



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 85

FEBRUARY 1980

No. 2

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यंतु विश्वतोऽ
दब्धासो अपरीतास उद्भिदः ।
देवा नो यथा सदमिद्वृधे असन्न-
प्रायुवो रक्षितारो दिवे दिवे ॥

देवानां भद्रा सुमतिर्ऋजूयतां
देवानां रातिरभि नो नि वर्तताम् ।
देवानां सख्यमुप सेदिमा वयं
देवा न आयुः प्र तिरंतु जीवसे ॥

तन्नो वातो मयोभु वातु भेषजं
तन्माता पृथिवी तत् पिता द्यौः
तद् आवाणः सोमसुतो मयोभुव-
स्तदश्विना शृणुतं धिष्ण्या युवम् ॥

तमीशानं जगतस्तस्थुषस्पतिं
धियंजिन्वमवसे हूमहे वयं ।
पूषा नो यथा वेदसामसद्वृधे
रक्षिता पायुरदब्धः स्वस्तये ॥

1. May auspicious thoughts¹ come to us from all directions—thoughts which are untainted by evil, unhindered, and capable of breaking our bonds. And may the Gods, who never give up their devotees, be with us, always protecting us and increasing our joy.

Rg-Veda 1.89.1

2. May the auspicious blessings of righteous Gods be upon us. May the Gods shower favours on us. May we attain the love of Gods. May the Gods extend our life and let us live long.

Rg-Veda 1.89.2

3. May the Wind, Mother Earth and Father Heaven send us the blissful medicine.² May the stones used for preparing it, and may the Āśvins communicate the bliss-giving medicine to our intellect.

Rg-Veda 1.89.4

4. We invoke for our protection the supreme Controller, the Lord of all the living and the non-living, the Awakener of our intuitions. May he increase our wealth [knowledge] and be our infallible protector.

Rg-Veda 1.89.5

* Four *mantras* from a well-known Rg-Vedic hymn are given here. The hymn is addressed to all the Gods (*visvedevāh*) and is often chanted during religious ceremonies.

1. The word *kratu* has different meanings, sacrifice, will, desire, thought.

2. The word *bheṣajam* (medicine) occurs several times in the Vedas. It evidently refers to spiritual knowledge which is the only remedy for *bhava-roga*, the disease of worldly existence.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

The theoretical basis of Karma-yoga was discussed in the editorials of the last two months. Its practical side is the subject of this month's EDITORIAL.

Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, places before us another piece of the garland of the experiences of spiritual bliss in the lives of Brother Lawrence, some Sufi mystics, Jñānadeva, Tukārām and Mīrābāi, in the sixth instalment of THE JOY OF THE ILLUMINED.

In the second and concluding part of RELIGION AND SOCIETY, Swami Mukhyananda examines the solutions to the problems of society offered by various thinkers, and explicates the religious solution which is based on a comprehensive knowledge of human personality and its relation to life and reality at various levels.

Though existentialism is no longer as

active nowadays as it was during the forties and fifties, it has profoundly influenced world thought. Vedanta begins with a study of the existential situation of man but its main orientation is transcendental and soteriological. In EXISTENTIALISM AND VEDANTA Dr. Padma Sudhi, a postdoctoral research scholar of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, attempts a comparative study of the two systems of philosophy. The article is based on a paper read by the author at the Honours' Centre, Colorado University, U.S.A., in 1966.

Swami Atmarupananda concludes the life and spiritual struggles of the remarkable English mystic, Richard Rolle, in this month's HOW THEY WALKED ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE. Though not sainted by the Church, Rolle was a great mystic who lived as a free bird of the Spirit, unfettered by social conventions and revelling in photic and auditory experiences of communion with God.

WORK AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE—III

(EDITORIAL)

Karma-yoga is a spiritual discipline which converts ordinary work into a means for one's own liberation and the welfare of others by continually detaching the will from desires.

Desires are of two types: desire for external sense-objects which are directly perceived, and desire for unseen future results of present actions. The first one even animals have in the form of instincts. The second type of desire, called *āśā* or *īpsā* (expectation, hope), is characteristic of man alone, and Karma-yoga is concerned chiefly with this. As stated earlier, both the types of desire become a source of

bondage to the soul only when the will is attached to them.

If the will is detached from desires, the soul remains as a witness. Then one clearly sees the working of desires—how they appear and disappear, how they impel the organism into different actions. The daily Vedic ritual called *sandhyā* ('twilight devotions') teaches the aspirant this attitude of detachment: 'Salutations [to the Gods]. Desire performed actions. Desire has done the act. Desire is doing the act, not I....'¹

1. कामोऽकार्षीन्नमो नमः, कामोऽकार्षीत्, कामः करोति नाहं करोमि . . .

All desires are parts of the movements of Prakṛti, so are all actions. A man of self-knowledge sees that Prakṛti works both outside and inside him.² The Tantras look upon Prakṛti as the Śakti of Brahman, and so regard all activities as carried out by the Divine Mother according to Her own inscrutable will.

Ordinary work has a snowballing effect: one work leads to another; and the more we work, the more work we get and the more we are bound. Karma-yoga is the conversion of work into a means for getting out of this whirlpool in which the self is caught. It is a technique of allowing Prakṛti to do all the work, and freeing the self progressively from involvement in work. This is what the *Gītā* calls 'dexterity in work'.³

This dexterity lies in the mind, and not in the external work. Karma-yoga is actually a mental discipline. It is a discipline for controlling the mind. The mind can be controlled only by something higher, namely, the *buddhi* which is the locus of pure will and pure consciousness. Unless this higher intuitive faculty is to some extent developed, it is not possible to do Karma-yoga. In fact, it is only when the *buddhi* emerges, comes forward, and takes charge of work that it becomes Karma-yoga. That is why the *Gītā* calls Karma-yoga 'Buddhi-yoga'.⁴

Conditions for the conversion of work into Karma-yoga

From the above it is now clear that Karma-yoga is not an easy path. True, it does not need sitting calmly in a solitary place, scholarship in scriptures, guidance of a teacher, etc. which the other yogas need. True, it can be practised anywhere at any

time by anybody. But the popular notion that it is an easy path along which one can blunder one's way up is wrong. In order to convert ordinary work into Karma-yoga certain mental conditions are to be fulfilled. Discrimination, detachment and aspiration are the basic qualifications necessary for the practice of all the yogas. But they find different forms of expression and application in different yogas.

In Karma-yoga aspiration means not only desire for one's own salvation, but also the welfare of others. Asks Swami Vivekananda: 'What is the good of that spiritual practice or realization which does not benefit others, does not conduce to the well-being of people sunk in ignorance and delusion, does not help in rescuing them from the clutches of lust and wealth? Do you think, so long as one Jīva endures in bondage, you will have any liberation?'⁵ A Karma-yogi's aspiration is his mission in life. He must feel that his life has a definite purpose, and must connect all his actions to it.

The detachment of a Karma-yogi is based on Dharma or morality. Detachment has a spiritual value only for a person who lives a virtuous life. The detachment of an impure and selfish man is only cruel indifference. Secondly, the detachment of a Karma-yogi is based on love. He knows that only a person who is detached and stands on his own self can love all people equally. Thirdly, his detachment is based on an attitude of acceptance which comes from the awareness of a larger existence. He accepts himself with all his limitations and future possibilities. He accepts as inevitable the polarities of life: fortune and misfortune, happiness and sorrow, love

2. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.27,28,29,33.

3. *Ibid.*, 2.50.

4. *Ibid.*, 2.49;10.10;18.57.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in 8 vols. (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama 1972-77), vol. 7, p. 235.

and hatred, good and evil. This attitude of acceptance is true humility.

The Karma-yogi constantly practises discrimination between what is to be done and what is not to be done, and between the eternal and the impermanent. It expands the boundaries of his self and integrates it with the *virāt puruṣa*, the Cosmic Self.

To maintain this kind of aspiration, detachment and discrimination in the midst of one's daily activities is impossible unless the *buddhi*, the higher intellect, is to some extent developed or awakened. Mind has two levels: the conscious and the unconscious, and work can be done with either. Walking, cycling and other routine activities and a large part of our mental life are controlled by the unconscious, and as a result we are seldom self-aware. This kind of unconscious work is not yoga. Work becomes yoga only if it is a conscious process and there is continuous self-remembrance. This is possible only if work is supported by an alert *buddhi*. For the clarity and development of *buddhi*, continence (*brahmacarya*) is essential. Continence is thus an important factor in the conversion of work into Karma-yoga.

Parts of Karma-yoga

We have seen that mind plays an important part in Karma-yoga. Mind has three faculties: reasoning, will and emotions. If work is to become a spiritual discipline, it must purify and develop all these faculties. Karma-yoga is thus a composite discipline which consists of several parts. What are they?

Patañjali defines Karma-yoga as consisting of *tapas* (self-control), *svādhyāya* (self-study) and *īśvara-praṇidhāna* (self-surrender to God).⁶ According to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *yajña* (sacrifice), *dāna* (charity) and *tapas* (self-control) purify the mind, and so

should never be given up.⁷ The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* speaks of three branches of religious duty: *yajña*, *adhyayana* and *dāna* forming the first branch; *tapas* forming the second branch; and living with one's Guru forming the third branch.⁸ These definitions make it clear that four disciplines—*tapas*, *svādhyāya*, *dāna* and *yajña* or *īśvarārpaṇa*—together constitute Karma-yoga. Practice of Karma-yoga means the practice of all these four disciplines. The popular modern notion that Karma-yoga is doing some work in any way one likes is not supported by Hindu scriptures.

Tapas or austerity etymologically signifies heat, and is used to mean the drying up or control of desires. The roots of desire cannot be destroyed without spiritual illumination. The purpose of austerity is to reduce the power of desires and convert them into their 'seed' form. It is only when many of the desires are thus suppressed and their impetuosity controlled that detachment of will from desires becomes possible. In modern times the most important form of self-control is chastity. A Karma-yogi has to move about and work with different types of people, and he has to learn to love all. To attempt this with unsublimated sex is a risky venture.

According to Śrī Śaṅkara *tapas* is one-pointed effort. He quotes with approval the *Mahābhārata* definition, 'concentration of mind and the senses is the highest *tapas*'.⁹ This is an ancient Indian idea. When the Ṛṣis wanted to know the Truth, they performed *tapas*. When Dhruva wanted his father's love and kingdom, he did *tapas*. When Pārvatī wanted to get Śiva as her husband, she did *tapas*. When Arjuna wanted celestial weapons, he

7. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 18.5.

8. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 2.23.1.

9. Śaṅkara, Commentary on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.1.1.

6. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra* 2.1.

performed *tapas*. *Tapas* is thus a form of self-control involving austerity and one-pointed effort. This idea is fast vanishing from modern life.

Svādhyāya, the next discipline of Karma-yoga, is usually interpreted as study of scriptures or repetition of a divine name. It provides the aspirant with ideas and guidance and enables him to keep his mind on a higher plane. A large number of our normal problems and mental troubles can be set right through proper studies and deep thinking. *Svādhyāya* also means study of one's own mind and the working of one's thoughts. 'We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care of what you think,' warns Swami Vivekananda.¹⁰ Karma-yoga involves not only physical work but also talking, preaching and writing. There is an inseparable relation between knowledge and word and between word and image. A Karma-yogi must be aware of this and he must study how words and images rise in his mind and influence him and influence others. Says Swamiji, 'Think of the power of words! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without inquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is also a part of Karma-yoga.'¹¹ The true Karma-yogi does not fritter away his energies in useless thinking and talking. He uses his words with such power that they produce an irresistible impression in others.

Dāna, the third discipline, is charity. There can be no Karma-yoga without charity for that is the only practical test of one's detachment and love for others. Every great religion insists upon it as a fundamental duty of man. The income-tax extracted by the government from unwilling

hands is nothing but a legally enforced secular form of charity! All life is one and nature forces us to share with others what we have in excess of our personal needs. Says Swami Vivekananda: 'Learn that the whole of life is giving, that nature will force you to give. So, give willingly. Sooner or later you will have to give up. You come into life to accumulate. With clenched hands, you want to take. But nature puts a hand on your throat and makes your hands open.'¹²

Dāna does not mean only giving away material things. Nor is it meant only for the rich. Everyone is bound to give; the poor are not exempt from this law. If one cannot afford to give away wealth and material goods, one must give something else like knowledge, manual service, or love. There is at present a great hunger for true knowledge and pure love. Above all, let everyone give to everyone else freedom—freedom to grow according to his own law of being.

Helping another person to attain spiritual illumination is, according to Swamiji, the highest form of charity.¹³ Even if one is not spiritually advanced, one can at least send out constantly prayerful thoughts for the spiritual welfare of others. Swamiji once advised one of his disciples to do this and said, 'Even by such continuous current of thought the world will be benefited. Nothing good in the world becomes fruitless, be it work or thought. Your thought-currents will perhaps rouse the religious feeling of someone in America.'¹⁴

Austerity, study and charity become spiritually effective only if they help in detaching the will from desires and integrate the individual with the cosmic. This

10. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 14.

11. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 75.

12. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 5.

13. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 52.

14. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 237.

detachment of will and expansion of consciousness are achieved by *yajña* or *īśvar-ārpaṇa*, the fourth and most important discipline of Karma-yoga.

There are several ways of achieving this integration, depending upon one's mental growth and orientation to Reality, and accordingly there are several types of Karma-yoga. These Karma-yogas may be classified into four groups: *niṣkāma karma* (work without motive), *bhagavat-prīti-kāma karma* (work done with the desire of pleasing the Lord), *prapatti* (total self-surrender to the Lord), and work as participation in divine *līlā*.

Niṣkāma karma

This means working without any motive. Swami Vivekananda calls it 'work for work's sake'. Self-effort alone counts here and God's grace has no place in it. This is the path followed by seekers of Knowledge. Three attitudes are possible in this path.

One is that held by the Mīmāṃsakas who believe that everyone is bound to perform Vedic rituals, not with any ulterior motive, but because the Vedas have enjoined them. This idea was rejected by Hinduism long ago.

