually a function of Prakṛti. The self appropriates that movement of Prakṛti and considers itself the agent. The appropriation takes place through willing (*icchā*). It is the will that is bound. Behind every action there is the will which supports it.

Will and 'I'-consciousness are the active and passive aspects of the self. Will may be regarded as a focussing of consciousness. Just as 'I'-consciousness in its true nature is pure and free, so also, is will intrinsically free but is actually found enslaved by desires. Most of the Karma done by us is prompted by this impure and enslaved will. Between the will and the action, desires intervene and change the nature of action. If our will is freed from the hold of desires, then all our actions will be supported and impelled by the pure will.

Karma and freedom

Desires are the sprouting of latent impressions (*samskāras*) left in the mind by earlier experiences. According to teachers of Hinduism every action, or the experience that follows it, produces two kinds of effect. One is the cosmic effect which, as already mentioned, returns to the doer after some time as the *karma phala* or fruit of action and determines his living conditions. The second effect, which is individual, is the production of a *samskāra* or subliminal impression in the mind. Unlike the *karma phala* which is irrevocable and unchangeable, *samskāras* can be changed. Suppose a man does a wicked deed: this will produce a bad *samskāra* in his mind and also a painful *karma phala*. Through repentance, prayer and good conduct, the man can change the bad *samskāra* in him, but he can by no means avert the painful *karma phala*, which

will visit him with unerring certainty.⁵ This is the Law of Karma, which may not give us freedom to change our circumstances as we please, but certainly gives us freedom to change our minds and to gain strength to face our situations.

According to Patañjali, *samskāras* are of two types: *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā*. Every action or experience produces in us a tendency to repeat the action or experience. The smoking of one cigarette produces a tendency to smoke another. The impression in the mind which produces this desire or tendency to act is called *karma bīja*. The sum total of all *karma bījas* is collectively called *karmāśaya* by Patañjali.⁶ It may be said to correspond to the 'instincts' of Western psychologists. All our desires, drives, impulses—good and bad—all that prompt us to act are the sprouting of *karmāśaya*. According to Patañjali our future birth (*jāti*), longevity (*āyus*) and experiences (*bhoga*) are determined by the *karmāśaya*.

Every experience also leaves in the mind a second type of *samskāra* called *vāsanā* which later on gives rise to memory.⁷ A person who has conquered his smoking habit can remember his earlier experience without feeling the urge to smoke. This shows that the memory of an experience and the desire or impulse to repeat that experience are two different things.

Usually, however, memory and impulse are intimately interconnected and the arousal of one automatically leads to the arousal of the other. *Karmāśaya* and *vāsanās* are simultaneously recorded in the mind and are closely interconnected. But they represent two different functions of the mind, and this distinction is important. Memory is a kind

5. For a rational explanation of *karma phala*, cf. Swami Vivekananda, 'Karma Yoga', in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 1, pp. 81-82.

6. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtra* 2.12,13.

7. *Ibid.*, 4.8,9.

of imagination in which names and mental pictures are formed. By itself it is a harmless exercise. Not so are the impulses or desires. They produce bodily changes and drag the soul away to the objects of desire. In a person who has controlled the passions like hatred, fear, etc. the images connected with them may appear but these images do not rouse the passions. There is no need to get alarmed when certain images appear in the mind, they are dangerous only if they are connected to wrong emotions. The connection between memories and impulses (actually between *vāsanās* and *karma bījas*) is a sort of conditioned reflex made by habit. But this connection can be broken through discrimination, prayer and repeated effort. A large part of human suffering is caused by the wrong connections of various names and images to bad emotions made during early adolescence through evil company.⁸

For our present purpose the most important point to remember is that it is only desires or impulses produced by *karmāśaya* that bind the soul, and not the memories produced by *vāsanās*. The will, which is a dynamic principle, gets connected only to the impulses or desires, and this is what binds the soul. It is Karma that produces desire. A person who has never smoked a cigarette cannot have a *desire* for smoking. He can at best have only a curiosity for it. Since *karmāśaya* is produced in the mind through Karma, and the connection between it and the will is also usually produced through Karma, these two effects can be destroyed through Karma. It is through right action that one counteracts the bad effects of wrong actions. Karma rouses latent desires and Karma itself can destroy them. The effects of bad Karma

cannot be easily erased through the thinking process alone. Even if one partially succeeds in it, one has to test it in actual life through action. That is why Karma-yoga is regarded as an unavoidable discipline for the purification of the mind. Hence Śaṅkarācārya says: *na hi acalato śuddhirasti* ('There is no purification for one who does not move,' i.e. who does not work).

Prāṇa or life-energy is constantly activating the *saṁskāras*, and as a result desires and memories are constantly rising in our minds, though we notice only a few. Left to themselves, even the desires are not troublesome. It is only when the will goes and hooks the desires that they become our own. Then they become *saṁkalpas* (intentions). When the desires thus get connected to the soul they become charged with consciousness, become living and then start haunting us. But if the will is withdrawn through detachment, the desires get deflated, become lifeless and then disappear after remaining in the field of consciousness for a short time. On a Diwali night if you stand on the terrace of a house in an Indian city, you can see hundreds of squibs, 'rockets', crackers, etc. going up and exploding all around you. But you remain unaffected. In the same way, a detached person feels desires rising and disappearing in him without giving him any trouble.

Detachment means freedom from desires. The desires cannot be destroyed in the beginning, for destruction of the seeds of desire (*karmāśaya*) is possible only by the light of spiritual illumination. But for a beginner in spiritual life what is important is to see that desires are not given physical expression but are reduced to their latent, subliminal seed-state. If the desires arise, the will should be freed from them. This is the first freedom that an aspirant must acquire, and this is the primary purpose of Karma-yoga. When the will is detached

8. The above discussion on *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā* is based on Bhoja's gloss on *Yoga Sūtra* 2.18, and Hariharananda Aranya's Bengali notes on *Yoga Sūtra* 2.12; 4.11.

from desires, then aspiration or yearning for God can turn it inward. This inward going tendency of the will freed from desires is what Sureśvarācārya calls *pratyak pravānatā* ('interiority of the mind'). This is the first purpose of Karma-yoga according to all Vedantic teachers. Sureśvarācārya says, just as the clouds produce rain and then disappear, so does Karma disappear after producing *pratyak pravānatā*.⁹ Without acquiring this first freedom it is not possible to attain higher degrees of freedom.

Karma and love

The freedom to turn within, the freedom to detach the will from desires is, however, used by the Karma-yogi to perfect his work and render service to his fellow beings. In the case of the Karma-yogi interiorization of mind is aimed at projecting his inner powers outside for the welfare of the world. So in his case spiritual effort moves in two directions: inward, for the deepening and concentration of mental powers, and outward, for the extension and deployment of these powers in social service. This double movement is an important characteristic of Karma-yoga which distinguishes it from all other yogas.

What is that power which draws the Karma-yogi outward and makes him take up the burden of others? It is the power of love—not selfish love but love freely given without expecting anything in return. Love is an inseparable aspect of Karma-yoga.

Human love is usually regarded as an emotion which is harmful to spiritual progress. This misconception is the result of identifying it with desires and instincts. True love is neither an emotion nor a desire. It is a mysterious unifying power which is the very fabric of existence. It is indeed inseparable from life. It is the basic rhythm

that pulsates through all creation. Infinite are its expressions. It is not personal. You do not create it; it creates you. Love cannot be manufactured. It is a mistake to think that love is a special creation of the individual or something to be newly acquired. It is a universal power which spontaneously bubbles up in all living beings. The main reason for failures in love is that many people are not mature enough to handle properly this natural power that is arising in them.

Unlike Christian religious literature which speaks frankly and forcefully about human love, Hindu religious literature is more restrained and less emphatic about it. This has given rise to the criticism that Hinduism teaches dry intellectualism and unmitigated egotism. The truth is that love in Hinduism is identified with the unifying power of existence. Everything that unites man and man and man and God is love. A Hindu devotee does not tell God, 'I love Thee'. Rather, he seeks union with Him. Love is thus an inseparable aspect of Reality. But the exact place of love in ultimate Reality is a matter of dispute among Hindu philosophers. Śrī Śaṅkara, in order to keep the purity of Jñāna, includes it under Karma. Śrī Rāmānuja looks upon love as a special kind of Jñāna. Swami Vivekananda identifies love with Ānanda, Bliss: Vallabhācārya also does the same. The Bengal Vaiṣṇava school which looks upon creation as God's self-projection of His essence, regards love as God's self-enjoyment of His own Bliss. From the point of view of a Karma-yogi, love is perhaps more meaningful as an expression of *sat*, Existence. All life is one, and love is an expression of this unity of life and basic solidarity of creation.

Karma-yoga is regulating one's activities in tune with the rhythm of universal love. The difference between a Karma-yogi and a worldly person, who too does work, lies in the way they manipulate love. In the

9. *Naiṣkarmya Siddhi* 1.49.

first place, the worldly person has very little love in him because he obstructs the flow of universal love through him by hatred, jealousy, greed and other negative emotions. In the Karma-yogi love flows like a river. Secondly, the worldly person tries to prevent whatever little love he has got from flowing out of him and reaching others, but he succeeds only in creating a whirlpool or a cess-pool in himself. As a result, love for him becomes a source of conflict and torture. A third difference lies in the fact that the worldly person is unconscious of the power of love. His love is instinctive and unenlightened; it is a reaction to the attitudes of others. He is more or less a helpless victim of love. The true Karma-yogi, on the contrary, is fully conscious of the tremendous power of love and is its master and controller. Love flows from him to others in a regulated way but in abundance. He does not try to bind others to himself but helps and guides all people along their own paths to the supreme goal.

Thus, interiorization of mind through Karma, and the mature, conscious, unselfish regulation of the stream of love for the welfare of the world are the two important characteristics of Karma-yoga.

Fundamental principles of Karma-yoga

Karma-yoga is a spiritual discipline and is based on certain eternal principles which are universally valid. The first principle is the naturalness of selfless work. Though we think we are doing our work by our free will, all work is a part of the universal stream of life. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: 'Verily, no one ever remains even for a second without work; for everyone is helplessly driven to action by the energies of Nature.'¹⁰ Just as physical work involves

the transformation of physical energy, so also Karma involves the transformation of life-energy. These life movements are only a part of the vast and mysterious motion going all over the universe.

One of the great discoveries made by Galileo and Newton was that all bodies spontaneously move in a straight line unless acted upon by an external force. This is the famous Newton's First Law of Motion. What this means is that no force is necessary to keep bodies in motion. If there were no gravity holding us down on earth we would all be floating in space! From electrons to super-galaxies everything in the universe is constantly moving. Even when we think we ourselves are moving our legs and arms, what actually happens is that solar energy which had been impounded as potential energy in our body cells through phosphate-bonds is being transformed into kinetic energy. We can only regulate or change the course of the movement that is already present in us and everywhere. Similarly, we do not actually produce our thoughts. Thoughts arise in us by the movement of *prāṇa* or life-energy which activate the latent *samskāras*. All that we can do is to regulate the flow of thought. According to Patañjali, one's mind never stops until one attains final liberation. Even in deep sleep and Samādhi subliminal transformations go on in the mind. All this shows that motion is universal and uncreated.

Centuries before Newton, Aristotle propounded the theory that all movements are parts of one universal movement which originates from a Prime Mover, who is himself unmoved. A similar view is found in the Vedānta philosophy which holds that the whole universe is the body of God who is the source of all motion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares in the *Gītā*: 'O Arjuna, the Lord seated in the hearts of all beings, whirls them around as if they were mounted on

¹⁰. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.5.

a machine.¹¹ And he teaches Arjuna to practise self-surrender to that Prime Mover: 'I take refuge in that primeval Puruṣa from whom streamed forth the ancient movement.'¹²

The whole universe is in a dynamic state. Just as every cell in the body is constantly doing its allotted duty which makes the life of the human organism possible, so also, all living beings are working for the maintenance of the ceaseless flow of the universal stream of life. Every living being seems to have some part to play in the mysterious economy of existence. What does this show? It shows that no Karma is actually ours and selfless action is the natural law. The ego tries to appropriate a part of the universal action to itself and claims it to be its own. Indeed, selfless action, carried on by Prakṛti, is alone 'action'. Egoistic action is actually a 'reaction'; it is the reaction of the ego to the flow of the life-stream in the personality; it is the desperate attempt of the ego to retain things which really belong to the universal stream. That is why action with desire creates so much struggle, tension and suffering. Egoism is the only cause of all our suffering. The more egoistic we are, the farther we move away from the life-stream; and the greater the effort needed to keep ourselves going.

Selfless action is spontaneous, natural, relaxing and peaceful. There is no need to worry so much about our daily routine and work. Prakṛti really does everything for us. All that we have to do is to understand how Prakṛti works—this process is called learning or education—and create a channel in us for the free-working of Prakṛti. How does a boy write his answers

in the examination? He only holds the pen. His unconscious which is a storeroom of all the ideas—digested and undigested—that he had earlier collected, mixes them and feeds his pen. The boy is hardly conscious of the whole process. Almost all our daily activities and professional work are done by Prakṛti working through the unconscious. If we learn to trust Prakṛti and attune ourselves to her workings, we can do our work more efficiently, selflessly and without needless strain and conflict. The peace of mind and freedom thus gained could then be utilized for seeking God.

