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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

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

मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिधवः ।
माध्वीर्नः संत्वीषधीः ॥

मधु नक्तमुतोषसो मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः ।
मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता ॥

मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिर्मधुमां अस्तु सूर्यः ।
माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः ॥

शं नो मित्रः शं वरुणः शं नो भवत्वयमा ।
शं न इन्द्रो बृहस्पतिः शं नो विष्णुरुक्मः ॥

1. May the winds blow bliss to us who are devoted to truth. May the rivers flow giving us bliss. May the plants be blissful to us.

Rg-Veda 1.90.6

2. May the night and the dawn be blissful. May the very dust of the earth give us bliss. May the sky, our father, shower bliss on us.

Rg-Veda 1.90.7

3. May the fruit-bearing trees give us bliss. May the sun be blissful to us. May the cows bring us bliss.

Rg-Veda 1.90.8

4. May Mitra,¹ Varuṇa,² Aryaman,³ Indra, Bṛhaspati,⁴ and Viṣṇu of wide stride⁵ grant us happiness and freedom from difficulties.⁶

Rg-Veda 1.90.9

* The *mantras* given below are well-known and widely used. The first three verses, collectively called *Madhu-mantras*, form one of the most beautiful prayers that ever welled up in the human heart. The purified mind of the Vedic Ṛṣi saw only the bliss of Brahman in everything. These are important *mantras* which form a part of the sacred *Trisuparna-mantras* chanted by the sannyāsins for self-purification, expiation of sin, and enlightenment. These prayers create an attitude of friendliness and acceptance towards the world around us where people usually see nothing but strife and evil.

1. Mitra means the sun, the presiding deity of day.

2. Varuṇa, according to Sāyaṇa, here stands for the presiding deity of night.

3. Aryaman also means the sun, the controller of both day and night.

4. Bṛhaspati is the teacher of gods.

5. According to Sāyaṇa, this is an allusion to Viṣṇu's incarnation as Vāmana. It may also mean that Viṣṇu is all-pervading.

6. The word *sam* according to Sāyaṇa means joy or well-being and freedom from troubles. It is a word which expresses blessing.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Prayer, worship and meditation are the three successive disciplines or stages on the path of Bhakti. This month's EDITORIAL discusses the nature and importance of prayer as a preliminary spiritual practice.

Meditation is a state of higher concentration which is difficult to attain without creating a meditative mood. Swami Adiswarananda, Head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre in New York, and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, discusses lucidly some of the factors that govern this higher mood, in the second instalment of his article THE MOOD FOR MEDITATION. His insightful observations on holy company, control of speech, purity of food, steadfastness, service, discrimination, *japa*, etc. are sure to prove helpful to sincere spiritual aspirants.

We opened a forum for inter-religious understanding in the March issue with a brilliant article MAN'S DIALOGICAL NATURE AND THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS by Fr. John B. Chettimattam, Ph.D. (Theol.), Ph.D. (Phil.) of the Catholic order of C.M.I. In the second and concluding instalment the author, who is at present an Associate Professor of philosophy at Fordham University, New York, points out that true inter-religious dialogue becomes fruitful and beneficial only when it is based on certain presuppositions. We hope the article,

which is a product of mature thinking, experience and deep scholarship, will stimulate more thinking on the role of religion as a witness to divine love and a unifying force in human life.

As a centennial homage to the memory of Sri Ramana Maharshi, who served as a beacon light to innumerable seekers of God during the first half of the present century, we are publishing a brief life-sketch of THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA and a collection of his luminous teachings on SELF-ENQUIRY.

Prof. Santosh Kumar Chatterjee, M.A., Former Head of the Department of English, Maharaja Manindra College, Calcutta, stresses the importance of traditional values in the article OUR EDUCATION AND REARMAMENT IN FAITH.

Several Western scholars have criticized the Vedantic view of life as escapist. With a view to refuting this criticism Dr. Vinita Wanchoo, M.A., M.A., D.Phil., in the second instalment of IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE? first examines the psychology of escape. Then she takes up an analysis of the symptoms of escape that the critics have found in the Hindu way of life like pessimism, denial of life, asceticism, quietism, etc. This study is based on extensive research.