A second possible attitude is that of *sākṣī* or witness. Here all Karma is regarded as the inscrutable working of Prakṛti or the illusory working of Māyā. The 'I' is identified with the higher Self and remains as a witness of all the bodily and mental changes. The *Gītā* describes this attitude in several places. This is the main attitude adopted by Jñānis.

A third attitude is to do work as *yajña* or sacrifice. The idea that the whole of life is going on as a cosmic sacrifice seems to have prevailed in India even during the early Vedic period. The well-known *Puruṣa Sūkta* describes all creation as resulting from a self-sacrifice of Prajāpati or the Cosmic Self. This cosmic sacrifice pro-

vides energy for the sustenance of each individual being for a short span of life, during which it is expected to live in such a way as to maintain the continuity of the sacrifice. Every living being is allotted a short time to take part in this sacrifice and is itself then sacrificed to give place to another living being. If one realizes this truth, and looks upon every work as an act of participation in this universal phenomenon, then one will not get attached to work. That is why the *Gītā* says, 'People are bound by Karma because they do not do work as a sacrifice.'¹⁵ In its fourth chapter it teaches how all bodily and mental activities could be carried out as a sacrifice.¹⁶

Work without motive can be performed with any of the above three attitudes. But it is not an easy path, warns Swami Vivekananda, who himself was its chief popularizer in modern times. 'Nothing is easier to say than "I work for work's sake", but nothing is so difficult to attain. I would go twenty miles on my hands and knees to look on the face of the man who can work for work's sake. There is a motive somewhere.'¹⁷ For the vast majority of aspirants it is easier to practise Karma-yoga, when it is connected to love of God.

Bhagavat-prīti-kāma karma

This is work done with the motive of pleasing the Lord. It is the main path followed by devotees of God. In it God's grace and self-effort are regarded as equally important.

The motive of pleasing God is born of Bhakti and, as Nārada has pointed out, should not be regarded as a desire because it restrains all other desires.¹⁸ The devotee

15. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 3.9.

16. *Ibid.*, 4. 23-32.

17. *Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. 241.

18. Nārada, *Bhakti-Sūtra*, 1.7.

through love and self-surrender identifies his will with the Divine Will. This automatically detaches his own will from worldly desires. In this path also three attitudes are possible depending on the aspirant's stage of spiritual evolution.

The first is the dualistic stage. At this stage the aspirant cannot help looking upon himself as the agent or doer of actions. Moreover, he is unable to think that the work (especially secular work) he is doing is an act of worship of the Lord. All that he can do is to surrender the fruit of his actions at the feet of the Lord at the beginning and end of his work. He may try to remember Him and do this offering even in the midst of his work. The vast majority of spiritual aspirants find themselves at this stage. In their case *work and worship* go hand in hand.

The second is a higher dualistic or qualified monistic stage. At this stage the aspirant realizes that the Lord is the Indweller (*antaryāmi*). He has given up the idea of enjoyment (*bhokṛtva*) but he is still unable to give up the notion of agency (*karṛtva*), though he feels that he is under the control of the Indweller (*'antaryāmya-dhīnoham'*). He is now able to look upon all work as sacred and do *work as worship* of the Lord.

The third is the monistic stage (not Śaṅkara's Advaita, however). At this stage the aspirant is said to see God alone everywhere. Every being appears to be a manifestation of God. *All work is worship*. In fact, there is no question of work at all now, for he no longer feels that he is the doer. He only *sees* all movements going on as worship. He no longer worships God in man but worships man as Brahman. It is this highest form of Karma-yoga that Swami Vivekananda has placed before the world as the ideal for the modern age. It is indeed the highest ideal but it can be

practised only by those who have attained a higher level of consciousness.

Work and prapatti

The types of Karma-yoga described till now are meant for those who are leading a somewhat peaceful life. Such people hold to God with one hand and to work with the other. But there are many who are unable to do that. Buffeted by the sorrows and sufferings of life, or burning with an intense hunger for God-realization, their minds are in a state of agitation and they cannot pay much attention to work. For such people scriptures teach the path of *prapatti*, total self-surrender to the Lord. They don't have to worry about work; they may do their work in any way that is possible for them. They have to hold to the Lord with both the hands, and let the work take care of itself. When they sincerely do this—because no other way is possible for them—they find that, according to the mysterious laws of the spiritual world, their work is going on smoothly, allowing them plenty of freedom to think about the Lord. In this path God's grace alone matters and self-effort counts nothing.

Work as participation in divine līlā

There is yet another way of practising Karma-yoga. It is to look upon the whole of life as the *līlā* or play of the Divine, and all work as taking part in this cosmic sport. For children all work is play but for adults even play becomes work. Illumined souls, who retain the innocence and spontaneity of children, look upon the whole world as the playground of the Divine, and accept joys and sorrows, good and evil, life and death, as parts of this divine game. A little of this attitude will make everyone's life sweeter and richer, and will open new vistas of beauty and meaning in life.

Conclusion

We may now conclude our long discussion on work by referring to the importance of work in modern life. Increase of population, industrialization and urbanization, and socio-political changes have made work an unavoidable necessity for the modern man. Science and free thinking have changed man's views about himself and the world, and opened up new fields of experience and expression. Everywhere men and women are seeking freedom from economic exploitation and social and religious tyrannies. At the same time, modern life has alienated man from his parent culture and religious beliefs, and has sowed in him seeds of discontent, division, hostility. This has increased his need for spiritual orientation and fulfilment more than ever.

On the other hand, even in spiritual life work has assumed greater importance. Because of the need for earning his livelihood and because of greater social awareness and commitment, modern man cannot take exclusively to a life of contemplation and solitude. Even otherwise, teachers of Vedanta have made Karma-yoga an unavoidable first step in spiritual life. For one thing, Karma-yoga provides the beginner continuity with his past, which he is yet to outgrow, and enables him to work out his creative urge and exhaust his surplus *rajas* through socially useful channels. If these are suppressed, they are likely to create worries, fantasies and restlessness. But if expressed in selfish actions, the result will be loss of will-power. 'Such actions', says Swami Vivekananda, 'will not cause power to return to us. But works in which all selfish motives are restrained will surely contribute to the growth of a new power in your mind.'¹⁹ Again, just as the defects

of a machine can be detected only when it is working, so also the hidden passions, egoism and other defects of character can be detected and remedied only through work. What is more, every action has some evil associated with it. As Swamiji has pointed out, 'every bit of food that we eat is taken from another's mouth.' We must therefore continuously do good to others to counteract the evil that our actions cause. Life is full of uncertainties, and we find that our selfish actions do not always produce the selfish results we had expected, and ultimately lead only to greater bondage and misery. But selfless work reduces our ego and purifies our mind. Thus Karma-yoga plays an important part in the lives of spiritual aspirants.

So then, the two problems facing modern man are: to find joy and satisfaction in work, and to convert it into a means of spiritual fulfilment.

A person can find joy in work only when it becomes an expression of his creative genius. This becomes possible only when he has the freedom to choose his work. And he can have freedom of choice only when every kind of work can provide him economic security and social status. This is a fundamental principle of Marxism, and it is by putting into practice this principle without its sinister socio-political implications that Western societies have warded off communism and attained material prosperity. But such a freedom of choice in work is impossible in an undeveloped country like India where population growth is out of control and millions live in dire poverty.

However, whatever be the condition of the society or the nature of one's work, everyone will find sooner or later that secular work cannot relate man meaningfully to life and reality unless it has a spiritual orientation. What is now needed is a theory of work which integrates both

¹⁹. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 33.

the secular and the sacred and will lead man from fulfilment to fulfilment by unfolding the potentialities of his self at different levels of existence. This calls for a comprehensive philosophy of life which accepts the unity of life, the divinity of the soul, levels of experience and the importance of work in spiritual unfolding.

The great task that Swami Vivekananda set to himself was to produce such a vast philosophical synthesis of all the best ideas of the East and the West, of ancient and modern times. His purpose was to provide only a basic flexible framework, and not a dogmatic strait-jacket. For he knew that Truth or Reality was inseparable from man's self and, since human nature shows infinite degrees of variation, every man must be given freedom to discover truth

within himself by following his own law of growth. That is why he said, 'No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul.' In other words, every man must find out his own philosophy of life. Or, in the words of Swamiji, everyone must discover his own religion.

And the first step in this direction is to accept life and to open oneself to its power and mystery. 'Do not fly away from the wheels of the world-machine,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'but stand inside it and learn the secret of work. Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.'²⁰

(Concluded)

20. Ibid., p. 115.

JOY OF THE ILLUMINED—VI

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

Nicholas Herman of Lorraine was a lowly, unlearned man who, after having served as a footman and soldier, was admitted in 1666 as a lay brother among the Carmelites at Paris. The one discipline he practised was to endeavour to walk constantly 'as in His presence'. He worked mostly in the kitchen, but always in the presence of God. Through this process he reached a state from where he could say:

The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.⁸⁴

84. Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God the Best Rule of a Holy Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), p. 20.

What was the effect of such close possession of God? The lowly man became the enlightened man, and came to be known as Brother Lawrence. In some of his letters he has casually mentioned what joy illumination brought to him. We are here quoting at random some relevant passages:

I have taken this opportunity to communicate to you the sentiments of one of our society [meaning himself, but speaking thus out of humility], concerning the admirable effects and continual assistances which he receives from the presence of God. Let you and me both profit by them.

You must know his continual care has been, for about forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which may displease Him, and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him and because He deserves infinitely more.

He is now so accustomed to that divine presence that he receives from it continual succours upon all occasions. For about thirty years his soul has been filled with joy so continual, and sometimes so great, that he is forced to use means to moderate them, and to hinder their appearing outwardly.⁸⁵

He complains much of our blindness, and cries often that we are to be pitied who content ourselves with so little. God, saith he, has infinite treasure to bestow, and we take up with a little sensible devotion, which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God and stop the current of His graces. But when He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favours plentifully; there they flow like a torrent which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.⁸⁶

I know not how God will dispose of me. I am always happy. All the world suffer; and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them.⁸⁷

* * *

Rabia, the Sufi mystic, who has been described by her biographer as 'that woman who lost herself in union with the Divine, that one accepted by men as a second spotless Mary', thus spoke of her agony and ecstasy:

The groaning and the yearning of the lover of God will not be satisfied until it is satisfied in the Beloved.

I have made Thee the Companion of my heart, but my body is available for those who desire its company. And my body is friendly towards its guests, but the Beloved of my heart is the Guest of my soul.

My peace is in solitude, but my Beloved is always with me. Nothing can take the place of His love and it is the test for me among mortal beings. Whenever I contemplate His Beauty, He is my *mihrab*, towards Him is my *qibla*—O Healer of souls, the heart feeds upon its desire and it is the striving towards union with Thee that has healed my soul. Thou art my Joy and my Life to

eternity. Thou wast the source of my life, from Thee came my ecstasy. I have separated myself from all created beings: my hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my quest.⁸⁸

* * *

Ahmad B. al-Arabi, the Sufi, wrote in his *Kitab al-wajd*, a book on ecstasy:

Ecstasy in this world comes not from revelation, but consists in the vision of the heart and realization of the truth and gaining assurance, and he who has attained to it beholds with the joy of certainty and with a devotion free of self-interest, for he is all attentive. When he awakes from the vision, he loses what he has found, but his knowledge remains with him and for a long time his spirit enjoys that, with the increase of certainty which he has gained through the vision. This depends upon the servant's proximity to his Lord, or his distance from Him, and upon the vision given to him by his Creator.⁸⁹

* * *

Harith B. Asad Al-Muhasibi, who was said to be a Sufi 'whose arrow attained its mark', obviously said these vibrant words from his personal experience:

When love is established in the heart of a servant, there is no place there for remembrance of men or demons or of Paradise or Hell, nor of anything except the remembrance of the Beloved and His grace. The love of God in its essence is really the illumination of the heart by joy because of its nearness to the Beloved, for love, in solitude, rises up triumphant and the heart of the lover is possessed by the sense of its fellowship with Him, and when solitude is combined with that intercourse with the Beloved, the joy of secret intercourse overwhelms the mind, so that it is no longer concerned with this world and what is therein.

To that one whom God has placed in the rank of His lovers, He gives the Vision of Himself, for He has sworn, saying, 'By My glory, I will show him My Face and I will heal his soul by the Vision of Myself.' The hearts of such lovers are held captive in the hidden shrine of the Divine loving-kindness: they are marked out by

85. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

86. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

87. Ibid., p. 41.

88. See Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* (London: Luzac & Company, 1950), pp. 11-12.

89. Ibid., p. 21.

their knowledge of the revelation of the Divine Majesty, being transformed by the joy of the Vision, in contemplation of the Invisible, and of the enveloping Glory of God, and from them all hindrances are removed, for they tread the path of friendship with God and are transported into the garden of Vision, and their hearts dwell in that region, where they see without eyes, and are in the company of the Beloved, without looking upon Him, and converse with an Unseen Friend.

This is the description of the lovers of God, who do righteousness, who are gifted with heavenly wisdom, who are on their guard both night and day, pure in all their thoughts, those whom God has prepared for His service, whom He has preserved by His care, whom He has invested with His own authority. They are continually serving Him to Whom belong the heavens and the earth: they are completely satisfied, for they live the good life, their bliss is eternal and their joy is made perfect and they possess an everlasting treasure within their hearts, for it is as if they contemplated with the eye of the heart the Glory that is invisible, and God is the Object and goal of their aspirations. Whoso knows God loves Him and whoso loves Him, He makes to dwell with Him and whom He makes to dwell with Him, in whom He dwells, blessed is he, yea blessed.⁹⁰

* * *

About the joy of illumination Jñānadeva says:

As I went to see God, my intellect stood motionless, and as I saw Him, I became Himself.... As a dumb man cannot express the sweetness of nectar, so also I cannot express my internal bliss. God keeps awake in me, says Jñānadeva, and the Saints became pleased by this sign....

Throughout all my experiences, I have been overwhelmed with silence. What shall I do if I cannot speak a word? Nivṛtti showed me the God in my heart, and I have been enjoying each day a new aspect of Him.