The second fundamental principle of Karma-yoga is the law of *yajña* or sacrifice. This has two implications. All beings form the body of God and life-energy is flowing in a circuit in it. Every being must refund to the common stream what it takes from it. The law also implies that in order to attain higher happiness or experience one has to sacrifice lower happiness or experience. Until one attains the highest goal of life one has to obey this law. Only a fully illumined man is free from this obligation, though he too may follow it and render social service for the welfare of the world.

The third fundamental principle on which Karma-yoga is based is that the effect of Karma depends on the state of consciousness of the doer. It is not what we do that is important but how we do it. (This principle evidently applies only to virtuous, sane actions.) The ultimate source of all work energy is the Divine, and hence every kind of work is holy and could be used as a means for Self-realization. But for this we must be in the right state of consciousness.

What binds us to the world is not work but desires and egoism. This however does not mean we should work like a machine or a honey bee. Work must be done with an alert mind, with full self-awareness. It

11. *Ibid.*, 18.61.

12. तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसूता
पुराणी ॥
Ibid., 15.4.

should always be remembered that 'self'-less work only means working without desires, but there must be an awakened, detached, larger self behind it. Every activity must detach the will and enlarge our self-awareness. When the self is detached from desires, Karmā will not produce new *samskāras*. And when the self is detached from the life-stream, all actions will be carried on by Prakṛti and the fruit of actions, which also belongs to Prakṛti, will not return to the doer. Thus,

it is the state of consciousness of the individual that is the most important factor in converting ordinary work, which is normally binding in its effect, into Karma-yoga, a liberating discipline. As the saying goes, 'Mind alone is the cause of man's bondage and liberation.'¹³

(To be continued)

13. मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।

Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad 2.

JOY OF THE ILLUMINED— V

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

Brother Leo, a companion of St. Francis, was once being assailed by a severe temptation of a spiritual nature. The afflicted brother thought that if he could possess some holy words written by St. Francis his temptations would leave him—if not wholly, at least partially. Brother Leo was not, however, courageous enough to take this to the saint. But this unspoken desire came to be known by St. Francis, who accordingly gave him a written blessing,⁷¹ the original of which is preserved

at Assisi. In this blessing St. Francis speaks of God: 'Thou art joy and gladness.' And it is not surprising that St. Francis should say so, for God came to St. Francis that way.

His three companions, Brother Leo, Brother Rufino, and Brother Angelo, write in their reminiscences of Francis:

Now on a day when he was ardently beseeching the mercy of God, the Lord shewed him that it should soon be told unto him what he ought to do. And thenceforward he was filled with such joy that he could not contain himself for gladness, albeit he took heed lest he should

⁷¹. Here is the full text of St. Francis' Blessing given to Brother Leo:

'The Lord bless you and keep you. May He show you His face and be merciful to you. May He turn His countenance to you, and give you peace. The Lord bless you. Brother Leo. T [the Greek letter *tau*, representing the Cross].'

On the reverse is this Praise of God:

'Thou alone are holy, Lord God, who doest wondrous things. Thou art strong, Thou art great. Thou art the Most High. Thou art the Almighty King, the holy Father, King of heaven and earth. Thou art Trinity and Unity, O Lord God, all Goodness. Thou art Good, all Good, the Supreme Good, Lord God, living and true. Thou art Charity and Love. Thou art Wisdom.

Thou art Humility. Thou art Patience. Thou art Serenity. Thou art Peace. Thou art Joy and Gladness. Thou art Justice and Temperance. Thou art our wealth, our treasure, and our satisfaction. Thou art Beauty. Thou art Clemency. Thou art our Protector. Thou art our Guardian and Defender. Thou art Strength. Thou art Refreshment. Thou art our Hope. Thou art our Trust. Thou art our great Delight. Thou art Eternal Life, great and wondrous Lord, Almighty God, merciful Saviour.'

See *The Flowers of Saint Francis*, trans. L. Sherley-Price (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1959), Appendix 5.

blab aught of this secret in the ears of men. Cautiously, nevertheless, and speaking in riddles, he said he was minded not to go into Apulia, but to do noble and mighty deeds in his own country. But when his comrades saw him thus changed,—though in truth he had long been estranged from them in spirit, even while associating with them from time to time in bodily presence,—they again ask him as in jest: ‘Art thou minded to take a wife?’ Unto whom he made answer by a sort of riddle as before was told. Now after a few days he was walking near the Church of S. Damian when it was told him in the spirit that he should enter to pray therein. And when he had come in, he began to pray right instantly before a certain Image of the Crucified, the which spake unto him in holy and gracious wise, saying: ‘Francis, seest thou not that My House is being destroyed? Go therefore, and repair Me it.’ And trembling and astonished he saith: ‘Gladly will I do it, O Lord.’ For he understood the saying to be of that Church, which through its exceeding great age seemed like soon to fall. And by that speech thus made unto him he was so filled with joy and so illumined of light that in his soul he felt in very truth that it⁷² had been Christ Crucified Who had spoken unto him.

Perfect love of God is supreme joy in God. Supreme joy in God is perfect love of God. Of this St. Francis’ life is a wonderful example. St. Bonaventura, Francis’ biographer, narrates:

Of the ardent love that glowed in Francis the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. For, at the mere mention of the love of the Lord, he was aroused, moved, and enkindled, as though the inner chords of his heart vibrated under the bow of the voice from without. He would say that it was a magnificent largesse to offer such wealth in exchange for alms, and that those who esteemed it of less worth than money were verily fools, for that the priceless price of the divine love alone availeth to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and His love Who hath loved us much is much to be loved.

⁷². Three Companions, *The Legend of Saint Francis*, trans. E. G. Salter (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1902), pp. 27-28.

That he might by all things be stirred up unto the divine love, he triumphed in all the works of the Lord’s hands, and through the sight of their joy was uplifted unto their life-giving cause and origin. He beheld in fair things Him Who is the most fair, and, through the traces of Himself that He hath imprinted on His creatures, he everywhere followed on to reach the Beloved, making of all things a ladder for himself whereby he might ascend to lay hold on Him Who is the altogether lovely. For by the impulse of his unexampled devotion he tasted that fountain of goodness that streamed forth, as in rivulets, in every created thing, and he perceived as it were an heavenly harmony in the concord of the virtues and actions granted unto them by God, and did sweetly exhort them to praise the Lord, even as the Prophet David had done.⁷³

Perfect love of God, which is supreme joy of God, made St. Francis as gay as a drunken Bohemian, the seeming frivolity of which might shock a sophisticated piety which is overmuch concerned about the right look of a man in habit. It is said:

Drunken with the love and compassion of Christ, blessed Francis on a time did things such as these. For the most sweet melody of spirit boiling up within him frequently broke out in French speech and the veins of murmuring which he heard secretly with his ears, broke forth into French-like rejoicing. And sometimes he picked up a branch from the earth, and laying it on his left arm, he drew in his right hand another stick like a bow over it, as if on a viol or other instrument, and making fitting gestures sang with it in French unto the Lord Jesus Christ.⁷⁴

Out of his joy in God, St. Francis saw the whole world instinct with the joy of God. This was why he hymned objects, which we call ‘inanimate’, and preached to those which we call ‘lower creatures’.

One who has experienced joy of God, he sees Him sparkling everywhere and in

⁷³. Saint Bonaventura, *The Life of Saint Francis* (London: J. M. Dent and Co.), pp. 94-95.

⁷⁴. *The Mirror of Perfection*, trans. Robert Steele (London: Temple Classic, 1903), chap. xciii, p. 137.

everything. In his first rule for the Brotherhood which he guided, St. Francis called for the spirit of joy as a fundamental postulate of spiritual life:

Let the Friars beware of being sad and gloomy like hypocrites; but let them show themselves joyful in the Lord, gay and pleasant.⁷⁵

This is how St. Francis set forth to Friar Leo where perfect joy was to be found:

One winter's day, as St. Francis was going from Perugia with Friar Leo to St. Mary of the Angels, suffering sorely from the bitter cold, he called Friar Leo, that was going before him, and spake thus, 'Friar Leo, albeit the friars minor in every land give good examples of holiness and edification, nevertheless write and note down diligently that perfect joy is not to be found therein.'

And St. Francis went his way a little farther, and called him a second time, saying, 'O Friar Leo, even though the friar minor gave sight to the blind, made the crooked straight, cast out devils, made the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, restored speech to the dumb, and, what is a yet greater thing, raised to life those who have lain four days in the grave; write—perfect joy is not found there.'

And he journeyed on a little while, and cried aloud, 'O Friar Leo, if the friar minor knew all tongues and all the sciences and all the Scriptures, so that he could foretell and reveal not only future things, but even the secrets of the conscience and of the soul; write—perfect joy is not there.'

Yet a little farther went St. Francis, and cried again aloud, 'O Friar Leo, little sheep of God, even though the friar minor spake with the tongue of angels and knew the courses of the stars and the virtues of herbs, and were the hidden treasures of the earth revealed to him, and he knew the qualities of birds, and of fishes, and of all animals, and of man, and of trees, and stones, and roots, and waters; write—not there is perfect joy.'

And St. Francis went on again a little space, and cried aloud, 'O Friar Leo, although the friar minor were skilled to preach so well that he should convert all the infidels to the faith of Christ; write—not there is perfect joy.'

And when this fashion of talk had endured two good miles, Friar Leo asked him in great wonder and said, 'Father, prithee in God's name tell me where is perfect joy to be found?'

And St. Francis answered him thus, 'When we are come to St. Mary of the Angels, wet through with rain, frozen with cold, and foul with mire and tormented with hunger; and when we knock at the door, the doorkeeper cometh in a rage and saith, "Who are ye?" and we say, "We are two of your friars," and he answers, "Ye tell not true; ye are rather two knaves that go deceiving the world and stealing the alms of the poor; begone!" and he openeth not to us, and maketh us stay outside hungry and cold all night in the rain and snow; then if we endure patiently such cruelty, such abuse, and such insolent dismissal without complaint or murmuring, and believe humbly and charitably that that doorkeeper truly knows us, and that God maketh him to rail against us; O Friar Leo, write—there is perfect joy.'

'And if we persevere in our knocking, and he issues forth and angrily drives us away, abusing us and smiting us on the cheek, saying, "Go hence, ye vile thieves, get ye gone to the spital, for here ye shall neither eat nor lodge;" if these we suffer patiently with love and gladness; write, O Friar Leo—this is perfect joy.'

'And if, constrained by hunger and by cold, we knock once more and pray with many tears that he open to us for the love of God and let us but come inside, and he more insolently than ever crieth, "These be impudent rogues, I will pay them out as they deserve;" and issues forth with a big knotted stick and seizes us by our cowls and flings us on the ground and rolls us in the snow, bruising every bone in our bodies with that heavy stick—if we, thinking on the agony of the blessed Christ, endure all these things patiently and joyously for love of Him; write, O Friar Leo, that here and in this perfect joy is found.'

'And now, Friar Leo, hear the conclusion. Above all the grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that Christ giveth to His beloved is that of overcoming self, and for love of Him willingly to bear pain and buffetings and revilings and discomfort; for in none other of God's gifts, save these, may we glory, seeing they are not ours, but of God. Wherefore the Apostle saith, "What hast thou that is not of God, and if thou hast received it of Him, wherefore dost thou glory as if thou hadst it of thyself?" But in the cross of tribulation and of affliction we may glory, because this is ours. Therefore the Apostle saith,

⁷⁵ See 'Introduction', *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, p. 19.

"I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." ⁷⁶

* * *

In the endless winding roads of the world everyone is on a pilgrimage. Who is reaching the destination earlier? Is the man on wheels reaching it faster? No. He reaches it faster who experiences the joy of God earlier. Let a wayfarer of the world (about whose identity nothing is known, except that he was a pilgrim who made his way from place to place in Russia and Siberia, praying unceasingly) tell his simple story of the joy of illumination:

By the grace of God I am a Christian man, by my actions a great sinner, and by calling a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth who roams from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack with some dried bread in it on my back, and in my breast pocket a Bible. And that is all.

On the 24th Sunday after Pentecost I went to church to say my prayers there during the Liturgy. The first Epistle of St. Paul to the Thesalonians was being read, and among other words I heard these—'Pray without ceasing.' It was this text, more than any other, which forced itself upon my mind, and I began to think how it was possible to pray without ceasing, since a man has to concern himself with other things also in order to make a living. I looked at my Bible, and with my own eyes read the words which I had heard, i.e. that we ought always, at all times and in all places, to pray with uplifted hands. I thought and thought, but knew not what to make of it. 'What ought I to do?' I thought. 'Where shall I find someone to explain it to me? I will go to the churches where famous preachers are to be heard; perhaps there I shall hear something which will throw light on it for me.' I did so.⁷⁷

He moved on his way seeking, knocking, asking, praying, all the while to be shown

⁷⁶. *The Little Flowers of St. Francis: The Mirror of Perfection: The Life of St. Francis*: (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1934), pp. 15-16.