“What is this idea of Bhakti without renunciation? It is most pernicious.”

— *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*
Vol. 8, Pp. 278

PRAYER AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

(EDITORIAL)

There is hardly anyone who has not prayed at some time or other in his life. When a baby feels hungry or discomfort it cries. To its mother at least, it is an unarticulated prayer, and she runs to it and attends to its needs. In a way, every wish may be regarded as an unuttered prayer. In this sense even an atheist or a materialist prays; only in his case he prays to himself.

Prayers may be grouped into two main divisions: secular and spiritual. Secular prayers are for the fulfilment of worldly desires and needs. Life is full of uncertainties, and in the life of every person come times when he finds himself in the grip of forces which are beyond his control. Confronted with fear and despair, buffeted by sorrows and difficulties, millions of people turn to God in prayer.

There is no need to go deep into the question whether such prayers are answered and, if so, how it can be reconciled with the law of Karma, for our purpose here is only to study the second type of prayer, namely, spiritual prayer—prayer practised as a spiritual discipline.

Spiritual prayer

The main purpose of spiritual prayer is to seek divine assistance in attaining moral purity and spiritual progress. A true devotee of God prays not for material things, which are after all transitory, but for spiritual enlightenment. Prayer represents the first stage in the aspirant's struggle for higher consciousness.

Even those who do not believe in a Personal God or in the efficacy of prayer are advised to pray for others in order to free themselves from thoughts of hatred, jealousy and selfishness which are inimical to their own spiritual progress. Prayer in

this sense is only a way of purifying oneself by sending good thoughts to others. Since all individual minds are parts of a cosmic mind, this kind of prayerful thinking may help others. One may thus render service to others in silence—a form of mental Karma-yoga.

All the great religions of the world teach prayer. Among them Christianity gives the greatest importance to it. Christ himself prayed long hours and taught his followers to 'watch and pray'. His apostle St. Paul's exhortation to 'pray without ceasing' is famous. Origen, a great third century Christian theologian of Alexandria, says that to pray for earthly things is disobedience to God. St. Augustine points out that the purpose of prayer is not to instruct God but to elevate man, to bring man round to what he ought to desire—desire for God. Prayer for St. Thomas Aquinas is concerned only with man's faith and contemplation of God's love. Meister Eckhart regards each prayer as a part of the eternal foresight of God. To St. Teresa of Avila prayer is the only door to those mystical graces that the Lord bestows upon the soul.

In Hinduism prayer once dominated the life of the people during the Vedic period. But later on worship, meditation and enquiry almost completely replaced it. Though the common people still prayed, prayer as a spiritual discipline was seldom stressed by the great teachers. It may be said that in modern times Sri Ramakrishna has revived it. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* one finds the Master recommending prayer on several occasions. Once a devotee asked him, 'Then what is the way, sir?' Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'Prayer and the company of holy men.' After explaining the benefits of holy company, the Master continued, 'There is another way: earnestly

praying to God. God is our very own. We should say to Him : "O God, what is Thy nature? Reveal Thyself to me. Thou must reveal Thyself to me ; for why else hast Thou created me?"' Another day M, the author of the book, told him, 'God gives to some full spiritual consciousness, and others He keeps in ignorance.' Immediately the Master corrected him : 'No, that is not so. One should pray to God with a longing heart. God certainly listens to prayer if it is sincere. There is no doubt about it.'¹ What Sri Ramakrishna meant was that through sincere prayer everyone could overcome his inherent limitations and gain spiritual experience by God's grace.

Sri Ramakrishna's divine consort Sri Sarada Devi also emphasizes the importance of prayer very much in her teachings. Among the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Shivananda (Mahapurush Maharaj) teach constant prayer to God as an important spiritual practice.²

The two highways

A unique feature of Hinduism is that it offers to humanity two great highways (*mārgas*) to liberation : the path of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) and the path of devotion (*bhakti mārga*). From time immemorial these two seemingly contradictory paths have coexisted within its fold, giving to it great dynamism and adaptability.