I have been satiated by the enjoyment of Divine experience, and I have been nodding from time after time. I have lost all desires; I have grown careless of my body. Meum and Tuum have disappeared from me. I became

merged in God, and the bliss was witnessed by all.⁹¹

* * *

After his long, strenuous struggle, when the vision of God came to Tukaram, his joy was boundless and unceasing. In many inspired songs he expressed his joy:

For long had I waited to see Thy feet. Time had parted us for a long time. Now shall I enjoy Thy company to my satisfaction. Desires hitherto had given me much trouble.... I was moving away from the path.... For long was I merged in mere semblance.... Now the consummation has been reached, and I am merged in enjoyment....

How blessed am I that I have seen Thy feet today! How much have the Saints done for me, O God! Today's gain is indescribable. Its auspiciousness is beyond measure. Tuka wonders how so great a fortune should have fallen to his lot.

All the quarters have now become auspicious to me. Evil has itself been transformed into the highest good. The lamp in my hand has dispelled all darkness.... The grief I hitherto felt will now conduce to happiness. I now see goodness in all created things.

Blessed am I that my love has been fixed in Thy name. My blessedness is undoubted. I shall never be a creature to the onslaught of time. I shall now live on the spiritual nectar, and live always in the company of the Saints.

Satisfaction is being added to satisfaction, and enjoyment to enjoyment.

Blessedness beyond compare.... We, who are mad after God, are sunk in blessedness. We shall sing and dance and clap our hands, and please God. Every day to me is now a holiday. We are full of joy, and the omnipotent God will vindicate us in every way....

I have become entirely careless of the objects of sense. Divine joy is seething through my body. My tongue has become uncontrollable, and ceaselessly utters the name of God. From greater to greater bliss do I go, as a miser goes from greater to greater riches. All my emotions

⁹¹. See R.D. Ranade, *Indian Mysticism: Mysticism in Maharashtra* (Poona: Aryabhushana Press Office, 1933), pp. 173-74.

⁹⁰. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

have been unified in God, as the rivers in an ocean.⁹²

* * *

In the Upaniṣad, as we have quoted before, it is declared that on attaining the experiential knowledge of Brahman one becomes fearless.⁹³ Rāmprasād, the worshipper of the Divine Mother, after attaining the knowledge that Kālī and Brahman are the same, declared his joy in a triumphant song:

I have surrendered my soul at the fearless
feet of the Mother;
Am I afraid of Death any more?
Unto the tuft of hair on my head
Is tied the almighty *mantra*, Mother Kālī's
name.
My body I have sold in the market-place of
the world
And with it have bought Śrī Durgā's name.
Deep within my heart I have planted the
name of Kālī,
The Wish-fulfilling Tree of heaven;
When Yama, King of Death, appears,
To him I shall open my heart and show it
growing there.
I have cast out from me my six unflagging foes;
Ready am I to sail life's sea,
Crying, 'To Durgā victory !'⁹⁴

* * *

When St. Teresa of Avila was loving God in one part of the world as the 'Bridegroom', Mīrā, the daughter of the royal family of Chitor was doing the same. For Kṛṣṇa's sake, Mīrā left the palace and became a begging minstrel. After she had passed through the intense agony of seeking the Beloved, the great moment of joyous union ultimately came. And Mīrā sang :

Friends, my beloved has come home:
After long separation and agony
I have been united with my beloved.
I have greeted him with the waving of a light.
Ah, this return of the beloved,
In all his grace!
Let us sing the song of the joy of union,
The boundless joy.
My eyes swim in the ocean of his beauty
Mīrā's courtyard is gay today.⁹⁵

Mīrā's bliss could not be taken away
from her ; her union could not be broken.
So she confidently sang :

All-pervading one
I am dyed with your colour.
When other women's sweethearts
Live in foreign lands,
They write letter after letter.
But my beloved lives in my heart,
So I sing happily day and night.⁹⁶

* * *

After coming through so many trials
and such anguish, Mīrā could at last declare
triumphantly, without the least trace of
vainglory:

I am true to my Lord:
Why should I feel ashamed,
Now that I have danced in public for my
beloved?
I lost all appetite in the day,
And all sleep at night ;
Now the arrow of love has pierced me,
And I have begun singing of the knowledge
divine ;
Therefore my relatives have all come
And are sitting round me like bees sipping
honey.
Mira, the slave of Giridhara,
Is no more the laughing stock of the world.⁹⁷

(To be continued)

92. Ibid., p. 301.

93. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.9.1.

94. See 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1942), p. 302.

95. Quoted in 'The Story of Mira's Love', *Vedanta and the West*, No. 174 (July-August 1965), pp. 56-57.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Social thinkers have suggested different remedies for the ills of man depending on the view of man they take. If you think of man simply as a physical being who has only to satisfy his physical needs—food, clothing, and shelter—and if you take this as the be all and end all of human life, you try to provide exclusively economic solutions. Those who take man as a mental being also, may try in addition to include certain cultural elements, but nothing beyond that. It all depends on the view of man, the philosophy preached—Marxism, Humanitarianism, Scientific Materialism, and so many other ‘isms’. The great sages, however, have seen the Reality, the Divinity within, and experienced that there is something permanent in the midst of all these changing things. You can’t explain our life or even this world taken alone. Life appears and disappears: you can’t say that it came accidentally by itself, nor can you say it is purposeless; there must be some purpose, though you may not know it. There is a Higher Reality, which is the basis of all existence. The seers have found this Reality, and they have taught that man must not be treated as a means, but as an end in himself. Man is not only a physical and mental being, he is a spiritual being. The Divine Reality which is at the back of the universe is trying to express itself in and through all these personalities.

Change is an essential part of nature. Nature is not to be blamed, because change is very necessary for life to function; if things do not change, there cannot be any experiences, there cannot be any phenomenal knowledge, there cannot be any development or progress. Manifestation

means change. It is therefore not a condemnation to say there is change. In and through these changing phenomena, the Changeless is trying to manifest Itself. Man is this Changeless Being in his core; and through his personality this inner spiritual Reality is trying to express Itself in various ways. Therefore, its expression must be helped. As we all have consciousness of individuality, in and through this individuality we must try to express this inner Truth.

The Spirit is manifesting on the collective plane also. When we realize this dual manifestation and try to adjust the whole of our being, the physical, mental, and moral, in terms of this ideal, and try to manifest the Spirit within on the individual and collective planes, then only we find peace. When we are at harmony with the whole, then only there is peace and happiness. A jarring note, aloofness, singularity always results in unhappiness. So it is that harmony with the whole is very essential. The goal of religion is to express the freedom of the Spirit, the beneficence of the Spirit, to express the oneness of the Spirit.

In terms of social life—for oneness is expressed by identifying ourselves with one and all—we should try to go beyond the barriers of caste and creed, race and nationality, sex and wealth, and try to identify with the whole of humanity. We must grow gradually into higher and more generalized consciousness. To give an example: There are men and women, but we may include both under the wider concept ‘human beings’; we can bring a larger concept to include animals and plants also, by saying ‘living beings’; and in the still

larger concept of 'existents' we can include all that exist, even inanimate things. Thus we identify ourselves with larger and larger concepts until at last we come to the universal concept. So to expand ourselves we must expand our consciousness to embrace the whole of existence itself. And all the dark corners of the mind will be illuminated when we have a full view of the blazing Reality.

Somehow we are shrouded in ignorance of our real nature, and we are trying to manifest our true nature by rending this veil. This is the goal of religion, and we may adopt various methods to achieve it. To put it in the words of Swami Vivekananda : 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal [of religion] is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work [Karma], worship [Bhakti], psychic control [Dhyāna], or philosophy [Jñāna], by one, or more, or all of these and be free! This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books, temples, and forms are but secondary details.'⁸ We can seek the help of all these methods in a spirit of Yoga and try to manifest the divinity. We are to conquer not only external nature through science, but also the internal nature through Yoga. Now we are enmeshed in our ego and selfish desires, passions, prejudices, and all such obstructions—the six internal enemies of man: *kāma* (lust), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (delusion), *mada* (pride), and *mātsarya* (jealousy). These are the six enemies that are haunting men all the time. These demoniacal tendencies are to be conquered by inner divine assistance, the grace of the Self. In this way we are to control nature internally as well as externally.

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8 vols. (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 1, p. 124.

This is true religion. Religion is not merely thinking, as we normally do, in terms of a God somewhere sitting beyond the sky, and some sort of heaven to be reached after death. Religion is the transformation of personality, and it is to be attained here and now. It is not merely going to a post-mortem heaven. For even if a person reaches heaven, unless he has consciously transformed himself and known the truth he will not be free, he will not be happy. He will find only an exaggerated replica of this world. 'Thou shalt know the Truth, and the Truth shall make thee free.'⁹ Truth alone will make man free.

Religion is not, as some conceive, an opium of the people, or a sop to keep people under submission; but it is an absolute necessity for the well-being of the individual and society. Just as our physical being perceives things and we have physical hunger to satisfy, similarly the soul sees the Spiritual Reality and hungers after It; this is an urge of the soul which must be satisfied. This urge expresses itself in various ways. In the primitive stages it is expressed in a crude way. Just as, on the physical plane, primitive people whose knowledge of nature is scanty eat raw flesh, or fruits and roots that are available in the forest, and use crude instruments—with all that, the object being to satisfy the needs of the body—similarly in religious matters also the need is satisfied, but in a more or less crude way. But that does not matter at all; our conceptions of God and other things are comparatively refined and expressed in a better way; but the power of the soul is always the same. The primitive man also sees—he sees the universe just as we see it. We know more about objects since science has developed; that does not mean a man without science cannot see or carry on his activities. The

9. John 8:32.

power to see is given even to a child, but the evaluations are different according to the growth of the mind. Similarly the spiritual eye of the primitives sees the Reality within, but they express these perceptions in crude terms, while we express them in refined terms: in either case it is the necessity of the respective group's very constitution.

Thus religion being the urge of the soul to manifest itself, it can never be extinguished, it can never be destroyed whatever theories one may preach. Tomorrow if someone begins to preach, 'Oh people, do not eat food. Food is not a necessity for you. It involves so much labour; some people want you to labour, so they ask you to eat food. Then you have to go on cooking for such a long time; this is meant to keep you engaged in these things. Don't eat food, don't eat food'—if someone preaches thus, nobody will listen, because food is a natural necessity. Similarly, with regard to religion. However much you may try to present things this way or that, people won't give up religion, because religion is a necessity of the soul. Only it may take some time for the religious urge to manifest, just as the sex-urge manifests in the child only after maturity. We come from God and we want to go back to God; or rather, God is our nature, divinity is our own nature, and we want to express it. Religion in the true sense cannot be accepted or rejected, but can only be recognized or neglected with the corresponding consequences, just as in the case of gravity.

This is the purpose of religion on the individual plane. But religion has another aspect. All these various moral teachings, rituals, doctrines, and dogmas, may be called religious in a secondary sense, as they are of help in overcoming the inner obstructions to manifest the inherent divinity. Thus religion expresses itself in society in different ways. That is how

religion has got different outward expressions in different societies. According to the stage of cultural development and prevailing environment, expression is given differently to religious philosophy, dogmas, and doctrines which help the religious spirit to grow in human beings. Religion has this secondary purpose of binding together society and helping it to grow. That is, it provides a platform, an environment, in which individuals can grow up and express their religious nature, because individuals are a part of society. The word 'religion' has come from the Latin *re-ligare*, 'to bind together' or 're-unite'. So religion is meant to bind and hold together society. This is the purpose of religion in its secondary sense; and in its primary sense to re-unite us with God.

Thus religion is the source of morality, without which society cannot be held together. If everybody is selfish, society goes to pieces; so religion comes and provides the means of holding society together. It provides ethics and morality, and bases them on the universal factor of spirituality. When there is a common factor supporting us all, we may appeal to it. God is our Father, we are all His children, so we are all brothers united in Divinity. If man is considered to be only a fortuitous combination of matter, then there is nothing to unite mankind, nor can there be any sanction for morality and ethics.

Religion has this purpose of giving ethics and morality to society. But with all that, society is only a means: ethics is not the end, or merely living happily is not the end. The end of man is to express his divinity, to realize the Truth, to realize his true infinite nature, to go back to God. So if society is made an end in itself, one misses the mark. Society is only a contingent, limited thing that has come into existence. We are living together to pursue a common purpose, and that common

purpose is to attain our own real infinite being. But if we make society an end in itself, as various social thinkers ask us to do, then we miss the mark, we become nothing; that is, the individual has no meaning or value in himself apart from the State or society. So if we bind ourselves to society and take society as all in all, we miss our goal.

Society is a gymnasium where we take moral exercise, where we purify ourselves, where we try to express the divine qualities within us. To that end we should try to make society a better medium for individual expression and attainment; and as a consequence of individual improvement, the society also improves. But gradually the individual has to transcend society. Society does not have a personality with a goal of its own. It can be likened to a university, which we equip well, so that the students may acquire good knowledge and pass out. They do not stay there. If students pass well, the university gets a good name. The best of universities has no value or meaning without students; for it has no purpose of its own. It is only a means.

Similarly, the goal of religion is not merely to make a happy society, but to make it a means for the growth of individuals and to help them to attain their true value. The goal of religion is trans-social, universal. In Indian terminology, the social aspect of religion is called *dharma*, which is the same etymologically as 'religion'; *dharma* is that which binds or holds together people.¹⁰ It is a force of social cohesion; and making *dharma* as a basis, one has to rise up. *Dharma* is not the end; that is, religion in the secondary sense is not the end, but the end is Mokṣa, liberation or freedom of the Spirit, or realizing the Kingdom of God within. The goal is not social but trans-social. We try

to express ourselves in society; therefore religion has a great part to play in society, welding it and holding it together and making people moral. It gives people a framework in which they can live and work and ultimately rise up and go beyond society by integrating themselves with the whole universe, of which they are an integral part. Just as one has to transcend family loyalties to integrate himself to the State or society, one has also to transcend social loyalties to integrate himself by ever-widening stages and loyalties with the whole universe to realize his infinite nature.¹¹

Therefore, the purpose of society is to provide a framework, a ground, a gymnasium, where people can develop to express their divine nature. As such, that society alone is best and true to its purpose which organizes itself to fulfil its task properly. The Hindu sages deeply pondered over these questions and gave a plan for a social organization by which such a society could be formed; and they experimented with it. In society there are all types of people; there are people with different temperaments and at different stages of growth. There are children; there are youth; grown-up men and women; there are those grown-up in body but children in mind, and those young in appearance but old in wisdom. Now, society has to organize itself in such a way that all these types of people find nourishment. They should grow up gradually and reach the goal. A society which merely provides one value and places

11. A Sanskrit verse says, 'One may give up a single person (*ekam*) for the sake of a family or clan (*kula*), a family for the sake of a village (*grāma*), a village for the sake of the state (*jana-pada*), and for the sake of the Spirit (*Atman*) one may give up (transcend) everything.' Cf. also what Vivekananda said in his letter from Chicago to Swami Brahmananda in 1894: 'Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment, *universality*.'