⁷⁷. *The Way of the Pilgrim*, trans. R. M. French (London: Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1941), pp. 11-12.

how to pray unceasingly. A contrite heart God will not despise, a sincere soul who is alone in the world and asks for nothing but God, God will not ignore. This pilgrim, to begin with, had no road maps—a knapsack with dry bread, and a pocket Bible were his only property—but he reached the destination all right. The first intimation itself was so powerful and reassuring:

When about three weeks had passed I felt a pain in my heart and then a most delightful warmth, as well as consolation and peace. This aroused me still more and spurred me on more and more to give great care to the saying of the Prayer so that all my thoughts were taken up with it and I felt a very great joy. From this time I began to have from time to time a number of different feelings in my heart and mind. Sometimes my heart would feel as though it were bubbling with joy, such lightness, freedom and consolation were in it. Sometimes I felt a burning love for Jesus Christ and for all creatures. Sometimes my eyes brimmed over with tears of thankfulness to God, who was so merciful to me, a wretched sinner. Sometimes my understanding, which had been so stupid before, was given so much light that I could easily grasp and dwell upon matters of which up to now I had not been able even to think at all. Sometimes that sense of a warm gladness in my heart spread throughout my whole being and I was deeply moved as the fact of the presence of God everywhere was brought home to me. Sometimes by calling upon the Name of Jesus I was overwhelmed with bliss and now I knew the meaning of the words 'The Kingdom of God is within you.'⁷⁸

When the experience came to him repeatedly, he knew better—that the Kingdom of God is not only within you, it is without, too, if, that is, there is a within and without for a man who is in the Truth. The great experience the Pilgrim narrates in such simple words:

The prayer of my heart gave me such consolation that I felt there was no happier person

⁷⁸. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

on earth than I, and I doubted if there could be greater and fuller happiness in the kingdom of Heaven. Not only did I feel this in my own soul, but the whole outside world also seemed to me full of charm and delight. Everything drew me to love and thank God: people, trees, plants, animals. I saw them all as my kinsfolk. I found on all of them the magic Name of Jesus. Sometimes I felt as light as though I had no body and was floating happily through the air instead of walking. Sometimes when I withdrew into myself I saw clearly all my internal organs and was filled with wonder at the wisdom with which the human body is made. Sometimes I felt as joyful as if I had been made Tsar. And at all such times of happiness, I wished that God would let death come to me quickly and let me pour out my heart in thankfulness at His feet in the world of spirits.⁷⁹

* * *

When God steps into history, as an Avatar, a God-man, His every movement, His every word is directed to working for the salvation of souls. In His scheme of salvation there are many strategies, for various are the types of souls for whom He provides. While in human flesh, He may reveal a few such strategies; and behind He leaves a trail of divine indications, holding on to any of which in later times a soul can reach Him.

God teaches that behind all the various methods of approach, the one supreme idea is uninterrupted love for Him. How you will love Him is not His fundamental concern. His concern is that you love Him; love Him by hook or by crook. Do you want to love Him as if He were your beloved? Do it that way, if that is what you want. He will not say, I am too holy to be loved sweetheart-wise. In God's eye, no kind of love for Him is unclean, because when a soul becomes open to God, that openness itself destroys impurity. In whatever way the Holy of Holies may be touched by a soul, it will become holy. Bring all your unclean love to God, only

bring it to Him in its entirety, and you will be saved.

Christ was an ascetic, but not a puritan. If he were not holiness itself, whose very touch broke the bondage of souls, he would not have told the Parable of the Bridegroom and the Ten Maidens.⁸⁰ Many saints in the Occident and the Orient have attained illumination holding on to God as the bridegroom. God, who has become everything, has also become the bridegroom for saving the devotee, while remaining God all the time. St. Teresa of Avila, for instance, is here telling her own story:

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

The action of this grace was so powerful that I remained out of my sense. I was as it were stupefied and asked Our Lord to enlarge my littleness or else not to give me such immense favour, for my natural weakness could not bear it. I spent that day in a state of inebriation. Great benefits have come from it since, but also an increase of confusion and distress, for I do not serve as I ought to serve after having received such a great grace.⁸¹

Thus took place the mystical marriage of St. Teresa of Jesus. At the command of the Bridegroom, she noted down in her *Thoughts on the Love of God*, the following dialogue that passed between the bride and the Bridegroom, in the soul's way which is above time:

⁸⁰. Matthew 15:1-13.

⁸¹. Quoted in Marcelle Auclair, *Saint Teresa of Avila* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), p. 239.

⁷⁹. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

Christ: My honour is yours, your honour is mine!

Teresa: He will take charge of my affairs and I of his!

God the Father: I have given you my Son, the Holy Spirit and the blessed Virgin here. What can you give me?

Teresa: What can I do for my Bridegroom? What could anyone so clumsy as I do? Waste the graces you have given me....

Christ: Do you imagine, daughter, that to be in a state of joy is meritorious? The only way to merit is to act, to suffer and to love.

Teresa: Stay me up with flowers. It does not seem to me that that is asking for death, but more to consecrate one's life to serve him to whom one owes so much.... Let Bridegroom and bride be no longer two but one single will, not so much in words or desires but in acts.⁸²

What was this marriage that, for St. Teresa, was illumination itself? Of the

joy of the illumination she has left an ecstatic account:

...A sort of divine intoxication, oblivious of what it wants, what it says, what it demands... He wants to fill her to overflowing, to delight her still more, he changes her into himself, and like all those who faint away through excess of pleasure and joy, she remains as it were unconscious in the divine arms and on the divine breast. She no longer cares for anything except to abandon herself to joy, nourished by the divine milk.... This heavenly inebriation by which she is delighted and terrified at the same time... this holy madness.... Thy breasts are better than wine.... entirely saturated in the ineffable greatness of God... My Bridegroom, a single drop of the precious wine which you give me makes me forget every created thing... Let me gaze at my Beloved and he at me... I beseech you, O God, by the blood of your Son, to give me this grace: Kiss me with a kiss of your mouth!.... And what can I do for my Bridegroom?⁸³

(To be continued)

⁸². *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸³. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: NITYAGOPAL GOSWAMI

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Krishnakamal Goswami (1810-1888), better known as 'Baro Gossain', popularized Vaiṣṇavism in Dacca, largely through his composition of innumerable Vaiṣṇava lyrics and dramas of unique beauty, of which *Rāi Unmādinī* was the most famous. He belonged to the Vaidya caste, and his forefathers had been direct disciples of Śrī Nityānanda, the spiritual companion of Śrī Gaurāṅga.

His handsome son Nityagopal showed deep religious inclinations right from his childhood, and also earned a name rather early in life as a good scholar. Of religious temperament and docile nature, Nityagopal

felt the pang of spiritual poverty and turned hither and thither for its alleviation. This search brought him first to the Brahmo Samaj, which utterly failed to satisfy him. Rather, he became all the more restless. Under the influence of a friend's suggestion, he joined a group of atheists; but being a firm believer in God, Nityagopal could hardly stand their uncongenial companionship. Then he became a member of the Theosophical Society. His experience there found expression in his observation: 'I cannot say that my association with this institution did not do me any good.' Nonetheless he continued to read and discuss the

Sāṅkhya and Yoga Śāstras. During this time he met Vijay Krishna Goswami, then the Head of the Dacca Brahma Samaj. Spiritual poverty apart, the pecuniary difficulties of his family made him anxious enough. He had long talks with Vijay Krishna Goswami about his mental agonies, and during one such discussion he heard of the Paramahansa of the Dakshineswar temple for the first time.

The son of Khudiram Chattopadhyaya, an austere Brahmin, Sri Ramakrishna was born and brought up in the village of Kamarpukur, which lies in the Hooghly District of Bengal. Possessed of an extraordinary memory, a keen intellect and fine aesthetic abilities, he refused to acquire traditional secular knowledge. Instead, his ecstatic experiences in boyhood led him to seek greater spiritual enlightenment. As a young man he went to Calcutta and then to the Dakshineswar temple, where the intense hunger of his soul led him through hard disciplines to the divine vision, which in time came to him not only in trance but in the normal state of consciousness, even with open eyes. Though living in a state of almost constant divine inebriation, he yearned for the vision of the Godhead in its different aspects and forms. Thus with superhuman energy, ardour and devotion he practised the spiritual disciplines of various Hindu sects. Next he turned to Islam and then to Christianity, and in each case he was blessed with wonderful experiences and the ultimate spiritual realization. The unique genius of Sri Ramakrishna allowed him to pass through the whole gamut of the world's spiritual teachings within a few years. During his spiritual practices this mystic lived as if there were none in the world except himself and God; but on his successful completion of his quest he returned to the world, realizing that it was the outer court of eternity.

The rich fund of mystical experiences gathered over twelve years led him to a sublime state called 'Bhāvamukha'. Reaching that state, it gradually dawned on him that he had a divine mission to fulfil, and he began to propagate his message. He wanted to set in a religious resurgence for the regeneration of India, for the spiritual awakening of all mankind, and for the establishment of harmony among the different religions of the world. Both by precept and by his own day-to-day life Sri Ramakrishna revealed to incredulous men, then under the spell of natural science and rationalism, the divine nature of human beings and the basic divine unity pervading the diversity of the universe. He demonstrated repeatedly that the spiritual goal is one, though the paths vary, and that the Divine Being is both transcendent and immanent and has many facets and expressions. He looked upon all men and women as living manifestations of God.

The story of Paramahansa Ramakrishna as presented by Vijay Krishna fascinated Nityagopal, who at that time was a lecturer in the Jagannath College at Dacca, now the capital of Bangladesh. He felt an urge, which became stronger with the passage of time, to meet the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. He availed himself of the first opportunity and went to Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, to see the saint. It was sometime after Sri Ramakrishna's participation in the festival at Mani Mallick's on November 26, 1883, that Vijay Krishna Goswami took charge of the Dacca Brahma Samaj, and it was during this period that Nityagopal came in close contact with Vijay.¹

1. After his formal spiritual initiation from a holy man of the Nanak school at Akasganga, Gaya, and a period spent in spiritual austerities, Vijaykrishna went to see Sri Ramakrishna at the temple of the Brahma Samaj on September 26, 1884. Observing the striking change in Vijay

In all probability Nityagopal met Sri Ramakrishna sometime in the middle of 1884. The popular version of the first meeting was that Sri Ramakrishna, who was having his midday meal at the time of Nityagopal's arrival, was so pleased at the sight of him that he could not enjoy his meal, and in fact left it half-finished.² Nityagopal himself, however, said later³ that he had found Sri Ramakrishna lying on a cot in his room at Dakshineswar when he met him first. Sri Ramakrishna was taking rest after his midday meal. An adept at seeing the inner nature of a person, Sri Ramakrishna could immediately assess the spiritual potentiality of the new arrival. Being pleased with him, Sri Ramakrishna asked him to softly massage his feet. This blessed favour moved the devout Nityagopal so much that tears of joy streamed down his cheeks. Sri Ramakrishna poured out his soul in rhapsodic talk of God and his rare spiritual experiences. In the course of conversation Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Nothing happens without the aid of a Guru. Vijay had his Guru and so he has now attained peace of mind. What is the necessity of your practising austerities and Yoga? It will be done in a trice.' Nityagopal further recollected that at one stage Sri Ramakrishna, in an ecstatic mood, had placed his feet on his chest.⁴ Nityagopal, however, continued

Krishna the authorities of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj sent him to Dacca, away from the influence of Sri Ramakrishna.

2. Akshay Kumar Sen, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*, in Bengali (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 5th edition), p. 387.

3. Sri Nityagopal Goswami narrated his reminiscences at the fifth meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission Association under the chairmanship of Swami Brahmananda held on May 23, 1897. An edited version of this appeared in the *Vedanta Kesari*.

4. The scientist Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar and other rationalists could hardly appreciate such happenings. On a similar occasion on October 25, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna explained his conduct

to massage the feet of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna softly told him that, 'It will be done in a trice. Can you counteract the Divine Mother's will?'

These unexpected developments stunned Nityagopal. The experience of spiritual joy he was now blessed with was more than he could ever have dreamt of. Such a brief acquaintance resulted in amazingly rich impressions on his devout mind. Sri Ramakrishna's conversation, his appearance, gestures, manner of speaking, and above all the inexplicable charm emanating from his personality helped Nityagopal to form an exalted opinion of the saint.

While he was taking leave of Sri Ramakrishna, the latter advised him to visit Dakshineswar again, preferably on Tuesdays and Saturdays. He returned to Calcutta but longed to return to Dakshineswar for another visit. Unfortunately he contracted high fever the next Friday at night. He was seized with fear that he might not be able to visit Dakshineswar the following morning as he had planned. In the morning, however, he summoned all his strength, took a bath and went forward to Dakshineswar to meet the Paramahansa. Sri Ramakrishna was glad to see him. On this occasion Nityagopal told him privately that he would not be able to do anything by way of practising spiritual austerities as he felt that he didn't have strength enough to do so seriously. Nevertheless, Sri Ramakrishna placed his right palm on Nityagopal's chest and said, 'You will not have to do anything. I am in you and you are in me.'

in these words, 'Something happens to me in that state of intoxication. Now I feel ashamed of myself. In that state I feel as if I were possessed by a ghost. I cease to be my own self. While coming down from that state I cannot count correctly.' ('M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda [Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974], p. 871).