These two highways represent two fundamentally different orientations of the human soul to the ultimate Reality. In

jñāna mārga the ultimate Reality is regarded as impersonal and without attributes, whereas in the path of Bhakti It is regarded as personal with or without a human form. Secondly, *jñāna mārga* emphasizes self-effort while *bhakti mārga* is the path of divine grace. Thirdly, the path of *Jñāna* is subject-oriented ; it is an enquiry into the true nature of Reality as the subject. The path of Bhakti is object-oriented ; it is an attempt to realize the true nature of God as the highest object and establish a true relationship with Him. The path of Bhakti involves what Martin Buber calls 'I and Thou' relationship between the soul and God. The path of *Jñāna* involves 'I-That' relationship, as the Advaitic interpretation of *tat tvam asi* clearly shows ; but even this relationship is illusory, and what *jñāna mārga* establishes is not a relationship but the real nature of the transcendent Self.

'I-Thou' relationship can be expressed in three ways : prayer, worship and meditation. These are the three most important disciplines of the path of Bhakti and represent three successive stages in it.

Prayer, worship, meditation

In Hinduism, *prārthanā*, the Sanskrit word for prayer, always means petitionary prayer and has been given only limited importance. It means asking God for help to free oneself from the hold of the senses and turn away from the darkness of ignorance to the light of Truth. It is the first stage in the struggle for higher consciousness in which the aspirant, realizing his limitations, opens his heart to divine power and light. It is in effect a movement from God to the soul.

Worship is offering something to God—it may be a material object or one's own body, mind and soul. The Vedic *yajña* or sacrifice meant this : *devatoddāśena dravya-tyāgaḥ* ('sacrificing things for the sake of the Deity'). Worship shifts the focus of

1. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974), pp. 21-22 and 196.

2. Cf. *The Eternal Companion* (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1971), pp. 166, 183, 255 ; *For Seekers of God*, trans. Swami Vividishananda and Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1975), pp. 1-2, 66, 151 and *passim*.

man's activities from the ego to the Divine and detaches the soul from external objects. It is primarily a movement from the soul to God.

As a result of these two movements, the soul draws closer to God. This act of approaching God is what *dhyāna* or meditation means. The Vedantic term for meditation is *upāsana* which literally means 'sitting near'—sitting near God.

So then, prayer, worship and meditation represent three degrees of the development of intimacy between the soul and God. One begins spiritual life by asking God for favours, then starts offering things to Him, and finally succeeds in going nearer to Him. These three steps also represent three stages in the progressive transformation of the aspirant's consciousness. When Christ in the Sermon on the Mount speaks about asking, seeking and knocking at the door, he is referring to these three stages—prayer, worship and meditation respectively.

In the history of Vedic Hinduism we can clearly see the development of these three attitudes or steps. The Vedas are divided into four parts: Mantra, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad, which according to modern scholars were composed at four successive periods. The Mantra portion mostly contains hymns and prayers. The Brāhmaṇa portion deals with rituals and rites of worship. The Āraṇyakas mostly discuss various types of meditation. The Upaniṣads also contain meditations, but they are chiefly a record of the direct experiences of the sages.

With the decline of Vedic culture, the Mantra portion lost its hold on the people, and prayer gradually lost its importance as a spiritual discipline. The Gāyatrī is practically the only prayer that now remains of what was once an important and widespread spiritual practice in ancient India. Vedic rituals were replaced by new rituals. The meditations of the Āraṇyakas were forgotten, and new types of medita-

tion on various deities and the yoga of Patañjali took their place. Gradually concentration became the most important test and form of spiritual practice. Even the Bhakti schools could not escape the influence of contemplation.