10. Cf. धारणात् धर्ममित्याहुः धर्मो धार्यते प्रजा ।

one ideal before different types of people is no good. If you have only one class, say M.A. class because it is the highest, and put everybody, children and old men, into it, it won't do. You must have a gradation from the kindergarten and primary upwards to M.A.—different classes for different intelligences. A society must provide for different values to be realized.

The Indian thinkers have therefore thought in terms of four values : *dharma* or righteousness, morality, ethics which binds together society ; *artha* or wealth ; *kāma* or desire and enjoyment ; and Mokṣa, spiritual freedom. These are the four values that we have to provide for ; there are people who are in the state of earning, they want wealth ; there are people who want sense-enjoyments ; there are people who want to cultivate virtues and serve others ; and there are those who are done with all these things and want to realize the Infinite Spirit behind the universe. Although the ultimate goal of all human beings is spiritual freedom and manifestation of the divinity within, this does not mean that everybody is fit for that at the same time. Everybody will achieve it by different ways through gradual stages. A society must provide for all, just as the university provides different faculties out of which one may take up any according to one's aptitude and inclination.

However, there are persons who have seen through all the enjoyment this world can give and want something higher ; the least bondage they cannot bear. While for others the world is a place of enjoyment, for the man of discrimination and dispassion it is a bondage. He cannot bear the least kind of slavery. Let us take an example. If a lot of sand is thrown on the body we aren't bothered much, but if a small particle of dust enters the eye, we become restless. Most of us are like the thick-skinned body where you may throw

all kinds of dust and sand without our minding at all. But there are people who, like the eye, have become so sensitive and refined that they cannot bear slavery to the world ; they want complete, absolute freedom. They smart under worldly bondage and are restless to gain their freedom. Therefore, the Mokṣa ideal is necessary for such people. But at the same time, those at other levels must not be condemned. A child wants sweets, and wants to jump about and play with marbles ; it is not condemned. Similarly in society there are grown-up children who want various things. Recognize it and don't create conflicts. Another wants to earn wealth ; let him have it by all means, only let him earn it by fair means ; he shouldn't run amok or go crazy over it but earn and enjoy in a controlled manner so that others also who want to enjoy may do so without conflict.

Dharma therefore is to be the first value. If you base yourself on *dharma* and go on with your wealth and enjoyment, gradually discrimination comes and you feel all these are transitory and not satisfying and you seek a higher value ; you seek freedom, you seek peace. Thus after seeking social fulfilment we seek something beyond it, which is self-validating and is not dependent on social approbation. And this is Mokṣa or spiritual freedom which is a trans-social value. A man has to climb up the social ladder, and go beyond it to the terrace. One pole of the ladder is individual *dharma*, individual duty and righteousness ; the other pole is the social *dharma*, social duty and righteousness. Individual *dharma* and social *dharma* at both sides are the two poles, which hold the rungs of the ladder : wealth and enjoyment. If you climb on this ladder, you won't slip, because *dharma* holds together the ladder, and you will gradually reach the roof, the trans-social state.

Every good society, therefore, must

organize itself in terms of Truth. Society for Truth, not Truth for the society; and that society alone is best which helps us to realize the values of Truth, Freedom, Goodness and Beauty. And this is the purpose of society.

So, to conclude, we see that there is an intimate connection between society and religion. Society is the means and the religious realization is the primary end; but in the secondary sense, religion organizes society in such a way that it may help all beings to grow up and realize the absolute value, Spiritual Freedom or Mokṣa. Take out the Spirit from the world, and at once it is reduced to zero.¹² The world is all zeros and the Spirit is the number; the number gives value to the zeros. There are six zeros in a line and the

12. Śankarācārya states in his commentary on *Katha Upaniṣad*, 2.20: 'Bereft of the Self everything loses its reality.'

numeral one is put at the head of them. Immediately it becomes one million. All these zeros get value. If the one is removed, they are reduced to zeros without value. Similarly take out God, take out the Spirit, and the world is an empty nothing. With all the world around us we will always feel empty if we don't take our stand on God; if we have God first, then all these things in the world have value. Therefore the Bible says, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.'¹³ We must therefore live our lives in society in terms of the divine ideal, and express our divinity in and through society. Spiritual values must be established in the world; spiritual values are primary and all other values secondary. Society, therefore, must help us to realize this primary value.

(Concluded)

13. Matthew, 6:33.

EXISTENTIALISM AND VEDANTA

DR. PADMA SUDHI

Existentialism is a very significant philosophical movement of the present age. It focuses attention upon the predicament of modern man, his alienation from existence, his loss of contact with being. George Boas of John Hopkins University says that 'existentialism is the protest against dissolution of the existing subject into the objects of his own creation, into the world of things and essences which constitute them.'¹ It calls attention to the fundamental crisis of the present age, which consists of man's experi-

1. George Boas, 'Existentialist Thought and Contemporary Philosophy in the West', *Journal of Philosophy*, 53 (November 8, 1956):740.

ence of metaphysical void, his radical doubt and despair, his horror of the 'death of God', and his disenchantment with the glamour of materialism and technology. It lays stress upon man's essential need for restoration of his sense of the mystery of Being, his compassionate participation in the joys and sorrows of being, and active realization of the full freedom and responsibility inherent in existence.

An emphasis upon the need for orientation towards pure existence has always been the dominant characteristic of the wisdom of the East. Representative of this is the philosophy of Vedanta, the philosophical tradition based on the Upaniṣads, and its

concept of the absolute Being, called Brahman. The purpose of this article is to make a brief study in comparison between existentialism and Vedanta philosophy. I will concentrate on some of the significant concepts of existentialism and how they can be related to the corresponding essential concepts of Vedanta. While calling attention to noteworthy points of similarity, some essential differences will also be indicated.

Vedanta stresses the need for man's re-integration with pure Being (*sat*, Brahman) or with the inmost centre of his own existence (Atman). Pure Being has been regarded as the source of all values and its realization the supreme fulfilment of human life.² George Burch has summarized the five steps of Vedanta philosophy as follows. (1) The psychological prerequisites are the traditional 'four qualifications' for spiritual progress. These are, first, self-control, including control of mind, control of the senses and the body, ability to endure suffering, and contentment with little; secondly, discrimination between reality and appearance; thirdly, renunciation of the fruits of actions in this life and the future life (but not renunciation of true bliss resulting from release from life); and finally, desire for release. (2) Listening (*Śravaṇa*) to revealed truth and accepting it by faith. (3) Thinking the truth out intellectually (*manana*), resolving all doubts, and demonstrating the revealed truth by rational understanding. (4) Meditation (*nididhyāsana*), the persistent effort to see Brahman in everything. (5) Release (Mokṣa) from illusion by direct experience of Brahman—first Jīvanmukti, release while still appearing in the body but behaving with the spontaneous altruism of the self freed from limitations; and then Videhamukti, final release after death. Absolute truth is first desired, then learned,

then proved, then experienced, and finally enjoyed.³

Existentialism offers no path to philosophical salvation. More than anything else, it poses a problem and presents us with philosophical issues.⁴ It is a broad philosophical movement covering a wide variety of concepts, insights, and tendencies. There is the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Marcel and others. And there is the non-Christian existentialism of Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and others. But underlying its wide divergencies of viewpoint there are some broad insights and basic tendencies that may be enumerated.

The basic problem of existentialism is that of man's alienation from existence. Modern man seems to have lost the ontological sense, the sense of his organic relationship to being.⁵ Uprooted from the matrix of existence, he is left alone in an age of anxiety, doubt and despair.

Thousands of people are experiencing today what has been called the 'shattering of existence'.⁶ Spellbound by the words of Nietzsche, 'God is dead', man finds himself a stranger in an alien universe. He faces a world from which the old gods have disappeared, the ancient all-familiar traditional values have been liquidated, and in consequence, a terrifying metaphysical void has been left in the minds of those who think.

According to Amstutz, the estrangement of man from the ground of his existence

3. George Burch, 'Contemporary Vedanta Philosophy', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 10 (March-September 1956):122-57.

4. See Boas, 'Existentialist Thought'.

5. See J. Wild, 'Existentialism as Philosophy', *Journal of Philosophy*, 57 (January 21, 1961): 45-62.

6. F. H. Heinemann, *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 17.

2. See *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1,

has been occasioned by different factors.⁷ The first contributing factor has been the trend of intellectualism, rationalism or preoccupation with the false metaphysic of essences. Heidegger says, 'Man's essence is his existence. The analysis of the modes of man's existence, the structural analysis of his essential nature, should disclose the fundamentals of his Being.'⁸ But no transcendent realm of essences can be a fit substitute for the true essence, 'the essential essence of Being'. No system of ideas and concepts, however vast and ingeniously constructed, can reproduce the infinite fullness of concrete existence. As Sartre would say, 'Existence precedes essence'.⁹ Edmund Husserl follows the method of 'phenomenological reduction' and calls attention to the basic reality of the subject and its intuitive consciousness.¹⁰

What is of fundamental importance in life is to be able to exist, to exist in the presence of God, as Kierkegaard would say, freely choosing between the unauthentic natural life and the authentic religious life;¹¹ to exist as a 'Guardian of Being' as Heidegger would say, seeking to unveil the light of truth of Being;¹² or to exist as unlimited freedom, as Sartre would maintain, creating through freely chosen

7. J. Amstutz, 'Origin and Types of Existentialism', *Journal of Religion*, 41 (October 1961) : 248-62.

8. Quoted in George A. Schrader, 'Heidegger's Ontology of Human Existence', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 10 (September 1956) : 35-41.

9. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York : Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 13.

10. Edmund Husserl, *General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1968).

11. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York : Doubleday and Co., 1954).

12. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, trans. Scott, Hall and Crick (Chicago : Henry Regnery Co., 1949), p. 138.

action new values of the chaos and absurdity of the given world.¹³

The second factor which has contributed to the existential estrangement of modern man is the rise of massive and all-engulfing social, economic and political organizations. The individual feels utterly helpless in the grip of colossal organized structures. Instead of being able to say, 'I am what I am', he has to say, 'I am as you desire me'.¹⁴ Wherever he looks he is overwhelmed with the sight of big corporations, big labour unions, big political parties and big power blocs. He realizes that the best way of survival is to sell himself as a marketable commodity, with the price-tag determined by some interplay of the forces of supply and demand. He thus suppresses the voice of the inner self, ignoring the aspirations and potentialities of his inmost nature.¹⁵ But as soon as he is enrolled in one of those highly organized structures he feels doubly lost. He is reduced to a number, to a registration card, or to a certain unit of energy to be utilized in some specific way. The smartest individuals are those who know how to fit into such institutions by smothering 'the word of the soundless voice of Being'.¹⁶

The third factor in the situation of alienation is the dazzling glamour of materialism. It is important to have a fairly good standard of living and to secure improvement in the material conditions of existence. But overemphasis upon materialistic pursuits and embellishments has a degrading effect upon human nature. Having produced in men a passionate attachment to material possessions, materialism blinds them to the higher values of life. Their personalities are 'devoured' by their

13. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 443-44.

14. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself*, (New York : Reinhart and Co., 1947), p. 73.

15. See Amstutz, 'Origin of Existentialism'.

16. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. 389.

accumulated property. They lose their sense of Being and are dominated by the spirit of 'having'.¹⁷

The fourth factor in the modern predicament is the unprecedented technological revolution of the present age. Technology has mechanized life on an enormous scale and has in consequence brought about a tragic depersonalization of human nature. Man, the master of machines, is faced with the danger of becoming a victim and helpless slave of machines. Overemphasis upon technical know-how has the effect of obscuring the intangible spiritual dimension of existence, which is the source of all higher values.¹⁸

But technology has invaded not only the physical existence and the economic-political sphere of man; what is still more dangerous, it has also invaded the realm of deeper philosophical thinking. Heidegger is sharply critical of the whole tradition of Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche because it increasingly lost contact with Being and quite naturally ended in nihilism with few exceptions. Heidegger argues that philosophers have been concerned not with Being itself but with Beings.¹⁹ Many philosophers today are busy inventing appropriate logical technology to handle effectively the spiritual and philosophical problems of man. Thus, philosophy is in danger of losing all vital contact with existence which is the true source of all creative inspiration and cultural efflorescence.²⁰ Herein lies the reason for the increasing popularity of existentialism, which is a spiritual protest against the technological alienation of man. Philosophy is nothing if it does not call man back to a renewed contact with the ultimate source of all Being. Direct insight into the heart of

existence does not depend upon a logical apparatus, however wonderful. It depends, on the one hand, upon loving participation in the being of the world, and on the other, upon detached contemplation of the meaning of life, in the context of the eternal.²¹ This is where the insight of the ancient sages, as embodied in Vedanta, has its contribution to make. True wisdom is not the product of any technological procedure. It dwells in the heart of existence itself, and shines out when the artificial constructs of the human mind are set aside.²²

The problem of man's alienation from existence in various directions, then, is the stimulating point of the modern existential movement of philosophy. But this is a problem essentially co-extensive with the history of man. It is the problem of what Vedanta calls metaphysical ignorance (*avidyā*).

It consists in man's ignorance of the true nature of his own self and his relation to Being (Brahman). He is essentially rooted in the unfathomable depth of Being, and so his inmost self is identified with Being.²³ Alienated from his true nature he develops an isolating, egocentric consciousness (*aham*). He sets himself up as a separate self-enclosed entity, a sort of spiritual atom, separate from the rest of humanity.