After this the influence of Sri Ramakrishna began to work in his mind like yeast till it was leavened. The yeast worked silently, almost unknown, but certainly, until his whole personality was transformed. It took its own time, yet it certainly followed the course chalked out by the Master.

In the meantime Sri Ramakrishna developed throat cancer. As soon as the news of his fatal illness was published in the Brahmo papers, Nityagopal hurried to Calcutta to see him. He learnt that Sri Ramakrishna was living in the house of Balaram Bose at 57 Ramkanta Bose Street, Calcutta, where he had been brought for better medical care and proper nursing. Nityagopal went there to see the ailing Sri Ramakrishna one Sunday afternoon⁵ in the third week of August 1885. Sri Ramakrishna, as was his wont, had forgotten all about his illness and was speaking of God to inspire his listeners in the spiritual path. Young Sarat (later Swami Saradananda), then a college student, had come to see the Paramahansa. His friend Vaikunthanath Sanyal was also present. Besides them, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Kalipada Ghosh, 'M', Balaram Bose and members of his family, and a few others were present. Sri Ramakrishna, with his face glowing in spiritual ecstasy, was seated in the western corner of the hall on the first floor. Following some religious conversation by Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Chandra Ghosh and Kalipada Ghosh together sang a beautiful *kirtan* which ran as follows:

Hold me fast, O Nitai! I feel as if I shall
pass away!

Bestowing Hari's name on men,
I raised high waves in the river of my love,
And now upon its raging stream I am carried
helplessly.

Alas! Nitai, I have written the bond with my
own hand,

To which the 'eight friends' stand as witness.
(Now) how shall I pay off my debt to the
creditor of love?

For all my accumulated riches have run out,
And still the debt remains unpaid.

I am now going to be auctioned to meet the
debt of love.

As the song poured out its pathos, Sri Ramakrishna in deep ecstasy raised his right leg and stretched it forward. Nityagopal, who sat before him, held it very tenderly and carefully on his breast. The impact was overwhelming for Nityagopal. Sri Ramakrishna's lips were adorned with a wonderful smile of bliss and graciousness, while Nityagopal, with his eyes shut and tears profusely flowing over his cheeks and breast, was also in ecstasy. Everyone present there was besieged, as it were, by the charm of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual power and filled to capacity with a flood of bliss and peace.

The song over, Sri Ramakrishna regained partial consciousness of the external world. After a while he beseechingly told Nityagopal and other devotees present, 'Please say Sri Krishna Chaitanya, say please Sri Krishna Chaitanya, say Sri Krishna Chaitanya.' Thus making Nityagopal and others utter the holy name thrice⁶ Sri Ramakrishna

5. Vaikunthanath Sanyal, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita*, in Bengali (Calcutta: Sudhir Nath Sanyal, 2nd edition), p. 178. Sri Sanyal has not mentioned any date. According to Ramchandra Dutta, however, Sri Ramakrishna left Dakshineswar one Saturday in the middle of August 1885, and went to stay with Balaram Bose (see *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever Jivanbrittanta*, in Bengali [Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 7th edition], p. 164).

6. Vaikunthanath Sanyal in his *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita* gives an explanation for repeating the holy name thrice. In order to purify the three mental states of waking, dreaming and sleeping in the disciple, holy texts enjoin that the holy name should be repeated thrice. According to Sri Ramakrishna, as told by Sri Sanyal, boatmen of a barge carrying a heavy load thrust thrice a bamboo pole till it gets firmly stuck in the river bed. So the thrust of the holy name should be given three times.

gradually regained his normal consciousness. Shortly thereafter he began to speak on religion with others. His heart-stirring words, parables and illustrations, bewitching in their simplicity, unfolded before his hearers the wonderful experiences of his spiritual life.

Subsequent to this important episode Nityagopal had an amazing experience which he narrated before the members of the Ramakrishna Mission Association in 1897. Here in brief is what he told: 'I went again to Dacca. I was then suffering from great mental turmoil. In the outskirts of Dacca there was a forest which was used by the Muslims as a burial ground. One day when I was sauntering about there I found a man sitting a few steps ahead of me. I asked him, "What are you doing over there?" I was aware that people came to that forest to catch those birds which are called Indian Nightingales. I took the man in front of me to be one of them. As if anxious to tell me something, he beckoned me to go near him. And his words dissolved all my doubts. He got up to walk away. As he proceeded he turned back and told me in that gracious voice, "Nityagopal, my child, do not give up what you have seized." After this I could not find him there any more. I went to Vijay Babu and told him everything. Vijay Babu told me that he too had received several times his [meaning Sri Ramakrishna's] *darsan* in like manner. The night was full of dreams: all the time I was talking to him and he to me and I continued to experience ineffable bliss. When I got up in the morning I met a sannyasin. He begged food of me and also a wrapper for his body. When I gave him his requirements he placed his feet on my head and blessed me. After that I could not find him there any more.'

7. The fifth meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission Association held on May 23, 1897.

The irresistible influence of Sri Ramakrishna deeply permeated Nityagopal's being. The scholar Nityagopal gradually changed into a mystic, an enthusiastic pilgrim on his way to the shrine of divinity. Ardent as he was, he came closer and closer still towards Sri Ramakrishna, the person as well as the ideals he stood for. He gradually became a suitable conduit for the propagation of the new gospel which had transformed his being and which held new promises for the rest of the world.

Sri Ramakrishna, then living in the Cossipore garden house at 90 Cossipore Road, was full of concern and compassion for the devotees. A few days before his passing away, Nityagopal came to see him again. Towards the end of their conversation Sri Ramakrishna touched Nityagopal's chest with his hand, and then raising his hand said, 'Well, I am leaving.' This was their last meeting.⁸

We find Nityagopal, in his later life, as an active worker for the propagation of Sri Ramakrishna's life and message. He actively participated in the weekly proceedings of the Ramakrishna Mission Association held at 13 Bosepara Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta. Some days he used to give talks and on other days he used to entertain the audience with his devotional songs. The Ramakrishna Mission Association's branch at Dacca was inaugurated on the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna in 1899, and its first session was held at the residence of Nityagopal Goswami. On this occasion Nityagopal read out a paper on Sri Ramakrishna's important statement 'Tie the nondual knowledge in the hem of your cloth and then do whatever you like.'⁹

During the period from 1912 to 1919, Manibhusan Gupta, a devotee of Sri

8. Manibhusan Dasgupta, 'Smritir Saurabh', in *Udbodhan*, vol. 46 no. 9, p. 390.

9. Letter of Swami Virajananda from Dacca; see *Udbodhan*, vol. 1 no. 6, p. 187.

Ramakrishna, saw him now and then at his residence in Malakar Tola in Dacca. Bright-looking, fair-complexioned, well-built, medium-statured and with long, silver-grey hair and beard, Goswami was attractive and sage-like in appearance. Every Sunday devotional songs were sung in his presence. One day he was rapt in ecstasy and stood during the songs with his body bent in three places like Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His dhoti fell off, but he had no outward consciousness. He was in deep spiritual ecstasy with the thought of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰

¹⁰. 'Smritir Saurabh', p. 389.

Nityagopal was a typical example of those worthy devotees in whom Sri Ramakrishna awakened spiritual consciousness along the path best suited for each individual. Again, he was one of those rare devotees who was repeatedly blessed by Sri Ramakrishna with direct communication of the experience of God. The final result was, however, similar to that of many: Nityagopal Goswami finally realized that Sri Ramakrishna was the centre of divine grace from which all the radii of religious experiences travelled towards the circumference of Divinity.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

If we look as far back as possible in the past, we find that religion has always had a very intimate connection with society. In primitive societies, from very ancient times, we find that religion was interwoven with the social life. They used to do everything within a religious context: eating and sleeping and hunting; singing and dancing and painting; and everything else. Religion guided and controlled everything and provided the background to thought, to art, to architecture. In Europe, even after the Middle Ages, we find the same thing: all our art, whether music or painting or sculpture, was predominantly religious. Religion, therefore, formed the greatest force that gave impetus to all the religious sciences and arts.

But later we find that as knowledge grew—secular knowledge, knowledge of the sciences—gradually the various departments of knowledge and activity began to be dissociated from the religious influence. The various arts and sciences came out of

the orbit of religion and struck out their own independent paths. Thus we find now that there are very many secular sciences which did not grow from religion at all; and the development in science and technology has been admirable, even against the opposition of religion in the West.

But this is not all there is to the story. It began to be thought on various plausible grounds that religion was the cause of much of the misery of humanity. The Industrial Revolution and the great disparity between the rich and the poor aggravated the situation. The rational and socio-political thinkers, especially of the last century in the West, pointed out that religion was at the root of all our unhappiness and misery. Religion is the opiate of the people and it lulls people into submission, they said. The powerful, those who are well off and high up in society, control the means of production etc. and want to keep down the people. And these capitalists see religion as the best means of keeping them down;

for it teaches that the rich cannot go to heaven. And the poor?—'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,' says the Bible.¹ So those in power say, 'You be poor, you be reconciled to your lot, and you submit to all the things in this world; don't care for this world because it is transient and ephemeral; but care instead for eternal life; heaven's eternal life is promised to you after you die; therefore all the injustices that are perpetrated here are to be borne patiently.' So various socialist thinkers came—Marx, Engels, and others—whose message was: 'Do away with religion, because religion only preaches to people to bear with oppression: "It is very difficult for the rich to go to heaven; even a camel may pass through the eye of a needle, but the rich cannot go, so therefore you be reconciled to your poverty;"² that is its message.' Lenin said, 'The first word of religion is a lie.'

On the one side the Communists taught that religion was the opium of the people, and they sought to abolish private property and nationalize all production. On the other side there were National Socialists like Hitler whose message was: 'Instead of nationalizing property, I will nationalize human beings. So when the State has complete control over them, they will simply be cogs in the wheel. The State machine runs, and there is no voice for the individual, who has no existence apart from being a member of the State, to which he must completely submit himself. To think, as taught by religion, in terms of individual liberty or individual freedom, is all nonsense. There is no personal immortality; it is an illusion. There is only immortality in the State. The State continues and the individuals

have to die for that. They should not think of their own liberty or salvation or any such thing. So do away with God. He is not necessary. Religion is not necessary. The State is everything: State is the only God.'

And even those who professed religion and preached religious values, even they, in their lives and outlook, in their practical approach to life's problems, never took real religion into consideration at all. Their approach was as materialistic as that of others; only the others were very blunt and said what they thought and felt. Hitler, for example, was very blunt: he said what he felt. Similarly the Communists and others. But the approach of those professing religious values was not really different when facing life's problems: they pursued material ends only. Besides, they were for the most part very narrow and dogmatic. The history of religion in the West is full of persecutions and opposition to all progress. All this accentuated the situation and gave impetus to the forces opposed to religion.

However, with all this neglect and condemnation of religion, and with all the opportunities for the pursuit of happiness through material development, man could not find satisfaction. He thought he would find happiness apart from religion by pursuing material things; but what has actually happened? The world was never so unhappy as now. The world is restless, peaceless. Man has developed technology, he has developed science, he has developed knowledge, everything; he has socialistic States; but with all that, a restlessness gnaws at the heart of human beings. With all these comforts, with all these means of happiness, they do not know why they are not happy. There have been only more and more struggle, competition, conflict, and wars, even among the Communists. They have begun to realize that the real

1. Matthew 5:3; cf. Luke 6:20; 'Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the Kingdom of God.'

2. Matthew 19:23-24,

cause of human misery is neither religion nor other systems, but it is due to certain basic mental conditions of man which intrude into all human endeavours. After all, religion was discovered for the welfare of man.

It is found that happiness is not in material things. Happiness is a quality of the mind, which is achieved when it is controlled and disciplined. It does not depend much upon external conditions, which can remove only our external needs to some extent. They have no bearing on our internal life and its needs, or mutual relationships with others. When you pursue external things, material things, you feel jealous and intolerant of those who are in a better situation, even though you may be comfortably placed. Suppose a poor man has a mud hut and is happy, and you build a solid building beside it; you feel very happy about it, while he feels miserable. Suppose another richer person comes and builds a big bungalow beside yours. That poor man was feeling jealous of you because of the contrast, but you felt happy. Now you feel jealous about the other person and feel unhappy by the contrast. The thing is, even if your external conditions improve, the factors of jealousy, lust, greed, avarice, envy, hatred, pride, and such other qualities are inherent in the unregenerate mind. So merely by changing the external environment we don't change the mind; the mind is the same. That is why by changing the conditions of environment only, we do not find happiness. And added to this, the more we multiply the means of comfort the more we want. Yesterday we were satisfied with a small house, designed, equipped, and decorated in a particular way; now new things have come and we want them. We find the neighbour has a car and other gadgets; so we must also have them in our house; without them we feel unhappy. The more we accumulate

things, the more the mind wants things. The craving is not at all satisfied thereby.