Prayer in Christianity

If Hinduism neglected prayer, Christianity raised it above all other disciplines. During the Middle Ages, Christian spirituality recognized three disciplines: meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*) and contemplation (*contemplatio*). Christian meditation corresponds, not to what is called *dhyāna* in Hinduism (which is nowadays translated as 'meditation'), but to *manana* or reflection which follows reading. Prayer during the early centuries did not have any definite method and each individual was free to pray in his own way. This kind of prayer later on came to be called Affective Prayer (which corresponds to *prārthanā* in Hinduism) and, when simplified and reduced to a single formula or a 'silent interior gaze', came to be called Prayer of Simplicity or Prayer of the Heart (which corresponds to *dhyāna* in Hinduism). Contemplation was regarded more as an experience resulting from meditation and prayer than as a discipline. It meant an intimate knowledge of God which was God's free and loving gift to the soul. In this sense it corresponds to *samādhi* of Hinduism.

However, owing to the influence of the great Spanish mystics of the sixteenth century and the French mystics of the seventeenth century, all spiritual disciplines came to be included under the blanket term 'prayer', a distinction being made between 'vocal prayer' (meaning the chanting of hymns in choir and private recitations) and 'mental prayer'. Mental prayer came to be divided into two: Active Prayer and Passive Prayer, also called Infused Prayer.

Of these, Active Prayer is a state in which prayer is done with self-effort, and consists of three progressive stages or degrees: Meditation (or Discursive Prayer), Affective Prayer and Prayer of Simplicity. Passive or Infused Prayer is contemplation. It is a state of transcendence free from self-effort in which the soul experiences union with God, which according to St. Teresa consists of four stages or degrees. By including all these different disciplines under one common term 'Prayer', what is really implied is that a prayerful attitude, an attitude of submission to God, is maintained throughout one's spiritual life. It is important to keep in mind that it is only Affective Prayer, meaning a free and informal personal prayer to God, that corresponds to the *prārthanā* of Hinduism. For the remaining types of Christian 'prayer' Hinduism uses different technical terms like *manana*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*, etc.

Nature of prārthanā

In Christian spirituality there are two definitions of prayer which have come down from very ancient times. One is that of Clement of Alexandria: 'Prayer is a conversation with God.' The other is that of John Damascene and Evagrius of Pontus: 'Prayer is the raising of the soul to God'. It is the first definition that corresponds to the Hindu concept of *prārthanā*. (The second definition is more general and can be applied to all the different forms of Christian 'prayer', but specially to Christian mysticism.)

Prārthanā or prayer is 'speaking to God'. It represents the first attempt of the ordinary human soul to approach God. Just as our meeting with our fellowmen takes the form of a dialogue, so also the first meeting of the soul with God takes the form of an inner dialogue. It is the first effort of the soul to express its spiritual aspiration, for that is the only way the infant soul can orientate

itself to the supreme Reality. Just as a child speaks about its needs to its parents or a student seeks guidance from a teacher or a servant places his problems before his master, so does the soul speak frankly to the Lord about its difficulties, needs and wishes. It is by expressing its needs that the child goes closer to its parents and understands its relationship to them. In the same way, prayer takes the soul closer to God and reveals its relationship with Him. It is this 'speaking' to God and dependence on His grace that distinguish prayer from other disciplines.

Though God is unseen, prayer is not a monologue. It is a mystic interior exchange with the unseen divine Partner going on through the medium of faith. A true devotee does not feel that God is unknown or does not respond. His burning faith makes God a living Presence. It is this continual exercise of faith that makes prayer a spiritual discipline.

The next question is, how to pray?

Talks with those whom we love are always personal and informal. The interior conversation with God, or prayer, too must be intensely personal, natural, spontaneous. Each individual must be free to pray in his own way. Let him begin praying in any way that is possible for him. Prayer itself will guide him about how to proceed further, and will perfect his prayer.

Nevertheless, all people do not have equal capacity to pray, and may not be clear about what to pray for. Even those who habitually pray may not be always in a mood to pray. To help such people, formal prayers have been composed by illumined seers. In Hinduism the most famous and popular of these formal prayers are the *Gāyatrī* and the *Abhyāroha Mantra*: 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality.'³ One may make use of these

3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28.

prayers now and then as guidelines, but true prayer is something welling up from the depths of one's heart naturally according to the soul's extreme needs.