Estranged from existence through nescience, man's sense of Being is replaced by an overriding urge for 'having'. He relies upon constant accumulation of means and things. And he develops a strong attachment (*āsakti*) to all of them. Such attachment is the objectified form of primal ignorance. Attachment further widens the gulf between him and his

17. Heinemann, *Existentialism*, p. 143.

18. See Amstutz, 'Origin of Existentialism'.

19. Schrader, 'Heidegger's Ontology'.

20. See Amstutz, 'Origin of Existentialism'.

21. Wild, 'Existentialism as Philosophy'.

22. Boas, 'Existentialist Thought'.

23. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 11.14.4.

fellow-beings. It obstructs his free thinking in the search for truth and intensifies the urge for power, because power is needed to safeguard vested interests.²⁴

The Vedanta maintains that, if nescience in its negative form is alienation from existence, its positive form is false knowledge and dualistic thinking. False knowledge is knowledge of division, duality (*dvaita*), separation, and the knowledge of mistaken superimposition (*ādhyāsa*). Ignorance in this positive form of division and illusory superimposition is called *Māyā* in the Vedanta.

Each individual human being in his isolated ego-consciousness lives in a world of his own. Therefore, he looks at the universe through the distorted medium of his own wishful thinking. This subjectively coloured world springs from his primal nescience which is unconsciously superimposed upon Being. It is like the illusory superimposition of the snake upon the rope in darkness. Owing to primal nescience, the true nature of being is concealed (*āvaraṇa*), and the subjectively constructed world is projected (*vikṣepa*) thereupon. The intellect tries to penetrate to the heart of reality with the help of different thought-systems. But the intellect which is unconsciously influenced by emotional factors can hardly cut through the fallacy of false superimposition. The intellectually constructed systems of ideas and essences so often act as so many more barriers or veils interposed between man and Being. But Being according to Vedanta is multiform and multidimensional. There is one Being which sages call by various names.²⁵ So neither one metaphysical system nor any number of systems combined can exhaustively express the fullness of Being. One must transcend the ego and

the intellect in order to realize the self (Atman). One must tear the veil of *Māyā* (the false superimposition of idea upon existence) in order to contact the real eternal freshness. The point of similarity here between the Vedantic approach and the existentialist's protest against essentialism is obvious.

There are also some points of distinction, however, which should be mentioned. The Vedanta and existentialism seem to be agreed that direct contact with existence can be achieved only by transcending the realm of existence, and this is possible only by transcending the realm of universals and essences. But still, the Vedanta repeatedly affirms the relative validity of different *Weltanschauungs*, or worldviews, as useful aids in man's search for Being. They are necessary phases of his response to the call of existence.²⁶ Different intellectual systems try to articulate different aspects of life and reality. But tragedy arises when a particular system of thought obstinately claims to represent the final absolute truth.

Existentialists seem to lack the breadth of vision and the spirit of toleration which is the characteristic of the Vedanta teaching. The Vedantist is eager to appreciate the truth, the relative truth of all philosophical systems, in all historic religions, in all political ideologies. In maintaining this comprehensive outlook, he often pays a price in terms of lukewarmness in the field of action. Existentialism has a tendency to lay greater stress upon choice, commitment, and action at the cost of comprehensive wisdom. From the nondualistic standpoint of Vedanta, existentialism minimizes the importance of essences on account of its preoccupation with the principle of existence. According to Macnicol, this

24. Burch, 'Contemporary Vedanta'.

25. *Rg-Veda*, 1.164.46.

26. See S. Judah, 'Indian Philosophy and Metaphysical Movement in the United States', *Religion in Life*, 28 (Summer 1959) :353-63.

creates a false dualism. If the enchantment with ideas and essences amounts to an alienation from existence, their deprecation is decidedly harmful to the cause of civilization. Comprehension of essences provides us with objective value-criteria and valid standards of ethical action. Essences in the form of transcendent values, objective thought-systems, ethical principles, socio-political ideologies, etc. are essential factors indeed in the growth of civilization.²⁷

The second aspect of false knowledge is reflected in ordinary dualistic thinking. This is what the Vedanta calls the deluded sense of duality. According to Advaita Vedanta reality is non-dual. This does not mean that the dualities of our experience such as subject and object, spirit and nature, God

27. N. Macnicol, 'Worship of the Absolute, East and West', *Hibbert Journal*, 40 (January 1951) :137-45.

and the world, etc., are not real. They are real in so far as they have relative validity. But they are not ultimately real inasmuch as they fall within the comprehensive unity of the same Being (Brahman). Thus, false knowledge, or ignorance, consists in losing sight of the fundamental unity of Being and in consequence bestowal of ultimate significance upon the dualities of common sense.²⁸

Thus man is challenged by both Vedanta and existential philosophical systems to transcend the world and become reunited with Being. By ignorance man is restrained from this union and technological development makes it increasingly difficult for him to find the real meaning of life. As Paul Tillich has stated, 'The fundamental challenge facing man is to have the courage to be.'

28. *Ibid.*

How They Walked on the Razor's Edge

THE FIRE AND THE SONG OF RICHARD ROLLE

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

(Continued from previous issue)

Soon after having the expression of heat and song, Richard began to tell others about the blessedness of this inner and spiritual fire of love in the heart, and of the heavenly song which enraptures the soul in contemplation. These experiences were so real to him that he perhaps never thought others might misunderstand; and he wanted to share his blessedness with those who were caught in the treadmill of worldly existence. The regular clergy, however,

perceived in his eloquent and stirring preaching a threat to their authority. Thus they began to question his authority to preach. 'He wanders about like a vagabond,' they said, 'he has no proper training in theology,' 'he is creating confusion in the minds of people.' A Carthusian monk claimed that Richard was teaching a material fire of love and exciting people. Partly due to ignorance and misunderstanding and partly due to jealousy, Richard

came under increasing attack. Yet these trials only served to drive him deeper within, closer to the Loved One, for 'in all mine anguish I flee to Thee; for Thou art my joy in weal and woe.'

At this time he seems to have gone to the Sorbonne in Paris for study. Though he had a lifelong disdain for intellectualism, he had an even stronger love and adoration for the beauty of wisdom—the knowledge which leads one actively to seek and love God, the source of all knowledge. The increasing criticisms he was facing in England must have encouraged his decision.

At that time the Sorbonne was the greatest University in Europe, and it was just the sort of place to attract a man of Richard's temperament. It had been founded for the study of theology, and there were daily scriptural classes. Its hostel gave shelter and board to poor students from all over Europe, who received free instruction as well. A democratic atmosphere prevailed in which teacher and taught moved together on terms of equality.

During this period he wrote *The Glory and Perfection of the Saints*, a Latin work in which he defended his way of life and described the life of holiness. Here we see him engaged in the age-old conflict between the prophet and the pharisee, the sannyasi and the priest, the mystic and church hierarchy. He wrote: 'Behold, a youth animated with righteous zeal rises up against an elder, a hermit against a Bishop; and against all, howsoever great, who affirm that the heights of sanctity consist in exterior acts.'

It is not known how long Richard remained at the Sorbonne, but he probably returned to England about the age of thirty. He had left England as an outspoken young mystic in his mid twenties, with the fire of divine love burning in his heart and the fire of God's truth blazing forth from his tongue, scorching those who were not bold

enough to face up to it. But the man who now returned had become mellowed by ever-deepening mystical experience and ever-broadening love. Moreover, he had been humanized by years of suffering: 'This have I known, that the more men have raved against me with words of backbiting, so much the more I have gained in spiritual profit.'

His heart yearned now for solitude, so he went to the Northern Moors and took up the life of a hermit once again. He never tired of extolling the solitary life. 'As the seraphim in high heaven truly they are burnt who sit in solitude of body while their minds walk among the angels to Christ their Beloved.' The solitary is not sad, for 'a heavenly noise sounds within him, and full sweet melody makes the solitary man merry.' He has 'more true joy and more true delight in a day than [ordinary men] have in the world all their life.'

And yet, true to his free and unconventional spirit, he combined the life of a wandering friar with that of a stationary hermit. For he travelled from county to country begging his way, taking what food and shelter chance brought. For sometime he stayed near Richmond. Later he went to Hampole and became the spiritual director of the Cistercian nuns there. (He is often known as the 'Hermit of Hampole' because of the long period he remained there as spiritual guide to the nuns.) And from time to time he settled down to write the books which brought him renown in his own lifetime for their depth of spirituality and scholarship. Thus he wrote a beautiful commentary on the Biblical book *The Song of Songs*, and a psalter in both Latin and English which became widely known. In the last years of his life he wrote *The Mending of Life*, a systematic work dealing with the soul's purification and ascent to God. A year or two later he wrote *The Fire of Love*, his famous con-

fession and apologia. Last of all were his wonderful epistles written to different woman aspirants. On these is based his fame as a master of English prose. Each one is a treatise on mystical theory and practice, giving a complete picture of his thought.

What is the nature of the spiritual path which Richard describes in these works? His is a path which begins and ends in love. 'To love and be loved is the delightful purpose of all human life.' How do we acquire love? 'If then you want to be loved, love! Love gets love in return.' We need only to direct our existing love wholly and forever to God. But this is of course a gradual process. So Richard describes three degrees of love : insuperable, inseparable, and singular.

Insuperable is that love which is determined to avoid all that is displeasing to the Loved One. It is insuperable because it cannot be overcome by temptation, by sickness or health, by failure or success. Richard describes 'nine degrees for cleanness of mind' to be practised during this first degree of love. These nine degrees correspond to what is usually known among Christian mystics as the Way of Purgation. For in order to rise to God one must be purified of all hindrances to the soul's flight.

The nine degrees are: *conversion* from the worldly life to the holy life; *poverty* or renunciation; *detachment* or desirelessness; *the restoring of man's life* or the strengthening of the aspirant's moral fibre through repentance, confession and austerity; *tribulation* or patient acceptance and forbearance of suffering; *patience* and humility; *reading* of scripture and other works helpful in our spiritual life; *meditation*, that is, discursive meditation in which we think deeply over the life of Christ and other spiritually beneficial subjects; and finally, *prayer*.

To give an idea of the moving beauty of his prose, we may quote what he says about one of these nine degrees, poverty, in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*: 'I went about by desire of riches and I found not Jesu. I ran by the wantonness of the flesh and I found not Jesu. I sat in companies of worldly mirth and I found not Jesu. In all these I sought Jesu but I found Him not, for He let me know by His grace that He is not found in the land of the softly living. Therefore I turned by another way and I ran about by poverty and I found Jesu poor-born into the world, laid in a crib, wrapped in swaddling clothes. I took the road of suffering and I found Jesu weary by the wayside, tortured with hunger, thirst and cold, filled with reproof and blame. I sat by myself, fleeing the vanity of the world, and I found Jesu fasting in the desert and praying on the mountaintop alone.... Therefore Jesu is not found in riches but in poverty; not in delights but in penance; ... not among many but in loneliness.' From this we can see why he attained such fame in his own lifetime both for his spirituality and for his literary talents; and we can understand how it was that he exercised such a profound influence over the spiritual life of England in the fourteenth century, for he had the capacity to make the life of poverty and contemplation seem most attractive and blessed.

Such are the nine degrees leading to cleanness of heart, which are to be practised during the first degree of love. Not that there comes a time when one can cast these practices aside, for they are to be maintained and deepened throughout life. But there comes a time when, through them, one reaches a state of purity sufficient for the 'heavenly door' to open, as Richard says, and one begins to catch glimpses of light from the realm of spirit. This 'opening of the heavenly door' brings the soul into the second degree of love, love inseparable,

which is distinguished by recollection. 'Inseparable is thy love when all thy heart and thy thought and thy might is so wholly, so entirely and so perfectly fastened, set and established in Jesu Christ that thy heart . . . never departs from Him, except in sleep.'

Yet, without the cleansing light of spiritual experience one cannot attain perfect purity. One day the heart is awakened and the aspirant has an experience of 'fire' in the breast—a heat and a glow which burns the soul free of all taint and serves to keep the mind turned ever towards the Loved One. As has been seen, Richard had this experience in a particularly intense way; it remained always with him, though sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker. He thought of this awakening as the setting fire to the soul with love: 'I call that heat when the mind is kindled in Love Everlasting, and the heart on the same manner is made to burn not hopefully but verily is felt. The heart truly turned into fire, gives feeling of burning love.'

Most Christian mystics who have had this experience (especially those of the Orthodox Church) say that first a pleasant heat is felt in the heart which presages the actual illumination of the soul; that is, the heat gives way in time to a mysterious and spiritual light in the heart. But it is difficult to say whether Richard's experience followed this pattern or not. For he makes no clear distinction between 'heat' and 'glow', though he usually refers to the fire in the heart with tactile imagery rather than visual.

With the help of this 'fire', one's mind remains always engaged in the thought of God until one day the 'song of heaven' is revealed to the soul. This song is not of the earth. It is 'spiritual music, which is unknown to all who are occupied with wordly business. . . . No man has known this but he who has striven to heed God alone.' What is this music? 'I call that

song, when in a bountiful soul the sweetness of Eternal Love is burning, and thought is turned into song, and the mind is changed into full sweet sound.' But no matter how Rolle strains his powers of expression in order to share his blissful experience with others, he has to admit that 'I cannot describe this cry'.

Christian cosmology says that the highest angels endlessly sing praises of God and glorify Him in heaven: that is their eternal joy and only employment. So Rolle often identifies this 'song' heard in contemplation with the song of the angels: 'A sweet note of the feast of heaven sounds in his heart which makes him break out into voice of rejoicing for the wonderful softness of mirth and song in his soul. . . . For in his thought he is taken into the melody of angels praising God'. At other times he says that Christ is the source of this song, for it is by Him that a soul is 'taken up into marvellous mirth and a beautiful sound is poured into him.' (Christian theology of the time had no other philosophical or mythological framework into which Rolle could fit his experience of 'heavenly song'. One can't but think that acquaintance with the Hindu concept of Nāda Brahman would have been of service to him in his search for ways of giving expression to his experience.)