Therefore, satisfaction does not arise by mere pursuit of external things; it lies in an entirely different field. As one Sanskrit verse says, 'The desire for enjoyment is not quenched by the enjoyment of sense objects; it is only inflamed all the more, just like the fire when fed with oil.' There is a story behind it—a mythological story, but perhaps with some historical foundation: There was a mighty king in ancient times, Yayāti by name. He lived for a thousand years with all the means of comfort and enjoyment that the world could give, and he enjoyed them fully. But he was not satisfied. Then he called his sons and told them: 'See, now I am getting old, but still my desire for enjoyment is not yet satisfied. I want to enjoy the world to satiety. Will any of you transfer your youth to me and take my old age?' But none of them was willing, except one son, Puru by name. He said, 'All right, I will give my youth and take your old age.' The king became youthful and for another thousand years or more revelled in all types of enjoyments. Yet he found that he never had contentment, nor was his craving satisfied. His desires seemed to increase all the more. Then wisdom dawned on him, and so he sent for his son and said, 'Dear son, you take back your youth, and I will resume my old age. I bless you for your great sacrifice. Now I have learnt enough. Enjoyment can never be satisfied by enjoyment. It is like trying to quench fire by adding clarified butter to it. Only by self-control can one find peace and happiness.'

That is the condition of our mind. The mind is a great raging fire. It wants to consume things, and the more you feed it the more it blazes. (In India people used to sacrifice to the fire by offering oblations of clarified butter; hence the simile.)

However much we may pursue external things, means of comfort, we don't get peace. That is why it was said in the Bible, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'³ The soul is the centre of peace, the centre of happiness; and if one forgets it and pursues happiness merely in outside objects, he will be pursuing a shadow, a will-o'-the-wisp which he will never catch. A distinguished poet of Mysore (K.V. Puttappa) has depicted very graphically in Kannada this tragic state of modern life. He says, 'The mighty vulture of science has gone up to the sky, gone down to the nether worlds, penetrated the stars, and reached everywhere; its sharp blood-sucking beak has drawn out their 'intestines' as it were. Truth it has torn out from the heart of things. There is so much knowledge, there is so much wealth, and so many means of comfort, but there is no respite even to enjoy. Then after all the knowing, knowing, knowing, about all the things, in the final analysis nothing is really known.'⁴

That is what modern man instinctively feels. After knowing everything about

³. Mark 8:36.

⁴. Sri Puttappa is a poet laureate and great writer of Karnataka. He was the Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University. Cf. what Colton, Nobel laureate in Physics, has stated: 'Ignorance lies at the bottom of all human knowledge, and the deeper we penetrate the nearer we come to it [ignorance]. For what do we truly know, or what can we clearly affirm, of any one of those important things upon which all our reasonings must of necessity be built—time and space, life and death, matter and mind?'

Cf. also Bertrand Russell: 'We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends.... Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil just as for good. It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.' (*The Impact of Science on Society*, p. 120).

the world, and displaying his wisdom before others in an assembly, when he goes back to his room and all is silent, he feels restless; he finds there is no quiet; he feels he is ignorant, as ignorant as he ever was; he has not known anything about himself. He does not know what this world is, whence he came or what happens to him after death; he does not know what he is pursuing or to what purpose. Meaninglessness stares him in the face. Simply by some force he is somehow pushed into things without choosing; he is simply flowing down the stream of time. So when he finds himself alone, he finds everything empty because he has not filled himself. He has taken his stand on the ever-shifting external personality, the social personality, and he finds it empty. This emptiness haunts him. He is restless but does not know why. He paints his own picture and sees it very ugly; then he wants to run away from himself. He tries to enter into groups of people to find solace and to forget himself; he plunges into activity and enjoyments to escape from reality, to still the questions. But loneliness and boredom pursue him everywhere.⁵

This world is in a constant flux. How can we find rest here so long as we take our stand on external things, on things that are themselves ever changing? The body itself is a constantly changing entity, from birth to old age or death. Man feels attracted and tries to take hold of things; but before he takes hold of a thing it has changed. He says this rose is very nice and keeps it; but after some time it has withered away; similarly with regard to all other things. The mind also is changeful. As long as it has not possessed a thing, the mind is drawn to it; but after possessing it, it loses all charm; then it lies abandoned

⁵. These two are the modern diseases according to *Pears Encyclopaedia*.

in a room, and the mind wants to run after something else. Thus as long as we fasten our attention on things which are changing, which are in a state of flux, whether subjective or objective, how can we expect to find peace and happiness?

If we want to enjoy, at least we must be steady. While watching a cinema we have to sit quietly in our seats; if we are running about all the while how can we enjoy it? Until a man gets a steady basis on which he can stand, a permanence in the midst of all these impermanences, a changeless thing in the midst of all this change, until he arrives at this and takes his stand on this unchanging Reality, how can he hope to get peace and happiness? One of the Upaniṣadic verses says the same thing: 'He who sees the Eternal in the midst of all these non-eternal, changing things; and that principle of Consciousness amidst all these inert phenomena; and the one Reality which appears as the many and is pervading all and is the source of all happiness—the Reality which is in the heart of every being as its Self—,that brave one, the intelligent one, the wise one, who realizes this Self which is the permanent Reality in the midst of all these changing entities, he alone enjoys eternal peace; none else, none else.'⁶

Therefore, the part religion has to play in our life is to lead us to this permanent Reality in the midst of these changing things. 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' says the Bible.⁷ Only on reaching that Kingdom of God, that Self, do we find permanent peace. When we find a Reality that is unchanging, then only is our happiness unbroken; it is a happiness which is not a correlate of misery. All our experiences in this world are only correlates; if it is pleasure, it is only the reverse of pain. What seems to be pleasure, that itself appears as pain after some time; or pain comes out as pleasure after some time. So these are all correlates; you can't have only the one and leave out the other. But the Happiness which is not a correlate, pure Happiness, unbroken Happiness, can be found only when we enter the Kingdom of Heaven which is within, for the Self is of the very nature of Joy (Ānanda-svarūpa). It is like heat to fire, which is never lost and always the same. Religion, therefore, has an important part to play in life and society. It takes the individual from his state of impermanence and gives him a steady basis from which to enjoy life.

(To be continued)

⁶. *Katha Upanisad* 5.13.

⁷. Luke, 17:21.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY

The 118th Birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda falls on Wednesday, 9 January, 1980.

THE FIRE AND THE SONG OF RICHARD ROLLE

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

In the year 1300, a child was born to the wife of William Rolle, a poor working-class man who lived with his family in the little Yorkshire village of Thornton-le-Dale, near Pickering, England; the boy was given the name Richard. Early in his youth Richard showed signs of great promise, so much, in fact, that he attracted the attention of Thomas de Neville, a prosperous archdeacon of Durham belonging to one of the noblest families in the North Country. Richard's poor parents must have been overjoyed when the archdeacon proposed to send Richard to Oxford in the hope that he would secure high distinctions. So, still in his teens, young Richard set out for the great University, second at that time in Europe only to Paris.

Oxford of the fourteenth century was witnessing the last great flowering of the medieval world. Only a few decades earlier, St. Thomas Aquinas had succeeded in synthesizing classical Greek humanism with other-worldly Judeo-Christian thought; and, as usually happens when two such great thought-currents are united, a torrent of new virility and creativity flooded the cultural life of Europe. The mystical theologies of St. Bernard, of St. Bonaventure, and of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor had also found their way to Oxford. But perhaps it was the Franciscans who were to have the greatest influence over Richard Rolle. They had brought to Oxford a love of poverty and a spirituality of joy which later became dominant elements in Richard's own life. It was here at Oxford also that he acquired his lifelong reverence for the Bible; for by rule the first lecture every day

had to be on Holy Scripture. And from his study of St. Augustine he developed a deep love for the Psalms.

As he was to write later in life, he was 'flourishing unhappily' at Oxford: 'flourishing' because by his brilliance a fine career lay open before him, but 'unhappily' because he could find no satisfaction in his success, and the vanity of it all was becoming apparent to him. The sophistry of the scholastics became repulsive for its hollowness. The interminable questionings of theologians who sought only to amass knowledge and not to love God disgusted him. For theory could no longer satisfy his longing for Reality; mere discussions about God's love could not quench the thirst of his heart; and the dark confusion of endless argumentation could not fill his hunger for Light. 'Not by disputing', he was to write later, 'but by doing and loving is God known.' So, true to his practical and independent spirit, he set out at the age of nineteen in search of God, leaving behind Oxford and the promise of great worldly success forever.

Without divulging his plans to others, he went home (now removed towards Richmond) during the summer vacation. There he approached his sister one day and said, 'My beloved sister, thou hast two tunics which I greatly covet, one white and the other grey. Therefore I ask thee if thou wilt kindly give them to me, and bring them to me tomorrow to the wood near by, together with my father's rain-hood.' His sister, to whom he was very dear, agreed in all innocence, though she must have wondered at this strange request. The next

day when she met him in the wood, he took the tunics and hood from her and, going behind a bush, fashioned them into a rough semblance of a hermit's garb. Removing his old clothes and donning the new habit, he stepped out from behind the bush. His astonished sister began to cry, 'My brother is mad! My brother is mad!'

Afraid of being seized by friends and relatives, he drove her away with threats and fled without delay. After wandering a few days in the forest, he came to the parish church in Pickering, not far from his birthplace. As chance would have it, when he went in to pray he knelt in the very pew which Lady Dalton, wife of the local squire, usually occupied for her devotions. When she came for vespers, her servants wanted to remove him; but out of humility she wouldn't permit him to be disturbed in his prayers. When Richard rose after some time, the sons of Lady Dalton saw his face and said, 'Why, this is William Rolle's son whom we know from Oxford!' Apparently they gave a good report of Richard; for the next day, the Feast of the Assumption, he stood in the pulpit and delivered the sermon. So powerful it was that his hearers were moved to tears, 'and they all said that they had never before heard a sermon of such virtue and power,' as his earliest biography relates.

The squire John de Dalton seems indeed to have been impressed, for after the Mass he invited Richard to dinner. Sitting among the Dalton family at the table, Richard spoke not a word, and as soon as he had eaten sufficient, he rose to go before others had finished. But John de Dalton said that this was not the custom of the house. Again he sat in silence. The master of the house detained him till all others had left the table, and then asked, 'My boy, are you the son of William Rolle?' Rather reluctantly Richard answered,

'Perchance I am,' for he was afraid that the squire, who was a friend of his father and a worldly man, would hinder him in the path he had chosen. Far from hindering Richard, however, John de Dalton offered him a cell on his own estate.

Now, after Richard's conversion there arose the need for purification. Many are the methods which people have used and the life-styles they have adopted in order to spiritually cleanse the body, senses, mind and heart in preparation for the vision of God. Perhaps due to his independence and originality, Richard chose the life of a hermit; for he said of his youth: 'I myself fled to the wilderness when it proved no longer possible to live in harmony with men, who, admittedly, were a frequent obstacle to my inner joy. Because I did not do the kind of things they did, they attributed waywardness and bad temper to me.'

But there was certainly nothing unusual in his choice. The vocation of the hermit was very popular at that time in the British Isles. For several hundred years men and women had been retiring into seclusion in the forests, hills, marshes, and sea-girt islands of Britain, turning their eyes towards Eternity. There were even married couples who left the world and entered the forest together, like the ancient Vānaprasthas of India.

There were two types of recluse. One, the anchorite, lived sealed within four walls, never going outside. Usually the anchorite's cell was a stone structure built onto the side of a church, so that he or she could see the church services, make confession and receive communion through a small hole in the church wall. There was even a special service for the walling in of the anchorite.

The other type of recluse, the hermit, had more freedom. He could go out from his cell, mixing with men, preaching and teaching, and performing acts of service. Indeed, the hermits were pinoneers in works

of public charity. Some lived on the seacoast, acting as coastguards or lightkeepers to guide ships. A large cross stood by the hermitage at Plymouth Hoe to guide sailors into port. Others helped maintain roads and bridges. One hermit collected so much in alms that he built a hospital for the poor. Another collected alms to purchase the release of those who had been unjustly condemned to prison. The hermits were thus a vital part of medieval English life: they served as signs of God's compassion and holiness set in the world for the illumination of men.

We may get some idea of the type of life that Richard settled into on the Dalton estate from descriptions of the hermits which have survived from that age, and from the Rules which governed their way of life.

The hermit's habit was made of coarse and humble cloth, white mingled with grey. His hermitage was a small, sparsely furnished hut with a little garden attached in which he grew vegetables to feed his body and flowers to feed and uplift his soul to God.

His day began at the first cock's crow; or if there were no cock, he was awakened early by the love of God. Rising from the hard bench which served as bed, afire with the love of God, his face 'washed with sweet love-tears' and his soul alive with spiritual joy, he heard as it were the call of God: 'Arise My love, My fair one, and show Me thy face; I long to have the voice of thy prayer ringing in My ears!' While dressing he was to be full of thankfulness for the protection provided by God through the night. Then he would sprinkle himself with holy water, bow to the ground and greet the Living Christ. Five times he would repeat a prayer beginning with the line, 'We adore Thee, O Christ!' And each time that he came to the words 'Have mercy upon us, Thou Who didst suffer for us!' he would bend to kiss the earth.