Prayer can be done in two ways : externally and internally. In external prayer one stands or sits before an image or picture of the Lord, preferably in a temple or one's own private shrine, and gazing at the image pours forth one's heart in a fervent appeal. In internal prayer one sits with closed eyes, visualizes the Lord's image in the heart, and appeals to Him mentally.

Wrong notions about prayer

Some people seem to think that prayer would reduce them to the position of a beggar which is beneath their dignity. Ignorance and egoism lie at the root of such thinking. In begging there is no relationship between the beggar and the begged. But spiritual prayer is addressed not to a total stranger, but to a Being who is the Soul of one's soul, the Ruler of the universe, one's eternal and inseparable Beloved. When a child expresses his needs, his parents do not think it to be begging ; they only give him what really belongs to him. Similarly, prayer is only a way of preparing ourselves to receive what is really ours by divine right. When a student approaches a teacher for instruction, it is not considered begging. Prayer is only seeking guidance from the eternal Guru, the Teacher of all teachers.

Another wrong notion about prayer is that it is only a form of aspiration. But, as St. Teresa has pointed out, 'It is one thing to desire the grace of devotion, and quite another thing to ask God for it.' Aspiration becomes effective only when converted into a spiritual discipline. This can be done in several ways, and among these prayer is one of the simplest. Prayer is mere aspiration ; it is the soul's dialogue with God.

Another notion, though not wrong, is that prayer is only a lower form of spiritual practice meant for beginners. This is indeed true, for prayer may be regarded as the kindergarten of spiritual life. But when it comes to spiritual life, most of the people are mere babies and need a kindergarten. In these days yoga and meditation are becoming very popular, and millions of people in the East and the West are practising them. But not many people seem to understand that *dhyāna* or true meditation is a fairly advanced stage of concentration. A large number of people seem to spend their whole life *trying* to meditate. For many, meditation itself acts as a trap preventing them from moving forward. Attempting higher degrees of concentration without fulfilling the primary conditions is one of the main causes for failure in spiritual life. Unreal things cannot change one's life. It is always good to remember that a simple prayer which an aspirant can do, which is real to him, can transform his life far more than a higher spiritual technique which is unreal to him because it is beyond his capacity.

Functions of prayer

'This divine Māyā of Mine is difficult to overcome ; those who take refuge in Me alone cross over this illusion,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa.⁴ Spiritual power is necessary in order to overcome the obstacles and gain spiritual experience. Just as physical strength comes from the food provided by the physical universe and knowledge comes from ideas originating in the mental universe, so also spiritual power comes from God. At the unseen touch of the golden rays of God's grace the lotus of the heart bursts into bloom. The main purpose of prayer is to seek divine power. Says Sri Ramakrishna, 'Through prayer all

4. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 7.14.

individual souls can be united to the Supreme Soul. Every house has a connection for gas, and gas can be obtained from the main storage-tank of the Gas Company. Apply to the Company, and it will arrange for your supply of gas. Then your house will be lighted.⁵ There is an inner resistance in all of us to the free flow of divine power. This resistance is offered by the ego. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Rain water does not collect on a mound.' Prayer reduces the inner resistance and opens the heart to grace.

True meditation is a state of relaxation, calmness. The mind becomes relaxed and calm only when it feels security and is detached from desires. Life is full of uncertainties and difficulties and modern conditions of living have increased man's anxiety and feeling of insecurity. The best way to overcome fear and insecurity is to constantly pray to the supreme Lord, the controller of the destinies of all beings. Even those who practise *japa* and meditation have to pass through dark periods when they feel forlorn and hopeless. During such arid periods prayer gives great support to the soul. Says St. John of the Cross, 'In all our necessities, trials and afflictions, there is no better nor safer remedy than prayer, and hope that God will provide for us in His own way.'

Meditation is the conscious, self-directed focussing of a continuous stream of thoughts on a mental object. This becomes possible only if the mind (or, to be more precise, the *will*) is free from the hold of external objects and desires. This withdrawal of the mind or the will is called *pratyāhāra*. One way to do this is repeated practice. But especially during the early stages of spiritual life most aspirants find this too difficult. Intense prayer, however, quickly accomplishes it. Prayer is the Bhakta's way of practising *pratyāhāra*.