With the revelation of heavenly song, the soul enters the third, and highest degree of love, called singular: 'The soul set in this degree loves Him alone: she yearns only for Christ and Christ desires; only in His desire she abides, and after Him she sighs; in Him she burns: she rests in His warmth. Nothing is sweeter, nothing she savours, except it be made sweet in Jesu, whose memory is as a song of music in a feast of wine. . . . She suppresses all activities that she sees contribute not to the love of Christ. Whatever she does seems unprofitable and intolerable unless it runs and leads to Christ, the End of her desire.'

For Rolle, the experience of fire and song are not ends in themselves, no matter how exalted and blessed. They are escorts that carry us to be Beloved. The awakening of the soul—the illumination of the heart with the fire of love—reveals the secret path hidden within everyone leading to heaven. Following that path with a heart panting after God, the soul reaches a point at which she hears the heavenly song, the music of the spheres. The sound of that song is all but unbearable in its sweetness. The soul is enraptured and swept forward until she ‘overpasseth all things seen, and is raised up in height of mind to the sweetness of everlasting life. And while the soul is covered with the sweetness of the Godhead and the warmth of Creative Light, *she is offered in sacrifice to the Everlasting King, and being accepted is all burnt up!*’

This path ends in exultant joy. Rolle says that the delight which the lover ‘has tasted in loving Jesu transcends all knowledge and feeling. Truly I cannot tell a little point of this joy, for who can describe an unknown heat? Who lay bare an infinite sweetness? Certainly if I would speak of this joy which cannot be told, it seems to me as if I should empty the sea by drops, and pour it all into a little hole of the earth.’

Such was the path to God described by Richard in his literary works. But what was his relationship with God? Many people are under the mistaken notion that Christianity teaches only one relationship between the soul and God—that of son to Father. In fact, this relationship is but rarely found in Catholic mystics: It is common only among the average Christians having no mystical life. To St. Francis of Assisi, God was King or Master, and he was His knight or servant. Julian of Norwich looked upon Christ as Mother. Suso had the vision of Christ as the Divine Child. Some have looked upon Christ or

upon God as Friend of their soul. And very common is the lover-Beloved or nuptial relationship, in which God is the Spouse of the soul.

We find in Rolle’s writings practically no reference to God as Father, except where he is dealing with purely theological themes. But he often speaks of God as the Friend of the soul: ‘Truly sweet and devout love melts the heart in God’s sweetness, so that the will of man is made one with the will of God in wonderful friendship.’ Most often, however, Rolle speaks of God as the Spouse of the soul: ‘I feel the love of my Beloved: I taste the moisture of His marvellous comfort; busily I yearn after that sweetness. . . . Love makes me bold to call Him that I love best, that He, comforting and filling me, might kiss me with the kissing of His mouth.’

Such intensity of love can never be satisfied with anything short of union with the Beloved. ‘Love makes him that loves like to the object of love.’ But going further, the soul is ‘knitted and oned perfectly to God’ through love, and even the world around is transfigured through its powers. ‘It spreads the beams of its goodness not only to friends and neighbours, but also to enemies and strangers. . . . It makes lovers one in both deed and will; and Christ and every holy soul it makes one.’

* * *

No longer was Richard Rolle the unknown and misunderstood young hermit. Now people sought his advice, disciples gathered to be instructed in the holy life, and the Cistercian nuns of Hampole put themselves under his spiritual guidance, though he had never been ordained a priest nor become a member of any monastic congregation. Both the outer and the inner struggles were over. And for the remaining twenty years of his life after

returning from Paris, he lived in angelic innocence and joy.

'In the beginning of my conversion and singular purpose,' wrote Rolle towards the end of his life, 'I thought I would be like the little bird that for love of her lover longs, but in her longing she is gladdened when he comes that she loves. And joying she sings, and singing she longs, but in sweetness and heat. It is said the nightingale is given to song and melody all night, that she may please him to whom she is joined. How much more with greatest sweetness should I sing to Christ my Jesu, who is Spouse of my soul....' Now the nightingale had been united to her Lover, and others came to hear her sweet song of union, to learn the way to woo Him who is the Lover of all souls. Through these disciples and through his written works, Richard's song of union spread all over England; he ushered in the golden age of English mysticism and exerted a powerful influence over English spirituality until everything ended abruptly with the coming of the Reformation. But long before that, the Black Death swept through Europe, killing full one fourth of her sons and daughters. It spared not Hampole nor her beloved hermit Richard Rolle. On the Feast of St. Michael, 1349, it released Richard from the last frail bond

holding him to earth—his body—and he flew as the nightingale to his Beloved.

'O Death,' Rolle had once said, 'where dwellest thou? Why comest thou so late to me, living but yet mortal? Why embracest thou not him that desires thee? Who can possibly assess thy sweetness, which brings an end of sighing, the beginning of all blessedness, the gate to a longed for and unfailing joy? Thou are the end of heaviness, the goal of labours, the beginning of fruits, the gate of joys. Behold, I grow hot and desire after thee : if thou come I shall forthwith be safe. Ravished, truly, because of love, I cannot fully love what I desire after, until I taste the joy that thou shalt give to me. If it behoves me, a mortal, to pass through thee as all my fathers have gone, I pray thee tarry not much : from me abide not long! Behold, I truly languish for love ; I desire to die ; for thee I burn ; and yet truly not for thee, but for my Saviour Jesu, whom, after I have had thee, I believe to see without end.'

Now the fire was consumed in the Fire, the song joined in the Eternal Song.

[*Bibliography* :

Elwin, Verrier. *Richard Rolle*. Madras : The Christian Literature Society for India, 1930.
Underhill, Evelyn. *Mysticism*. London : Methuen & Co., 1926.]

If a man becomes mad with love of God, then who is father, who is mother, and who is wife? He loves God so deeply that he becomes mad. He has no duty, he is absolved from all debts. When a man reaches that state, he forgets the whole world ; he becomes unconscious of even the body which is so dear to everyone.

— Sri Ramakrishna

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI
VIVEKANANDA*—XXI

To Mrs. G.W. Hale

(Continued from the previous issue)

23

Annisquam
23 August 1894

Dear Mother,

The photographs reached safely yesterday. I cannot tell exactly whether Harrison ought to give me more or not. They had sent only two to me at Fishkill⁴⁸—not the pose I ordered, though.

Narasimha⁴⁹ has perhaps got his passage by this time. He will get it soon whether his family gives him the money or not. I have written to my friends in Madras to look to it, and they write me they will.

I would be very glad if he becomes a Christian or Mohammedan or any religion that suits him ; but I am afraid for some time to come none will suit our friend. Only if he becomes a Christian he will have a chance to marry again even in India, the Christians there permitting it. I am so sorry to learn that it is the 'bondage of heathen India' that after all was the cause of all this mischief. We learn as we live. So we were all this time ignorantly and blindly blaming our much suffering, persecuted, saintly friend Narasimha, while all the fault was really owing to the 'bondage of heathen India' !!!!

But to give the devil his due, this heathen India has been supplying him with money to go on a spree again and again. And this time too 'heathen India' will or already has taken our 'enlightened' and persecuted friend from out of his present scrape, and not 'Christian America' !! Mrs. Smith's plan is not bad after all—to turn Narasimha into a missionary of Christ. But unfortunately for the world, many and many a time the flag of Christ has been entrusted to such hands. But I would beg to add that he will then be only a missionary of Smithian American Christianity, not Christ's. Arrant humbug! That thing to preach Lord Jesus!!! Is He in want of men to uphold His banner? Pooh! the very idea is revolting. Do good to India indeed! Thank your charity and call back your dog—as the tramp said. Keep such good workers for America. The Hindus will have a quarantine against all such (outcasting) to protect their society. I heartily advise Narasimha to become a *Christian*—I beg your pardon, a convert to *Americanism*—because I am sure such a jewel is unsaleable in poor

* © The President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

48. Fishkill Landing, a resort in New York State where the Swami had spent some days with his friends Dr. and Mrs. Guernsey of New York City.

49. A South Indian gentleman staying in the United States who had made the Swami's acquaintance at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, since which time he had called on the Swami for help—mainly financial—whenever he got into trouble.

India. He is welcome to anything that will fetch a price. I know the gentleman whom you name perfectly well, and you may give him any information about me you like. I do not care [for] sending scraps⁵⁰ and getting a boom for me. And these friends from India bother me enough for newspaper nonsense. They are very devoted, faithful and holy friends. I have not much of these scraps now. After a long search I found a bit in a *Boston Transcript*. I send it over to you.⁵¹ This public life is such a botheration. I am nearly daft. Where to fly? In India I have become horribly public—crowds will follow me and take my life out. I got an Indian letter from Landsberg. Every ounce of fame can only be bought at the cost of a pound of peace and holiness. I never thought of that before. I have become entirely disgusted with this blazoning. I am disgusted with myself. Lord will show me the way to peace and purity. Why Mother, I confess to you: no man can live in an atmosphere of public life even in religion without the devil of competition now and then thrusting his head into the serenity of his heart. Those who are trained to preach a *doctrine* never feel it, for they never knew *religion*. But those that are after *God* and not after the world feel at once that every bit of name and fame is at the cost of their purity. It is so much gone from that ideal of perfect *unselfishness*, perfect disregard of gain or name or fame. Lord help me. Pray for me Mother. I am very much disgusted with myself. Oh, why the world be so that one cannot do anything without putting himself to the front, why cannot one act

50. Apparently he means newspaper clipping providing proof of Hindu India's approval and support of his work in America.

51. Two newspaper clippings have been found enclosed with this letter, though neither is from the *Boston Transcript*. The texts of these two clippings—the first from the *Indian Mirror*, and the second from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*—are given below :

"There has been some lively correspondence between Swami Vivekananda and a retired Christian Missionary on the work and prospects of Christianity in India. Among other things, the Swami is reported to have said that "the way of converting is absolutely absurd;" "Missionary doctors do no good, because they are not in touch with the people." "They accomplish nothing in the way of converting, although they may have nice sociable times among themselves, etc." The reverend gentleman took exception to the words, maintaining that, speaking the vernaculars well, no body of foreigners understands, and sympathizes with, Indians better than Missionaries. The Missionaries are undoubtedly good and well-meaning people; but we think, the statement of the Swami that they are seldom in touch with the people, is not without foundation. With the revival of Hinduism, manifested in every part of the country, it is doubtful whether Christianity will have any sway over the Hindus. The present is a critical time for Christian Missions in India. The Swami thanked the Missionary for calling him his fellow-countryman. "This is the first time," he wrote, "any European foreigner, born in India though he be, has dared to call a detested Native by that name—Missionary or no Missionary. Would you dare to call me the same in India" Would he, indeed? (*Indian Mirror*).

From the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 24 August 1894 :

"The insinuation, that Swami Vivekananda is not an "orthodox" Hindu, owes its origin to missionary influence. It is simply impossible for the missionaries to love Vivekananda, and it is therefore natural that they should try to bring him down. And why is Vivekananda not an orthodox Hindu? It is because, say they, he has crossed the ocean and eaten un-Hindu food. But the restriction which Hinduism imposes upon its members has no force upon the liberated—the Sannyasis, to which class the Swami belongs. The Hindu who has cut off his connection with the world, has liberty to take anything and to go anywhere he pleases. Vivekananda deserves well of the world. The world is now governed by the West, and Vivekananda has opened out a new world to the people of that West. In the West, especially in America, every man is a monarch. To make any impression in such a country, is beyond the means of the ablest of our species. Vivekananda's work in America is a miracle, and he is no doubt an instrument in the hands of God.

hidden and unseen and unnoticed. The world has not gone one step beyond idolatry yet. They cannot act from ideas, they cannot be led by ideas. But they want the person, the man. And any man that wants to do something must pay the penalty, no hope. This nonsense of the world. Shiva, Shiva, Shiva.

By the by, I have got such a beautiful edition of Thomas à Kempis. How I love that old monk. He caught a wonderful glimpse of the 'behind the veil'—few ever got such. My, that is religion. No humbug of the world. No shilly shallying, tall talk, conjecture, I presume, I believe, I think. How I would like to go out of this piece of painted humbug they call the beautiful world with Thomas à Kempis—beyond, beyond, which can only be felt, never expressed.

That is religion. Mother, there is God. There all the saints, prophets and incarnations meet. Beyond the Babel of Bibles and Vedas, creeds and crafts, dupes and doctrines, where is all light, all love, where the miasma of this earth can never reach. Ah! who will take me thither. Do you sympathize with me, Mother? My soul is groaning now under the hundred sorts of bondage I am placing on it. Whose India? Who cares? Everything is His. What are we? Is He dead? Is He sleeping? He without whose command a leaf does not fall, a heart does not beat, who is nearer to me than my own self. It is bosh and nonse—to do good or do bad or do fuzz. We do nothing. We are not. The world is not. He is, He is. Only He is. None else *is*. He is.

Om, the one without a second. He in me, I in Him. I am like a bit of glass in an ocean of light. I am not, I am not. He is, He is, He is.

Om, the one without a second.

Yours ever affectionately,
VIVEKANANDA.

HINTS TO SEEKERS OF GOD

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Even though one is initiated by the greatest teacher, one has to exert oneself to reach the goal. What can the teacher do? He points out the proper path. But you have to follow his advice and tread the path with unflagging perseverance. If you do not at all care to heed his advice and walk in the path, whose fault is it? Has anyone attained to Mokṣa at any time without *tapasya*, severe spiritual *sādhana*? Everyone from an Avatar to an ordinary Sādhaka has had to practise many rigorous austerities to attain the goal. And you want to realize God without any *sādhana* whatsoever! Is it possible? Those who truly pursue their *sādhana*s in the *proper* manner are very few. All others are but pretenders, making of it a mere profession or display to serve some sordid, selfish interest.

The experiences in *sādhana* such as what you feel, what stands in the way of your attaining to concentration and the visions you have, should be revealed only to your own Guru. Do not go about proclaiming them to others. Otherwise your *sādhana* will be hindered. The Guru, who has attained perfection, will give you proper directions to overcome the difficulties you meet with in the path. Such a Guru can unerringly detect the thoughts coursing through the mind of the *Sādhaka*. Implicitly following the directions of such a Guru will ensure the reaching of the goal.