As he proceeded to oratory or church to receive the Holy Mysteries (communion), he was to keep a prayerful spirit and banish all thoughts of the world and its business from his heart. Afterwards he meditated on the life of Jesus, his exemplar in the holy life.

By now it was time to prepare his meal, during which he was to remain ever in prayer, for every meal was to be treated as a sacrament. As he sat to eat, he made a cross with five morsels of food before him, and as he ate each morsel he meditated on the meaning of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Importance was also given to the *type* of food eaten. The treatise *On Daily Work*, perhaps by Rolle himself, says, 'Man's body is like a burning furnace, especially when he is young; and delicious and hot meats and drinks make this fire to burn more fiercely.' And it goes on to quote an adage: 'If thou wilt abate the flame, abate the fuel.' As Rolle later wrote, 'While thou eatest or drinkest, let not the memory of thy God Who feeds thee pass from thy mind; but praise, bless and glorify Him in every morsel, so that thy heart be more in praising God than in thy food, that thy soul be not parted from God at any hour.'

The rest of the hermit's day was spent in peaceful activity: prayer and meditation, song and jubilation, study, loving service to the poor, giving spiritual advice, and perhaps giving an occasional sermon. But his main duty throughout the day was to remould his character in the image of Christ. Thus the hermit was urged, 'Establish thy thought in His love, and keep out of thee all evil; cast away sloth: conduct thyself manfully in goodness; be courteous and meek to all men; let nothing bring thee to rage or envy. Clothe thy soul with beauty, make therein a throne of love to God's Son, and make thy will eager to receive Him as gladly as thou

would'st be at the coming of a thing that thou lovedst most of all thing. Wash thy thoughts clean with love-tears, and burning desire that he find nothing foul in thee, for His joy is that thou be fair and lovesome in His eyes.'

Among the various prayers and meditations prescribed for the hermit's use, he is told to think at some time of the day or night of 'all who are sick and sorrowful, who suffer affliction and poverty, the pain which prisoners endure who lie heavily fettered with iron; think especially of the Christians who are among the enemies of Christ, some in prison, some in as great thralldom as is an ox or an ass; have compassion for those who are under strong temptations; take thought of all men's sorrows.' For the hermit was not to live for himself alone: his special charge was to call down by his prayers the grace of God on the world, to radiate over the whole earth the love and compassion of God which he experienced in his cell.

Finally, as the hermit prepared to sleep, he knelt on the ground and thought over the day's activities, confessing all shortcomings and failings to God and asking His forgiveness. Then standing he prayed, 'Visit, I beseech Thee, O Lord, this dwelling and drive far from it all evil. May Thy holy angels dwelling in it keep me in peace, and may Thy blessing be upon me for ever, through our Lord Jesus Christ...' Next he prayed, 'Christ conquers †, Christ reigns †, Christ rules †,' making the sign of the cross with his hand at each '†'. And then, 'Behold the Lord's cross †. Begone, ye adversaries: the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David [Christ] hath conquered. Halleluia.' Then he made four crosses in the four directions, with these four clauses: 'The Cross † drives away evil. The Cross † is the restorer of the world. By the sign of this Cross † let everything malignant fly away; and by the

same sign † let everything that is kind and good be preserved.' Finally he blessed himself and his bed, 'in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.' Once in bed he was neither to 'do anything, nor think, but sleep'.

Such was the way of life prescribed for medieval English hermits, and such was the life that Richard Rolle, only nineteen, entered into on the Dalton estate. It was a life designed to make of every action a sacrament, so that all times of the day might become occasions for meeting with God. Thus every moment was given a Godward turn and the whole life of the hermit was deified.

Several glimpses we get of Richard at this period show how quickly he was progressing in the contemplative life. Sometimes members of the Dalton household or others would come to visit him for their own spiritual edification. One day the lady of the nearby house came along with several other people to Richard's cell, where they found him busily writing at his table. They asked him to leave off writing and speak to them some words of counsel. In a most eloquent way he proceeded to urge them to practise virtue, to give up all worldly vanity, and to establish the love of God in their hearts. Yet during the two hours that he spoke, he never left off writing, which is all the more remarkable as the words he was writing differed entirely from those he was speaking. It is said that, another day when he was at prayer, some neighbours came and removed his cloak, patched it and replaced it without his noticing anything. If these two legends be exaggerations, they are exaggerations of a truth, the truth that his interior life was developing rapidly and that those who came in contact with him were deeply impressed by his evident holiness.

In spite of his nonconformity, there was nothing selfish in his seclusion. He used

to say, 'When that blessed Love is in a man's heart, it will not suffer him to be idle.' 'Love cannot be lazy.' 'Be our souls strong in the taking of hard labours for God.' He had a deep love for the poor, and said that men should honour them: 'Truly the poor, although they be clad with heaviness and uncleanness, yet should they not be despised; for they are the friends of God and brethren of Christ, if they bear the burden of poverty with deeds of praise.' In fact, his love for the poor was to get him into trouble with John de Dalton.

Soon Richard's cell became more a public place than the secluded retreat he had wanted. People began to come for advice or just for curiosity's sake. And during the summer months there was the usual farmyard bustle and noise. Then the devout Lady Dalton died. She seems to have been Richard's special supporter, and after her death John de Dalton lost what little interest he had previously shown in religion. By nature he was greedy, violent, an exploiter of the poor, and hence quite unpopular in the county. With his pious wife no longer by his side to control him, he became all the more despicable. It had perhaps been only for his wife's sake, or else to add an ornament to his estate, that he had hosted Richard in the first place. But now he lost interest in the young hermit, and indeed Richard was proving to be a rather embarrassing 'ornament'. For he was only about twenty years old and full of youthful vigour, besides being independent and outspoken by nature. He didn't hesitate to criticize hypocritical piety, immodesty and immorality, luxury and exploitation of the poor. No wonder Dalton was uneasy with him! To the poor, Richard said, 'Rejoice, ye poor, in your poverty; exult, ye needy ones; rejoice, ye beggars; look up, ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven; ye endure a

little and for a short time; ye shall glory much and for ever [in heaven].'

Due to his austerities and also, perhaps, due to John de Dalton's withdrawal of support, his health began to break. The habit he wore was rotten and in shreds. He had only mouldy bread to eat and insufficient water to drink. In winter he almost froze, and in summer sweat poured down his face. Flies bit him mercilessly. He developed severe headaches and became so weak that he couldn't stand. But that was not what finally drove him from his cell.

He was only twenty-one at this time, and in spite of his austerities and power of concentration, he had not completely overcome the fire of youth. Moreover, he began to feel that he was making rapid progress in the spiritual life, and therefore he relaxed his watchfulness and caution. At this time one of the ladies of the Dalton family seems to have attracted his attention. Though his affection no doubt seemed quite innocent when it first arose, one night he understood that it was developing into lust. Because of his greatly weakened physical condition, he felt exhausted in mind also; and at first he couldn't seem to gather the strength to overcome it. Then with all his might he turned in thought to Jesus and made the sign of the cross, and lo! the temptation withered and died forever. 'And I thanked God that delivered me,' he wrote. 'And soothly from that time forth I forced me to love Jesu [an old form of 'Jesus' pronounced 'yay-soo']; and ever the more I increased in the love of Jesu, the sweeter I found it; and from that day it went never from my mind. Therefore blessed be the Name of Jesu in the world of worlds. Amen.' He now realized with intense clarity that, as he said, 'man's soul is made for God alone: anything less than God cannot fill it: wherefore earthly lovers can never satisfy.'

Thus, at the age of twenty-one, only two years and nine months after coming to the Dalton estate, he fled from it never to return, having won that greatest of all battles: the conquest of passion. His flight was not in defeat, for 'to desert one's cell for reasonable cause does a hermit no harm any more than does its recovery if that seems right,' as he was to write later. It was rather to safeguard his victory. Now he entered upon the life of a wandering friar, without fixed abode, going where divine providence led. Sometimes he is found in a Manor House speaking with the local squire, sometimes at an inn speaking with the peasants. But everywhere he speaks of the joy of poverty, the effectiveness of prayer, and the glory of the Name of Jesus. Indeed, the glory of the Name of Jesus became an essential element of his spirituality from the time of his victory over lust. As he was later to write, 'One thing I advise thee, that thou forget not this Name Jesu, but think it in thy heart as thy special and dear treasure. Love it more than thy life, root it in thy mind. Love Jesu for He made thee, and bought thee full dear. Give thy heart to Him, for it is His debt. Therefore set thy love on His Name Jesu, which is health.'

Some of the stories he told in the inns and by the roadside during these itinerant days have been recorded. 'The bee', he once told some peasants who had gathered round him, 'has three characteristics. One is that she is never idle, and she will not live with those that will not work, but casts them out, and puts them away. Another is that when she flies she takes earth in her feet, that she be not easily carried away with the wind. The third is that she keeps her wings clean and bright. Righteous men that love God are like that. They are never in idleness. They take earth, that is, they hold themselves humble so that they are not blown about with the wind

of vanity and pride. They keep their wings clean, that is, they fulfil in good conscience the two commandments of charity [to love God and neighbour], and they have other virtues unblended with the filth of sin and unclean lust.'

Even though the young friar had to suffer much physical hardship as well as the criticism of a world which could not understand his free and unconventional ways, this was a period of deep spiritual joy and vision. One day, after living as a wandering friar for about a year, he had an experience which was to colour the whole rest of his life: 'I was sitting in a certain chapel, delighting in the sweetness of prayer or meditation, when suddenly I felt within myself a merry and unknown heat. . . . It was, I found, more fervent and glad than I had ever known.' So vivid, in fact, was this experience of heat that he put his hand to his breast to find if there were an actual fire, for 'as thy finger, if it were put into fire, should feel sensible burning, so the soul, set afire with love, truly feels most real heat.' But he found that the heat had an inner, spiritual cause. It remained with him continuously for years, 'sometimes more and more intense, sometimes less, as the weakness of the body allows.'

The effects of this experience were great and far-reaching: 'His [God's] love truly is fire, making our souls fiery and purging them from all degrees of sin, making them light and burning; which fire, burning in them that are chosen, ever makes them look up in mind.' Thus he strove always to keep the flame burning, for it served to keep his mind turned ever Godward, and he understood that it would be a source of much greater blessings. On waking in the morning, he set himself 'to warm his soul, pierced with the cold'; he strove to pass the day 'in full inward burning', with his mind raised 'into that most lovely and merry burning'. But this flame of love in

his heart was not merely experienced as heat; it was 'a honey-sweet flame' which drove him to be 'gladly molten into the desire of greater love: and especially for the inflowing of this sweet delight and spiritual sweetness.'

Nine months passed in this way, when one day he was sitting in that same chapel, singing psalms and praying. 'I heard', he said, 'as it were the tinkling music of stringed instruments, or rather of singers, over my head. And while my whole heart and all my desires were engrossed in prayer and heavenly things, suddenly, I know not how, I felt within a symphony of song, and I overheard a most delightful heavenly harmony, which remained in my mind. For straightway, while I meditated, my thought was turned into melody of song, and for meditation I, as it were, sang songs. And that music voiced itself even in my prayers and psalmody; and by reason of the interior sweetness which was outpoured upon me, I was impelled to sing what before I had only said.'

This experience marks Richard's entrance

into true contemplation. Previously there had been an element of effort in his prayer and meditation; but now, Richard says, 'meditation is turned into songs of joy, and nature is renewed and enveloped in heavenly mirth.' Even one's 'thought turns into song and melody'. No longer could the world compete with God for his love, for 'as soon as thine heart is touched with heaven's sweetness,' he says, 'the mirth of this world will little delight thee; and when thou dost feel joy in the love of Christ, thou wilt detest the joy and comfort of earthly pleasures. For all the melody, all the riches, all the delights that all the men in this world can ordain and think, seems, and is, nothing but annoyance and wrath to a man's heart that is verily burning in the love of God, because he has the mirth and melody of Angel's songs.' This love is content 'to rejoice in the Loved One; all other things despising and forgetting; thinking without forgetfulness; ascending in desire; going on in embracing; overcome by kissing; altogether molten in the fire of love!'

(To be continued)

HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

All sorts of evil tendencies accumulated in countless births remain stuck in the bottom of the mind. When we try to concentrate, they begin to rush out and toss the mind to and fro. They will not allow the mind to become concentrated. But these distractions are only in the early stages. One need not fret and fume over them. One should persevere vigorously

with one's whole heart and soul. There is no cause for worry. Perseverance in *sādhana* will gradually cure these ills.

If you maintain recollection and meditation on God even while performing your other works and studies, it will not be difficult for you to keep your mind steady. Hence, it is useful and beneficial to remember the Lord at all times even when you are not

engaged in formal meditation and *japa*. To be absorbed in the contemplation of God at the time of *japa* and meditation, depends on the good thoughts you keep during the whole day. If all the time is wasted in gossip and idle and frivolous thought, the mind will become restless and unsteady when you retire at night to contemplate on God.

What is ordinarily understood as meditation does not at all deserve that name. The mind is upset by various evil thoughts and tendencies, and worldly matters try to turn the mind away from the contemplation of God. To attempt time and again to draw the mind inward and fix it on God is the usual state of the majority of spiritual aspirants. Such a state is ordinarily styled meditation. Really, it is *pratyāhāra*, drawing inward the outgoing mind. To keep the mind in the contemplation of similar thoughts for a short space of time is itself the result of many days' effort. This state is called *dhāraṇā*, holding the mind to a certain thought. When all the outgoing tendencies of the mind are restrained and the mind flows continuously as a current in the contemplation of God, that stage is *dhyāna* or meditation. At that stage the mind forgets all the external things and surroundings, even the body. The mind transcends the region of the senses and rises to the supersensual plane. Then Godly visions begin to unfold themselves to the Sādhaka.

What is the use of sitting in a yogic posture and closing the eyes, if the mind is occupied in attending to what takes place around you, to what others say and do? If you desire to listen to the talk of the persons near you, why do you pretend to sit for meditation? Hypocrisy is the deadliest of obstacles in the path of God. Is it to serve a selfish end that you pretend to be seekers of God? Sitting in a yogic

posture and closing the eyes will not make for meditation. Otherwise, everyone can be a perfect adept therein.

Meditation is not an easy matter. One who has truly attained to the state of meditation has well-nigh reached the goal of spiritual practices (*sādhana*). Once that stage of meditation is attained the mind will no more be pulled down by the attraction of sensual pleasures. It will turn inward completely without any tendency to externalize. To have reached the stage of meditation is in effect to be on the step nearest to the indirect realization of God.

Those who are weighted with a load of anger, hatred and malice can never rise to the stage of meditation. It is impossible for the wicked, the calculating, the crooked and the double-dealing to collect their minds in the contemplation of God. If there be the least tinge of sensual desire, one cannot concentrate on God. Discrimination and renunciation (non-attachment) must go hand in hand with the study of the scriptures. Otherwise it will lead to vanity and egoism and the man will only degenerate. Without *sādhana* and control of the senses, the study of the scriptures is in vain.

To realize God, the proper method of *sādhana* should be learnt first. A perfected soul alone can reveal the secret of *sādhana*. He alone is the real Guru. He who has not realized God cannot lead another in the path. To get a correct knowledge of *sādhana*, we have to seek one who has had the direct realization of God. It is a blessed privilege resulting from the earnest efforts and aspirations of many lives that one comes in contact with a perfected soul. Such souls who have realized God are not met with everywhere. They are very, very rare. Equally rare is the earnest soul endowed with the spirit of renunciation who truly hankers after Mokṣa.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

YOGA AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY: By I.P. SACHDEVA. Publishers: Motilal Banarasidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1978. Pp. xvii + 273. Price: Rs. 55/-.

Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra is recognized as the authoritative text on Yoga. The key word in Yoga-Sastra is the term Yoga itself, which has several meanings in Sanskrit. If the word is derived from the root *yujir* (*Dhātupāṭha* 7.7), 'to unite', its meaning is union; but if it is derived from the root *yuja* (4.68), 'to meditate', its meaning is meditation. The correct meaning of Yoga throughout Patanjala-darsana is 'meditation'. Vacaspati takes care to point this out while interpreting Vyasa's famous sentence, *yogah samādhiḥ*, 'yoga is Samadhi'. In meditation the individual self extricates itself from the conscious and the unconscious. As Bhoja says, 'yoga is *viyoga* (separation) between self and matter.'

Citta (mind) exists for the sake of the self which is pure consciousness. The pure consciousness appears to take the changing colours of the mind. Yoga consists in severing the self from the Citta. Then it withdraws to its *svarupa*, its own pure form, and remains a mere spectator of the phenomena.

In the *Gita*, the word yoga is used in both the meanings: meditation and union. In the *Gita* any thought or work having a higher value becomes yoga. Thus we have Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Dhyana-yoga, Abhyasa-yoga, etc. It is not correct to say that Raja-yoga is Patanjala-yoga, for it is a part of the Tantras. Kundalini-yoga, if based on meditation, may be called Raja-yoga.

Psychology is a behavioural science that has primary reference to human beings acting alone and in groups. Freud (1856-1939) is the inaugurator of modern psychology and the founder of psychoanalysis. The basic contribution of Freud is to replace hypnotism by the method of *free association*. In this method the subject, without conscious restraint or guidance, is allowed to express his images spontaneously. In free association of ideas, things develop from a deeper level of the subject himself; that is, the 'unconscious' of the subject directs the thinking process. The basic motive power of life is the pleasure-principle which drives painful factors into unconsciousness. Thoughts of shame or guilt or injury to self-esteem are censored and kept out of awareness unless transformed into dream-symbols, slips of tongue or some other guise. Animal impulse (libido) is the chief motive

force from which all other faculties are derived. Sublimation is the deflection of this energy to useful goals or new aims. Freud has not shown how this sublimation can take place. But to him goes the merit of laying bare the dark chambers of the human mind by applying the free association of ideas, which overshadows to a great extent the one-sided sex theories for which he has become famous.

Alfred Adler (1870-1937), an Austrian psychiatrist and the founder of individual psychology, was a prominent early associate of Freud. But because of differences of opinion he left Freud and founded his own school. According to him, the dominant motive in life is the striving towards perfection, in compensation for the inferiority feeling common in everyone. Adler's conception of social interest reminds us of *lokasamgraha*.

Now we come to an important school of thought connected with C.G. Jung (1875-1961), a Swiss psychologist, psychiatrist and the founder of analytical psychology. Jung also parted company from Freud and set forth his own theory of libido and the unconscious. He rejected Freud's theory of sexual etiology of psychoneuroses, and laid stress on analysing man's immediate conflicts as being more useful in understanding neuroses than uncovering the morbid conditions of the childhood. In defining libido he emphasized will-to-live rather than sexual drive. Jung's approach, however laudable, cannot help us much, though his brilliant flashes light up now and then some area of darkness. *Unless man is helped to discover the meaning of his life there is no permanent cure for his illness.* Western psychologists may rouse the unconscious to the conscious level but they have no conception of the superconscious state or Samadhi. Total integration of personality is not possible if this is left out. Western psychologists attempt to measure the depth of the unconscious but have so far made no attempt to measure the heights of the superconscious. Patanjali has given a codified account of the various psychological states occurring at different levels of personality. Though our Acaryas have rejected the philosophy of Samkhya-Yoga, they have accepted the psychology and discipline or *sadhana* of the Yoga system.

This is the vast ground which Dr. Sachdeva has tried to cover in his book. In addition, he has included the work of the Italian

psychologist Dr. Assagioli and the great Indian sage Sri Aurobindo. According to the author, Yoga is a system of *psychosynthesis* which is even better than the one developed by Assagioli. What the author has attempted is a vast synthesis of all these ideas to produce a blueprint for the integration of personality. The importance of his endeavour lies in the fact that it is not merely a theoretical work but an expression of his own search for and discovery of the meaning of life.

The psychological approach, however, has its own limitations. But yoga can make a significant contribution to the technique of psychoanalysis. The author throws light on how yoga can help us in solving the problems of modern psychology and psychotherapy. Without underrating the importance of Western psychology, the author points out its limitations and the superiority of yoga over it. The author is successful in interpreting in modern idiom yogic techniques unfamiliar to the West. The writer deserves praise for attempting to integrate yogic technique with the Western concepts of psychoanalysis. The get-up and printing of the book are pleasing. We recommend this book to all those who want a clear and concise account of the basic principles of Western psychoanalysis vis-a-vis yoga.

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ALL ABOUT HINDU TEMPLES: BY SWAMI HARSHANANDA. Publishers: Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore-570002. 1979. pp. 40 +12. Price: Rs. 4.50.

Hindu temples have been a subject of study and research by many savants like Coomaraswamy, Ferguson, Percy Brown, P.K. Acharya, K.R. Srinivasan, Krishnadeva, Stella Kramrisch and others. Each was fascinated by some aspect or the other of Hindu temples, which have been in existence in our land from the hoary past. Most of the works written by the scholars mentioned above are meant for the specialist and the serious research student, and many of them are not easily accessible to lay readers who have some interest in the subject. Most Hindus visit temples without knowing the meaning, significance and symbolism of their design and structure, the reason being that ordinary readers are not provided with easily understandable literature on temples. Hence the present book fills a long-felt need for a lucid, easily under-

standable, attractive and above all a concise book on the subject.

The book is divided into twelve small sections, namely an introduction, a brief history of temples, symbology of temples, construction of a temple, essential parts of a temple, iconography, religious ceremonies and rites, temple arts and crafts, the temple and the devotee, the temple and the priest, the temple and society, and an epilogue. There is a short bibliography at the end followed by twelve line-drawings. Thus nothing of importance regarding temples has been left untouched by the learned author. After giving an idea of the historical development of the temple, the author has discussed the symbology and the essential parts in its construction, which is very useful to any visitor. The section on iconography is highly interesting and introduces the reader to iconometric concepts in which ancient Indians distinguished themselves. The section on religious rites and ceremonies makes very interesting reading. The three sections in which the author has discussed the relation of the temple with devotees, priests, and society are highly instructive. But the most valuable part is the epilogue in which very important suggestions are made by the erudite author for improving the management of the temple so that it could regain its old position as the centre of all cultural activities. In ancient India the temple was not just a place of worship but it was also the centre of civilization and culture. Swami Harshanandaji has explained in a lucid way what a Hindu ought to know with regard to the temples which he has been visiting as a matter of routine without knowing their symbology and meaning. A visit to a temple after reading this book will be more rewarding and meaningful. Line-drawings have increased the value of the book.

There are, however, some minor points which I wish to comment on briefly. Figure no. 3 does not bring out clearly the differences among the three styles Nagara, Vesara and Dravida. To make the diagram more apt, the *sikhara* portion has to be illustrated to show the differences among the three styles. Recent researches have shown that the temple complex known as Gaudargudi existed before Ladkhan temple (see p. 3). The Kailasa temple at Ellora cannot be clubbed with Chola temples either from the point of view of chronology or dynastic appellation (p. 4). Hoysala style is not generally included in the South Indian style. The word *vimana* is generally used to denote the *garbhagriha* and the

sikhara on it, and not the former in particular (p. 7).

These minor points apart, the book is a welcome contribution to the study of Indian temples. The book is designed and printed attractively. It is worth translating into local languages to reach a wider readership. We should be grateful to the learned Swami Harshanandaji, who is already known by his writings, for this attractive, lucid and useful book. The authorities of the Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore, deserve our praise for this timely publication.

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THE ESOTERIC GOSPEL OF GITA: BY
SUSRUVA. Published by Affiliated East-West
Press, Madras. 1978. Pp. ix + 216 Rs. 15/-.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a perennial source of a nourishing philosophy, not only for the Hindus but for all the thinking communities of the world. For the Hindus the *Gita* is of special significance as it stands for the divine Word. The diction of the original poem is so clear and simple that it does not need any detailed gloss. Yet so many books have been written on the *Gita* and none of them is worthless. This pocket volume by Susruva is a unique addition to the already existing *Gita* literature. Here the author has sincerely tried to harmonize the *Gita* with the theosophical 'Secret Doctrine' propounded by Madame H.P. Blavatsky.

The author was perhaps spurred on to his present endeavour by the introductory remarks of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan on his rendition of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. '*Gita* is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and variable.'

The author has successfully rebutted this stand. In the course of his exposition the author has been very thorough in expounding the basic words in the *Gita* such as *karma*, *naiskarmya*, *dharma*, *purusa*, *prakrti*, *yajna*, *adhyatma*, *yoga*, *kama*, *krodha*, *guna*, *svabhava*, *svadharm*, etc. wherever they occur in the course of discussion.

The author has taken great pains in collating the ancient message of the *Gita* with medieval and modern philosophies. The interpretation of

the symbols is also multiflorous which makes the reading interesting. Each chapter of the present work appears to have been built up on a sound logical footing. As the reader goes through the pages and comes towards the end of the book, he feels as if he had been moving through an ancient temple edifice consisting of ten spacious halls (for that is the number of chapters) tastefully decorated with comparatively modern exhibits.

But the reading of this book is no simple sauntering through the pages of the holy scriptures. The apparently far-fetched interpretations of comparable passages in world literature enable the reader to establish himself in the very core of the mystic meaning of the *Gita*. In the end the reader feels himself amply rewarded. More such books from the author are welcome.

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A SPIRITUAL CALCULUS: BY DR. A.R.
BISWAS. Published by Prabhat Karyalaya,
2C Nabin Kundu Lane, Calcutta-700 009. 1977. Pp.
vii + 62. Rs. 10/-.

To be spiritual mathematics is not necessary, but if one has interest in the latter, then with its help one can direct one's mind towards God. In this respect this book can be of much interest and help to a spiritual aspirant.