If the disciple is impure the blessing of even the great Gurus will not fructify. It is useless to impart spiritual instructions to impure souls. Merely receiving initiation is of no avail. Many evil tendencies are heaped up in the mind and hence there is no progress in *sādhana*. It is sheer waste of time and energy for a Guru to instruct such disciples. Earnest souls filled with the spirit of renunciation and yearning for Mokṣa are the proper *Śiṣyas* (disciples).

The results of *sādhana* depend on your exertions. It is unjust to blame the Guru for not attaining the desired end. If you

work with your whole heart and soul exerting to your utmost, you will get the maximum result. Otherwise you will not advance one step. Those who have no desire for sense enjoyments and are pure in mind, keeping a continuous current of good thoughts and call on the Lord with a yearning heart will progress. If the tendency to sense enjoyments is lurking, the counting of beads will be in vain.

Residence in the celestial regions with all enjoyments, and the attainment of Mokṣa are two different things altogether. One has to descend down to earth even from those regions. If one has not realized the Self, one will have to revert to the cycle of births and deaths. Those who have realized the Self are for ever freed from the bondage of rebirth. They are released from the effects of works, including even the *prārabdha karma* which brought the present body into existence.

The object of human birth is to realize God. This state is attained by the effect of *sādhanas* pursued assiduously for many lives. He who has attained to this state is the really blessed man.

Visit not miracle-mongers and those who exhibit occult powers. These men are stragglers from the path of Truth. Their minds have become entangled in psychic powers, which are like veritable meshes in the way of the pilgrim to Brahman. Beware of these powers, and desire them not.

— Sri Ramakrishna

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

COGNITIVE AWARENESS AND THE LINGUISTICAL-PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY : BY WARREN A. HAGAR. Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016. 1977. pp. 244. \$ 12.

To find out the identity of the 'person' or the 'self' has always been a ticklish problem for philosophers of the East and the West alike. For the Buddha and Heraclitus it was difficult to believe in a permanent entity called 'self' because the senses do not cognize such a thing, and what is cognized is temporal and fleeting. The empiricist Hume could not accept the existence of the self as the cause of perceptual activity because the very idea of causality could not be justified empirically. The linguistic philosophy, developed during the present century, did not come across a self since the major task before it was the clarification of ideas and concepts. The conviction that the root cause of philosophical problems was the wrong use of language directed the linguistic philosophers to play the language-game on an *ad hoc* basis, and they could not arrive at any stable ground. In the absence of a cognitive or witnessing self, normative values and ideologies became immediate casualties.

Mr. Hagar, in his challenging book under review, has proposed the Linguistical-Phenomenological Methodology (LPM) which explicates the awareness of the spectator, and this provides a clue to the existence of the 'person'. The LPM is a new and revolutionary methodology of 'awareness of awareness', and can mark the end of the dominion of the empirical attitude which has been dominating the Western world for the last two centuries.

The LPM, according to the author, is imperative to reconfirming the role of philosophy as a creative force in the life of man. He notes that the important insight concerning the function of the dual phenomenological fields of perception (the internal experiential field and the external visual field) is absent from most expositions on perception. Even the Gestalt psychologists are not clearly cognizant of the fact that these two fields of perception are related to and correspond to the two epistemological functions of the verbs 'look' and 'see'. A. J. Ayer is even less perspicuous in his philosophy of perception.

The book tries to present a thesis of phenomenology to supplement all previous theses of empiricism. The author's focus on the primordial origin of the two syntactical rules of gram-

mar as the synthetic *a priori* forms of sensible intuitions is very important. The two syntactical rules are (1) that all sensory verbs without any exception whatsoever are predicated by adjectives (signifying qualities of objects) but never in any case whatsoever by a noun or adverb; and (2) that all perceptual verbs, when transitive active, are predicated by direct objects and can be modified by adverbs but never in any case whatsoever by adjectives. This principle gives renewed credence to Kant's general thesis concerning sensible intuitions.

The author of the book combines the immaterial with the material in his approach. In his analogy of the bowl and the void he shows that both the aspects are essential for the functioning of the object. It is analogous to the function of the mind and the 'bio-physical-body-system'. Philosophizing, according to him, likewise, is not a one-sided approach. It is, rather, (a) to scrutinize the meaning of 'cognitive-focal awareness' and (b) to relate this awareness to the fundamental Life-Stuff-Awareness of the human species as 'persons'. The concept of 'person' as the paramount expression of cognitive awareness of Life-Stuff-Awareness is the apex of the logical pyramid constructed by the author. He makes the best utilization of the ideas developed by Descartes, Kant and Husserl on the one hand, and the linguistic analysts like Ayer, Wittgenstein and Chomsky on the other. Whether this *new philosophy*, as claimed by the author, 'is going to change the outlook of the linguists, philosophers, and psychologists throughout the world or not, it is definitely going to stop them for a while and make them examine their approach in the light of the LPM before making further advancements.

The book deserves exhaustive analysis and examination by all concerned. It is thought-provoking and challenging.

DR. S. P. DUBEY, M.A., M.A., PH.D.
*Dept. of Postgraduate Studies
and Research in Philosophy
University of Jabalpur*

BIBLICAL TEACHINGS IN THE LIGHT OF VEDIC RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY : BY N. S. V. R. Gurumurthy. Published by the Author. Printed at Svatantra Printers, Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh 534-201. 1978. Pp. 72. Rs. 5/-, (foreign) \$ 2.

The world has begun to realize with a keen

sense of urgency the need to integrate the spiritual values of various religious traditions, thus enriching all religious traditions. A number of books are now appearing on this subject, and Sri Gurumurthy's brief exposition is a useful addition. Its special interest lies in that it takes us to the sources of two great and important religious traditions—the Vedas (in the most inclusive sense of the term, which includes the entire compass of Hindu scriptures) and the Bible—and its aim is strictly practical, to apply the truths common to both Hinduism and Christianity to everyday life.

The overall plan and design of the work is comprehensive, stimulating and relevant. Ten themes common to both religions such as Creation, Righteousness, Spirituality, Grace, etc., form the subject of the chapters. Abundant scriptural quotations from both traditions are mustered to support similarities of viewpoint in both religions. Indeed, one cannot but be impressed by the author's familiarity with and easy access to the Biblical and Vedic literature, various passages of which are cited to expose the basic unity of religions. However, in his zeal to establish 'the basic nature of identity among the different religious teachings of the East and the West', Sri Gurumurthy has failed to note the many features which are unique to each of the traditions. One might hope that in future studies the author would pay heed to the perceptive and important observation of Dr. S. P. Dubey, found in the concluding section, 'From the Enlightened':

But the unique features available in each religion defy identity-propositions and make us inclined to vote in favour of plurality of religions. Instead of abstract identity, the living differences amongst world religions point to the individual independence of man and his religious behaviour. It is this independence and freedom of man to have his own way of living that distinguishes him from other beasts. *Dharmo hi tesham adhiko viseshah.*

For example, in chapter 1, dealing with Creation, it is misleading not to acknowledge the basic theological difference in the Christian idea of creation *ex nihilo* and the predominant Vedantic idea of emanation, expressed so graphically, for example, in the *Mundaka Upanisad* (2.1.1).

The study would have an enhanced value, not to say credibility, were it not superficially one-sided at several points. Without really acknowledging the fact to his readers, the author's basic presuppositions with regard to Hinduism are

those of Vedantic monism, when in fact the entire Hindu tradition, as it has developed over the centuries, cannot simply be laid on the Procrustean bed of Advaita Vedanta. Indeed when one reads the author's unqualified statement, 'Loving God means seeking complete identity with Him', one also thinks of the words of the Maharashtrian Bhakta, Tukaram:

Cursed be that knowledge which makes me one with Thee;

I love to have precepts from Thee and prohibitions.

I am Thy servant; Thou art my Lord; let there still be between us such difference of high and low.

Let this wonderful truth be established, destroy it not.

Water cannot taste itself, nor trees taste their own fruit:

The worshipper must be separate, thus alone pleasure arises from distinction.

After heat one enjoys the shade; at the sight of her child the milk comes into the mother's breast—what delight there is when they meet each other.

Tuka says, this is a great thing gained and so I view it.

In all honesty one must mention several problem areas in Sri Gurumurthy's interpretation and exposition of the Christian faith. For instance, in the light of Biblical scholarship and interpretation throughout the history of the Christian Church one finds it very difficult to accept the unqualified statement: 'The idea of personal God as conceived in the Old Testament has undergone a rational transformation in the New Testament and becomes impersonal'. If anything, Christians would by and large affirm the opposite, that the personal nature of God is supremely expressed in his Incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, who taught his disciples to pray, 'Our Father, who are in heaven...'. In another area, the author has himself admitted possible problems with the concept of 'original sin' which reflect his own personal observations. Of course, he has every right to these but he must also allow Christians the right to differ with him.

In the final analysis however, and this Sri Gurumurthy implicitly recognizes, it is only in the cave of the heart that the true dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism can take place. Contact at any other level can never be more than superficial and fleeting. Too often in the past both Christians and Hindus have given the impression that they are not even aware of the existence of this centre within the secret place

of the heart (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.1.1-6) where resides *ānandam brahmaṇah*, the supreme Bliss. Too often, perhaps, the impression was true. Now, however, the time has come for Christians and Hindus to recognize in each other the gift of the Spirit, and for that both must go silently down to the depths of their own being, where that Bliss is to be discovered. *Anandam brahmaṇo vidvān na bibheti kutasca* (*Taittīriya Upaniṣad*, 2.9.1). For Sri Gurumurthy's role in helping to open up the vistas, to awaken both Hindus and Christians to the treasures of their spiritual heritages we cannot but be grateful.

DR. DAVID C. SCOTT
Associate Director
Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur.

A SHORT LIFE OF 'M': BY DHARM PAL GUPTA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Sri Ma Prakashan Trust, 579 Sector 18-B, Chandigarh. 1977. Pp. vi+100. Rs. 3/-, \$ 1.50.

Out of humility, Sri Mahendranath Gupta preferred to hide his authorship of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* behind the initial 'M', or, in Bengali, 'Sri Ma'. And it is as 'M' that most people know him today. Though he was one of the most outstanding householder-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, very little biographical material on him has been available in English. This is a great misfortune, for his life is a luminous illustration of the Master's teachings on how to live in the world without being of it. A study of his life would certainly be edifying to householders who are trying to lead dedicated spiritual lives.

The book under review is a step towards filling this lacuna. One cannot ignore the many mistakes in punctuation, grammar and printing which detract greatly from the book's beauty, but the subject of the biography is so inspiring and the text is written with such transparent sincerity that one is willing to forgive such technical errors.

The Sri Ma Prakashan Trust has done an invaluable service to mankind by preserving the teachings, conversations, and letters of Mahendranath Gupta, as well as biographical material on him; these have been published in sixteen volumes in Bengali, entitled *Sri Ma Darshan*. This short life of 'M' is based largely on the material in these sixteen volumes. Though the book is small, the reader who cannot go to the Bengali sources due to the language barrier will find in it many new anecdotes which throw a flood of light on the spiritual eminence of 'M'.

At the end of the book is a useful chronology of the important events in 'M's life. The proceeds from the book's sale will go towards the construction of the Sri Ramakrishna Sri Ma Prakashan Trust Building.

It is only hoped that the Sri Ma Trust will bring out a bigger, more detailed life in the future, taking greater pains with the printing and English usage.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA
Mayavati

DAILY DIVINE DIGEST: BY SWAMI CHIDBHAVANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaitturai 639-115, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. 1978. Pp. ix+370. Rs. 2.50.

Man does not live by bread alone. He needs spiritual food also. This book provides man with daily food for thought and reflection starting from January 1 through December 31. It is a collection of inspiring teachings of the Vedānta, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and illuminating utterances of Tayumanavar, Tirumular, Tiruvalluvar, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda. The selections reveal not the spirit of one particular religion but the concurrent testimony of the main spiritual currents of mankind: Christianity, Buddhism, etc. The stirring words of the book possess an undeniable power, and will be of great help to a person in his inward strivings and in meeting the challenges of day-to-day problems of life with courage. By their inherent force and vitality the words carry the reader forward from day to day with increasing hope and aspiration. The reader is invited, as it were, to enter upon a spiritual journey. The author's claim, 'An ardent daily pursuit of a page in this book is bound to enrich the spiritual calibre of the aspirant,' will be fully borne out by a perusal of this book.

Various themes necessarily overlap, nevertheless an over-all sense of unity is maintained and transmitted throughout the book. Thanks to the author's ingenious method of giving cross-references, one is inexorably led to an awareness that there is but a single theme propounded on each of the 370 pages of the book, namely the attainment of union with the ultimate Reality.

This anthology will be especially useful to those who are intent on pursuing the highest Truth, who are convinced that Truth alone is able to solve life's problems and difficulties.

The printing and get-up are excellent. The price is moderate.

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA
*Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama
Cherrapunji, Khasi Hills*

THE DIVINE PLAYER : A STUDY OF KRISHNA LILA: BY DAVID R. KINSLEY. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007. 1979. Pp. xxii+306. Rs. 65/-.

As against the idea of the separate material reality of the universe in a setting of linear time as a historical process, generally conceived as created by a 'stern, sombre, authoritarian God' in the Judaic-Christian (p. 261) as well as Islamic traditions, the Indian view of the universe has primarily been of a non-historical, beginningless cyclic process (pp. 253-56) projected by the Divine Infinite in and through which It manifests Its supreme blissful nature (*ananda-svarupa*). Of course, there have been some mystics in non-Indian traditions, as shown by the author, who have given occasional expression to the joyful and sportive nature of God (pp. 256-77). But they are stray instances, and do not form any consistent school with elaborate systematic traditions accepted by those religions or systems, as they do in the case of Hinduism. Further, they do not deal with the triadic process of manifestation, maintenance, and mergence of the universe as a whole, even as a non-cyclic process.