The book consists of five chapters and a select bibliography. Dr. A. K. Biswas, the author, has made a noteworthy attempt at pointing out the basic similarities among different religions and at proving that modern science is not antagonistic to them. The first chapter, 'Tao or the Way of Nature', deals with this theme. In the second chapter entitled 'Religious Manifolds' the author, with the help of mathematical linear transformations, finds the relationship between the essential and non-essential parts of religion, and elaborates how linear transformations can help further in studying religious manifoldness. Man is studied as the central figure of the trinity, with God on one side and nature on the other; and the fluctuations between the Divine and matter are explained by mathematical spiral law in the third chapter, 'The Divine Ground'. R, rationality, is approaching G, God, but can never be God—this metaphysical principle is expressed in terms of mathematical calculus as $R \rightarrow G$. In the fourth chapter, 'This is That', the author makes a comparative study of Eastern and Western mysticisms and, by a formula $E=mc^{\infty}$, parallel

to Einstein's famous law $E=mc^2$, studies the relationships among effective Spirit-energy, man and consciousness. Further, it is mathematically proved that the Buddhist Nirvana is not void but is the same as the Infinite Existence of Vedanta. In the last chapter, 'The Law of Cosmo-Physics', the author discusses the different human and divine planes with the help of mathematical co-ordinate geometry.

This book containing only sixty-two pages affords interesting reading, and is replete with mathematical formulae which can be looked upon like aphorisms as an aid to remember different concepts about God, nature, religion and man.

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ARUNACALA—SIVA OF RAMANA
MAHARSI: TRANSLATED BY T.M.P. MAHADEVAN.
Published by Sankara Vihar, 25 Trust Square,
Madavakkam Tank Road, Ayanavaram, Madras-
600 012. 1978. Pp. vi + 122. Rs. 10/-.

The devotees of Sri Ramana should be deeply thankful to Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan and the publishers for making available this book. It has two of the sage's own hymns—the *Arunacala-aksaramanamalai* ('Bridal Garland of Letters for Arunachala') in Tamil, and the *Arunacala-panca-ratnam* ('Five Verse-gems on Arunachala') in Sanskrit. Each verse has been transliterated into English, followed by a charming translation and a commentary on the verse by the learned author.

To those who consider the sage to have been an uncompromising teacher of the path of knowledge or enquiry (*vicara*), the present book will prove to be a revelation. Can a Jnanin be a Bhakta too? Do external symbols have any meaning for him who sees the all-pervading Atman? Can that intense longing of the soul for God, the *viraha* known to possess a Bhakta, consume a Jnanin also? What place does divine grace have in the consciousness of a realized sage?

The sage himself has answered the above questions in these two compositions of his. The first hymn, one of his earliest, was a spontaneous outpouring while he was circumambulating the sacred hill Arunachala. The name of the hymn means, 'the bridal garland of letters for Arunachala' or 'the garland that serves as the insignia of marriage with the undecaying (*aksara*) Lord'. The first letters of the verses are in alphabetical order. Interestingly, the name of the hymn

contains the sage's own name: *aksa-ramana!* The entire hymn is a passionate prayer from the sage, addressed to the living presence of Arunachala, revealing an intense and mystical relationship between the two. The second hymn, *Arunacala-panca-ratnam* in five short verses, was originally in Sanskrit, epitomizing Vedanta. Later, in 1922, the sage himself rendered these verses into Tamil *venba*, for a devotee. In the first two verses, Reality is spoken of from the absolute (*svarupa*) and the relative (*tatastha*) standpoints. The next three cover the Vedantic teachings on the path to perfection.

The learned translator has reprinted towards the end of the work a record of his personal knowledge of the Rock of Ages—Sri Ramana and his message to mankind. An oil painting of the 'Holy Mountain' by a friend of the author is reproduced on the front of the art-board cover, and the back cover carries the sketch of Arunachala by Bhagavan Sri Ramana himself. Two art-plates, one of Sri Ramana and the other of the Auspicious Arunachala, are provided at the opening pages. May Bhagavan, through this book, inspire us to tread the long and strait path to the summit of the real Arunachala of spiritual experience!

BR. APURVA CHAITANYA
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MALAYALAM

NARADA BHAKTI SUTRANGAL: TRANSLATED WITH A COMMENTARY BY SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur. 1976. Pp. 192 + 25. Rs. 5/-.

Sri Narada is considered to be an authority on the science of Bhakti or love of God, and his famous *Bhakti-Sutras* or aphorisms are therefore considered to be the most authoritative treatise on the subject. And so, for spiritual seekers, especially for those who follow the path of Bhakti, there is no better guide than these Sutras. The very word 'Sutra' indicates that it is not an elaborate treatise that Sri Narada has written: he has given us only the quintessence of that science in the form of eighty-four aphorisms.

Of the various commentaries on these Sutras now available, the one written in English by the late Swami Tyagisananda and published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, seems to be the most popular. Though in his Malayalam commentary Swami Siddhinathananda has generally

followed Swami Tyagisananda's approach, it must be said to his credit that his method is in a way unique, for he has depended almost entirely on the *Srimad Bhagavatam* for the explanation of each of the eighty-four Sutras. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* is, in the author's opinion, nothing but an expanded form of the *Narada Bhakti-Sutras*, written by Vyasa mainly to illustrate and substantiate the principles enunciated therein. The explanations enriched with apt illustrations and profuse quotations from the *Bhagavatam* clearly bring out the close connection between the two. The book also reveals the author's great erudition in the *Bhagavatam*.

A noteworthy feature of the book is the author's long Introduction which is a helpful guide to the reader not only in understanding Sri Narada and his *Bhakti-Sutras*, but also in evaluating his place in the Sanatana Dharma, especially in our rich Itihasas and Puranas. If we remove Sri Narada from them, the author says, our Itihasas and Puranas will become dry and almost lifeless.

This is a valuable addition to the growing religious literature in Malayalam, and an indispensable guidebook for sincere aspirants following the path of Bhakti.

SRI NARADAN: BY SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Puranattukara, Trichur, Kerala 680 551. Pp. v + 144. Rs. 4/-.

Narada occupies a unique position in the Hindu religion, as a great seer, as perhaps the first religious propagandist, as the inspirer of some of our best Itihasas and Puranas and, above all, as the author of the famous *Bhakti-Sutras*, the most authoritative treatise on the science of Bhakti.

To get a real picture of this great sage we have to dive sufficiently deep into the many and varied branches of our rich ancient literature,

especially the Upanishads, the Puranas, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavatam*. The picture becomes complete only when all the relevant facts connected with Sri Narada are culled from these sources and put together to form something like a life-story. That is exactly what Swami Siddhinathananda has done in this beautiful book, perhaps the first of its kind in any language. Many have written commentaries on the *Bhakti-Sutras*, including the one written in Malayalam by the present author. But he is the first to bring out in book form a comprehensive life-story of the celestial sage, beautifully projecting his magnificent personality.

Coming out soon after the publication of the author's beautiful commentary on the *Narada Bhakti-Sutras*, it has a special significance. If in the *Sutras* we get a glimpse of Sri Narada's luminous mind, here we see him almost face to face, with his divine Vina pouring forth ecstatic music, and hear him talk of himself, as very few sages have done before. Hearing the sage talk of himself is a wonderful experience, which is really more thrilling than hearing what others have to say about him.

The whole book is an interesting study of the various aspects of Sri Narada's personality, and of the various episodes of his life-story divided into thirty-six subheadings. While evaluating the sage's place in Hindu religion and the meritorious service rendered by him to enrich it as a teacher of Bhakti, the author has also dispelled many of the popular misunderstandings about him.

The book is written in a very simple and attractive style that is characteristic of the author, and it is a welcome addition to the religious literature in Malayalam.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

In 1903 the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, started a small dispensary in response to the dire helplessness of the local villages in sickness. Since that time the dispensary has grown and developed into a fairly well-equipped, small rural hospital. Now quite a large number of patients come daily from far and near, crossing the mountains on foot, horseback, or in dandy, sometimes travelling a distance of fifty or sixty miles in four or five days.

The hospital stands within the precincts of the Ashrama, and is under the charge of a monastic member. A resident allopathic doctor treats the patients with the help of his assistants. Service is rendered irrespective of the suffering person's caste and creed, and earnest efforts are made to maintain a high standard of efficiency in service. Moreover, all patients receive prompt and sympathetic treatment completely free of charge.

The hospital has 23 beds in the indoor department, but sometimes arrangements have to be made for more. There is also a small operation theatre. The total number of patients treated in this department during the year was 642, of which 596 were cured and discharged, 23 were relieved, 15 were discharged otherwise or left, and 8 died. In the outdoor department the total number of patients treated was 20,310, of which 9,160 were new and 11,150 were repeated cases. Surgical operations (minor) numbered 1,055.

Urgent Requirements: To enable the hospital to serve the ailing poor in this remote area of the Himalayas, the beneficent public is requested to contribute liberally towards the following needs: (1) Construction of a water reservoir (capacity 10,000 litres) to provide potable water to the hospital and to the patients, tapping a fresh source up in the hills, laying of a pipe line about a mile away, etc.: Rs. 40,000. (2) Bedding and clothing for patients, including woollen blankets: Rs. 10,000. (3) Utensils for the use of patients: Rs. 5,000. (4) Equipment for the Operation Theatre: Rs. 5,000. (5) Construction of a Dormitory for the attendants of patients: Rs. 30,000. (6) Endowment for the purchase of medicines: Rs. 1,00,000.

Some of the hospital beds in the indoor department are already endowed; it will greatly help if the remaining beds are also endowed by

the generous public in memory of their loved ones; cost of endowment per bed: Rs. 5,000. Memorial plaques will be put up near the bed endowed.

All donations are exempt from Income-tax; cheques and drafts may be drawn in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital*, and sent to the President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P.O. Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dist. Pithoragarh (U.P.) 262 524, India.

SRI SARADA DEVI'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

AT A NEWLY BUILT COLONY IN THE FLOOD AFFECTED DIGHRA VILLAGE

The birth anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated on 10 December 1979 at Dighra village, of Bali Anchal of Arambagh Subdivision in Hooghly District, West Bengal, where the Ramakrishna Mission has undertaken the construction of 636 houses for the flood victims of the 1978 floods. Of these, 116 houses and a Community Hall-cum-Shelter House are getting ready for inauguration and handing over to the allottees.

On that day, people from the surrounding villages started gathering early in the morning near the big Community Hall, where a big painting of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was decorated in the first floor of the building. Thousands of villagers—men, women, and children—paid their respect to the Holy Mother.

2,100 pcs. of Saris, 1,100 pcs. of Dhotis, and nearly 2,600 pcs. of children's garments were distributed among more than 1,600 families of ten villages. More than six thousand people were given Khichuri prasad.

The most touching aspect of the function was when the monks joined one of the batches to take prasad after removing the mat arranged for them and sat on the ground along with others. Villagers were moved to hear them saying, 'How can we sit on mat when our Narayanas are sitting on the ground'. 'Victory to Sri Ramakrishna, Victory to Sri Sarada Devi, and Victory to Swami Vivekananda', filled the air.

At night the villagers in thousands witnessed the film *Rani Rasmani* screened specially on the occasion by the Ramakrishna Mission Janasiksha Mandir, Belur Math.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

China's Small Leap Upward

If Russia has an iron curtain, China has at least a bamboo curtain. Whatever comes through the chinks of that matting is always a surprise even to astrologers.

After the Long March and the People's Revolution, Mao gave his people the famous slogan *The Great Leap Forward*. But after the so-called Cultural Revolution of 1966-69 and its aftermath, it was realized that what had actually taken place was a *great leap backward*. The blame for this was duly thrust upon the Gang of Four, and the new regime with revolutionary zeal started a new programme of 'modernization' which some Western journalists dubbed a *great leap outward*. Having leaped in all the three possible directions on the good earth, that nation has now only one direction to leap into, namely, the upward direction. By 'upward' we mean not the outer space, though the Chinese are doing well in space research, but the spiritual plane. The resourceful Chinese are now determined to attempt something there also. This heavenward or heavenly 'leap' is, understandably, a small one.

In 1966 the Red Guards burnt hundreds of copies of the Bible in the streets and sent the remaining stock to paper-pulp factories, hounded out Western missionaries, imprisoned Buddhist monks, pillaged churches, Buddhist shrines and monasteries and converted them into warehouses. But now the Government has promised to reprint the Bible and the Quran (though not Buddhist scriptures) and has started reopening and renovating churches, mosques and shrines. China has about 100 million believing Buddhists, 10 million Muslims, 3 million Catholics and nearly a million Protestants. The Religious Affairs Bureau, dormant for many years, has reopened, and there is now even a plan for Government-sponsored academic research on religion, though the outcome of such research may not turn out to be flattering to religion. Even during the last years of Mao some of the imprisoned Buddhist monks were released and some religious festivals revived. But Taoism because of its strong links with folk superstitions among the peasants is still suppressed. Confucious, the teacher of reactionary morals and target of Mao's vehement denunciation, has also not yet surfaced.

It is clear that the sudden change in policy towards religion is aimed partly at enlisting the support of believers in the difficult task of modernizing that country and partly at improving China's image overseas. The Chinese Government certainly does not want to have any spiritual force on a par with their materialistic ideology. Nevertheless, the present change augurs well for that country's future. For, as the *Gītā* (2.40) says, 'Even a little of this Dharma saves one from great fear.'