In the Hindu tradition, from the noumenal point of view, the infinite Divine Reality in Its absolute or impersonal aspect (Brahman) not only serves as the supreme Spiritual Ground for the manifestation of the universe of space-time-causation by virtue of Its natural, inseparable, and inscrutable veiling-projecting Power called Maya, but also forms the Reality that gives substance to the universe and its living and non-living entities which arise from It with distinctive names and forms in a spontaneous, natural manner like dreams or waves from the ocean. The waves of creation emerge, play for a while, and merge again into that ocean of Spiritual Reality or Absolute Consciousness, all the while remaining non-separate from It. This is *cid-vilasa*. Here Maya is 'passive'.

But when we as persons look at the same Divine Reality from the phenomenal point of view, we visualize It through the framework of space-time-causation from within the universe. The Divine Reality then is seen as the Divine Person (Ishvara), who is related to the universe as its Cause, and who possesses and controls Maya, which is now conceived as His 'active' Power. However, Ishvara does not cease to be the infinite Divine Reality, nor does the universe cease to be the manifestation of His Mayic Power which is inseparable from Him though possessed by Him.

But since Ishvara too, being infinite, has no motive whatsoever in creating the universe, the creative activity is nothing but His Lila, that is, effortless 'overflow of joy from within' (p. 2). This is His *ananda-vilasa*. Thus the 'passive' Maya Power of the Divine Reality in Its impersonal aspect is expressed as the 'active' Lila of Its personal aspect by the Bhakti schools. The Divine Person plays with Jivas who are His own Lila-manifestations on the stage of the universe, assuming the dualistic relationship of the lover and the beloved. This Divine play reaches its highest climax when He plays with His Maya or Shakti (Dynamic Power) in its plenitude as the other partner, designated 'Radha' in Bengal Vaishnavism.

The book under review is an admirably systematic and deep study of the pervasive concept in Hindu tradition of the Divine Lila, both on the cosmic and the earthly planes, with special reference to the theology and episodes in the manifestation of the Divine as Sri Krishna, the Divine Player *par excellence*. While the extensive literature of Bengal Vaishnavism is the prime source for the study of Krishna Lila, the author has also copiously drawn upon the *Harivamsha*, the Puranas such as *Vishnu*, *Bhagavata*, *Matsya*, *Brahma-Vaivarta*, etc., and also on a large number of other religious and independent works dealing with the theory and psychology of Play. Though the subtitle says the work is a study of Krishna Lila it is not confined to the topic in any narrow theological sense. The work is far more comprehensive and studies with perspicacity all aspects of Lila, both theoretical and practical, not only with reference to Krishna but also with reference to Shiva and Devi, and other deities and the lives of saints.

In the Introduction the author points out that 'play' is the nearest translation of Lila, 'for play expresses freedom; it is carefree and relatively unmotivated. Play is done for the fun of it, for no ulterior reason... It is intrinsically satisfying rather than instrumental. It is an end in itself... Play and playful activities such as dancing, singing, emotional frenzy, and madness signify that man has exploded the confines of his pragmatic utilitarian nature and entered an "other" realm of freedom' (p. xi). However, we may comprehensively define Divine Lila as 'the effortless spontaneous disport or sportive manifestation from inner exuberance by the Divine Infinite in any one or more of Its aspects of Sat-Chit-Ananda on the Relative plane.'

The author further points out that 'while play is perhaps not a classic feature of the divine in

all religions, in Hinduism it is typical of the gods and represents, I think, an appropriate expression of the unconditional and transcendent nature of the divine in India' (p. xi).

The work consists of five chapters. Chapter I discusses the divine activity of the play of creation and world-dance. It also traces the gradual evolution of the concept of Lila from the concept of Maya—from the magical power of creation and assuming the forms of gods in the *Rig-Veda*, through the illusion-producing Power of the absolute impersonal Brahman, to the mysterious, unpredictable, bewitching Power of the personal God or Ishvara, all being aspects of one and the same Maya (probably relating to the Sat-Chit-Ananda aspects of the Reality). In the last sense, the exuberant disport of the Divine is termed Lila. The word 'Lila' as a term for the Divine creation of the universe occurs, maybe for the first time specifically, in the *Brahma-Sutras* ('*lokavattu lila-kaivalyam*'—2.1.33), which is accepted by Shankara as equivalent to Maya. Then the divine Lilas of Shiva, Devi, Indra, and other deities are recounted from the relevant Puranas and other literature and evaluated.

Chapter II is fully devoted to the Lilas of Krishna, whose variegated life in its entirety was a Lila. However, the author naturally focusses attention on the Vrindavan Krishna of Radha, the Gopis and the Gopalas, who has been the central figure of most Vaishnava schools, especially that of Bengal. The author has wisely reiterated the unworldly character of these Lilas, and the severe moral and spiritual discipline necessary to understand them and to apply them in *sadhana*.

Chapter III, deals with the expression of Lila-concepts in India in the religious activity of some cults, in art and dance forms, in festivals such as Holi, and in Kirtan and other expressions of

Bhakti. The theory and practice of Bhakti and the development of *rasas* into *bhavas* is also lucidly dealt with. Chapter IV further illustrates the expression of Lila in the lives of historical saints like Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, and a few others.

Finally, Chapter V deals with expressions of Play in some non-Hindu traditions to show that Divine Lila is a widespread concept, though it has been primarily and systematically developed in India; and the author shows that a study of it will be of great help to all mankind to get release from tensions and to divinize their lives and transcend natural limitations. In the Conclusion it is pointed out that 'man at play is reaching out ... for that superlative ease, in which even the body, freed from its earthly burden moves to the effortless measures of a heavenly dance' (p. 281).

In the light of this thorough study by a professor of the University of Chicago, these Hindu traditions, which were mostly ridiculed as immoral phantasies, reveal their deep significance to mankind for a healthy and joyfully religious life. Similar studies of the different aspects of the vast Indian religious lore will lift them out of obscurity and free them from ignorant or perverted evaluations; they will then prove to be an inestimable heritage of mankind, for India has been experimenting with religion in myriad ways in the course of her long history.

There is a good selected Bibliography and a useful Index. The printing and get-up are fine, with an attractive reproduction of a metallic sculpture of dancing *kaliya-mardana* Krishna.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre
Belur Math

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The 145th Birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna falls on Monday, 18 February, 1980.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

The Students' Home, which was started in 1905 under the inspiration and guidance of Swami Ramakrishnananda, now comprises five institutions. The activities of these institutions during the year 1978-79 are described below.

Hostel Section : This section, which is the Home proper, has two wings—the Junior Hostel which accommodates the boys of the Residential High School, and the Senior Hostel which accommodates both the boys of the Technical Institute attached to the Home and the poor boys of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith Vivekananda College, a separately run institution. Admissions are made on the basis of the students' performance at the School Annual Examination or Public Examination, and also on the means of the parents, orphans being given first preference. During the year the Junior Hostel had 184 inmates and the Senior Hostel 171, making a total of 355. The number of books in the General Library in the Senior Hostel at the end of the year was 2,861, including 591 in the textbook section. A number of periodicals were received free for the Reading Room. Important festivals and birthdays of saints and sages were celebrated in a fitting manner. All the inmates and the staff and students of the Residential Technical Institute and the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School formed a colourful procession to the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, on the birthdays of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramakrishnananda, with a decorated chariot carrying their portraits.

Residential High School : The medium of instruction in this institution is Tamil. There are five standards VI to X. Spinning, weaving, and gardening are provided in the arts and crafts department, and physical education is compulsory for all classes. The strength during the year was 184.

Residential Technical Institute : Here a three-year Diploma Course in Mechanical Engineering is provided, with three electives offered : Machine Shop Technology, Automobile Technology, and Farm and Equipment Technology. The Post-Diploma Course in Automobile Engineering was suspended during the year due to paucity of

funds, but there are plans to make it an evening course in the next academic year. There was a total of 132 students.

Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Primary School : This institution, situated in Mylapore, has standards I to V. The enrolment at the end of the year was 417, consisting of 237 boys and 180 girls.

Middle School : This village school in Malliankaranai, Chingleput District, has standards I to VIII. Agriculture is taught as a pre-vocational subject. There were during the year 211 students—164 boys and 47 girls. Midday meals were served to 10 children daily. In the hostel attached to the school there were 30 boarders, of whom 20 belonged to Scheduled Castes and 10 to Backward Classes.

Besides these five institutions, the new *Agro-Industrial Service Centre* has been added as a valuable part of the Home's services to the poor. Two mobile vans fitted with all necessary equipment have been acquired to carry out on-the-spot preventive maintenance to agricultural tractors. These vans go to the villages once a month and carry out whatever minor repairs are necessary and service the tractors whose owners have become members of the scheme. During the year the number of clients registered for monthly servicing crossed 100. A number of boys are also given training in tractor-repair through this programme.

Donations : In order to enable the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home to carry on and improve its services to the people of Tamil Nadu, the generous public is requested to contribute liberally. All donations are exempt from Income-tax and may be sent to : The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras-600 004.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYAPITH PURULIA, WEST BENGAL

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

Residential School : This institution, founded in 1958, is outstanding among other things for the remarkable planning of its campus which bears testimony to the glorious heritage of Indian art and architecture. Instruction is offered in both Bengali and English mediums. Active participation in the various co-curricular activities

—like music, painting and drawing, debate, drama, etc.—is required. And though participation in the hobby programme is optional, a majority of the boys devote their leisure hours to the eighteen hobby clubs connected with electronics, physics, chemistry, life science, photography, geography, Bengali, English, Hindi, etc. The numerous festivals—religious, cultural and national—held each year constitute an integral part of the community life in the Vidyapith. As of March 31, 1979, the school had a strength of 637 students.

Arogya Bhavan : An indoor and outdoor hospital is maintained for the inmates of the Vidyapith which has 24 beds, O.P.D., an X-ray unit and a small laboratory.

Pre-basic School : This institution provides instruction to the children of nearby villages.

Allopathic Charitable Dispensary : The Rameswarlall Singhania Arogya Bhavan provides free consultation and allopathic drugs to the poor people of the locality. During the year it served 35,338 patients. Furthermore, a health survey was made of 30 neighbouring villages, which was followed up by the institution of three new and special clinics : a tuberculosis clinic, leprosy clinic and immunization clinic. Also, 1979 being the International Year of the Child, the Vidyapith began a programme to immunize all children below 5 years of age in the adjoining 30 villages with Triple Antigen and Polio Vaccine.

Audio-visual Unit : This mobile unit, equipped with 16 mm and 35 mm projectors, screened 62 historical and religious films in different parts of the district.

Relief and Rural Uplift Work : The students and staff of the Vidyapith donated Rs. 2,000, and Rs. 6,100 was collected from the public towards the relief of flood victims in West Bengal in 1978. About 1,500 pieces of old clothing were distributed.

Donation : All donations to the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith are exempt from Income-tax, and may be addressed to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Vivekanandanagar, Purulia-723 147 (W.B.).

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA CHANDIGARH

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

Spiritual and Cultural : Ram-Nam Sankirtan is

conducted fortnightly in the Ashrama shrine. The birthdays of various prophets and incarnations are observed, and there is special worship on the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, as well as for Durga Puja and Shiva Ratri. Regular weekly lectures and classes in Hindi and English are conducted by the Secretary Swami and others at the Ashrama.

The library continued its home-lending service for members during the year, the total number of books being 1,634, and the number issued being 336. The book-sales section, which provides the publications of the Ramakrishna Order in English, Sanskrit, Hindi and Punjabi, was more active than ever before.

The combined public celebrations of the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were held from March 16 to 22, 1979. The programme included lectures in Hindi and English, special discourses in Hindi on *Rama-Charitamanas*, devotional songs and Narayana-Seva in the form of distribution of fruits, biscuits, and games-materials to the handicapped children at 'Saket'. The general theme of the celebrations was 'The Life and Message of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, with Stress on Real Revolution for the Good of Mankind through Enlightenment of Mind and Transformation of Character'.

Medical : During the year the Free Homoeopathic Dispensary resumed its service, which had been suspended the previous year. The total number of patients served was 1,152, new cases numbering 275.

Educational : As usual, the Vivekananda Students' Home for college boys provided accommodation for 40 students.

Relief : In response to the calls for funds to carry on relief work among the flood victims in Delhi, Bihar and West Bengal, the Chandigarh Ashrama collected Rs. 8,725.

Donations for the maintenance of the Ashrama and its activities may be sent to The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sector 15-B, Chandigarh-160 016. All donations are exempt from Income-tax.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

The Middle-East Imbrolio

Even long before the old patriarch Abraham folded his tent and set out with his aged wife Sarah and nephew Lot in search of the Promised Land, the Middle East had been the hotbed of troubles. The descendents of Abraham only converted into altar fire what had already been burning there. It is doubtful whether there is any other part of the globe which is socio-politically more active and unstable than the deserts and barren hills of the Middle East. There originated the oldest civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia; there flourished the turbulent kingdoms of Babylon, Assyria, Israel and Persia; there were fought some of the most destructive battles of ancient times; there ruled some of the most powerful monarchs like Tiglath Pileser, Sargon, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius; there preached Hammurabi, Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed; three world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, rose there; and two great scriptures, the Bible and the Quran, were compiled there.

By the first century A.D. history seemed to have spent itself in the Middle East. But it blazed forth again six centuries later through Islam which spread across half the world like wildfire and produced a new civilization of dazzling splendour. A thousand years later, with the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution, the centre of gravity of history seemed to have shifted to Europe and America. But the discovery of oil and its technological importance, and the change in the geopolitical situation caused by the creation of Israel, have once again produced a new awakening in the Middle East. Kemal Ataturk's liquidation of the Caliphate was the first sign that the age of Haroun al Rashid and Suleiman the Magnificent was coming to an end, and a new spirit was animating the desert. The recent attack on the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the Iranian revolution are not isolated events but are the result of the clash of tradition and modernity, and are a part of the dialectics of social change. The influence of Marxism and the return of the exiled children of Abraham are bound to have far-reaching consequences. History is once again ablaze in that region.

It was the inability of political leaders in the U.S.A. to evaluate the nature and power of historical forces that led to that nation's recent humiliating experience in Iran. Let no country underestimate the importance of the ferment going on in the Middle East. The storm of revolution in Iran may soon blow over. But there is no doubt that the desert has once again unleashed tremendous forces and, since the philosophy of life there has always been one based on intolerance and a cult of violence, these forces may not conduce to peace in the world.