Every man is capable of a certain degree of concentration on external objects or even on mental images, provided he likes them. The main difficulty is in concentrating the mind at a higher centre of consciousness. For this two conditions are to be fulfilled. The higher spiritual centre should be developed and made active to some extent. And then the will and mental energies must be given a higher turn. Prayer accomplishes both these tasks. Prayer is the best way to stimulate the heart-centre. After a day's distracting work you feel that your mental energies have got scattered in different parts of the body, and it is difficult for you to meditate. When this happens, try intense prayer. You will find prayer quickly gathers up the energies at the heart-centre and you feel a new access of strength. Prayer not only detaches the will but focusses it upward. If the mind is not lifted to a higher centre through prayer, the spiritual aspirant who tries to meditate very often runs the risk of concentrating on lower thoughts.

Another danger is, if the mind is not lifted up, it may sink into *tamas*, inertia, and be overpowered by sleep. That is why meditation very often ends up in sleep. The best way to avoid drowsiness during meditation is to pray. Prayer and sleep can never go together. Prayer keeps the mind alert.

Prayer thus gives a sense of security to the soul, detaches the will from desires and objects, activates the higher centres, gives a higher direction to thoughts, keeps the mind alert and, above all, clears the way for the inflow of divine power. As the aspirant goes on praying intensely, he finds that gradually prayer merges imperceptibly into *dhyāna* or true meditation. One may begin with a petitionary prayer using many words. But as prayer gains in intensity and depth, words drop away by themselves, leaving only a silent aspiration in the heart. Then the inner Image becomes still and the mind

⁵. *The Gospel*, p. 139.

flows in silence towards it. Prayer has transformed itself naturally and spontaneously into meditation. This is the ultimate goal of prayer.

Conditions of success in prayer.

Prayer, we have pointed out, is the simplest first step on the path of Bhakti. But if it is to become an effective and powerful tool, it must fulfil certain conditions. The first condition is, of course, a prayerful temperament. All people do not have an inclination or capacity to pray. Those who find it difficult to pray may try other spiritual techniques.

The test of a prayerful temperament is spontaneity. True prayer bubbles up from the bottom of the heart spontaneously. But it is also true that through practice one gradually acquires or strengthens the capacity to pray.

The prayerful temperament must be supported by a strong faith—faith in the existence of God, that God listens and responds to prayer. This faith must be so strong that there is no room for negative or contrary thoughts. If we pray for something but are deeply convinced that we are not going to get it, we only obstruct the working of God's grace. Prayer becomes effective only when the faith that supports it is total. The prayerful man must practise the sixfold surrender to God taught in Vaiṣṇava scriptures : 'Thinking of what is auspicious and favourable, not thinking of what is unfavourable or inauspicious, faith in God's saving power, always preferring God's protection, self-surrender and feeling of helplessness.'⁶

Along with faith there must be reduction of egoism, and a spirit of self-surrender.

⁶ आनुकूल्यस्य संकल्पः प्रातिकूल्यस्य वर्जनम् ।
रक्षिष्यतीति विश्वासो गोप्तृत्ववरणं तथा ।
आत्मनिक्षेपकार्पण्ये षड्विधा शरणागतिः ॥

Ahīrbudhnyā Samhita, 37.28.

Kārpānya or a feeling of helplessness is a great aid in practising self-surrender and prayer. In fact, it is out of sheer helplessness that many people pray to God. A person who is cocksure of everything need not pray. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that as long as there is a store-keeper looking after the storeroom, the master of the house does not go there. Speaking about self-surrender, Swami Vivekananda himself teaches in the *Inspired Talks*, 'God helps those who do *not* help themselves.'⁷ A devotee of God uses every experience of sorrow, suffering and difficulty as an incentive to pray to God. *Kārpānya* is, however, not a weakness. It only means that the devotee refuses to depend on matter but depends only on Spirit. Strong in the strength of God, he is not afraid of even death.

This does not mean that we should pray only when difficulties come. Prayer becomes effective as a spiritual discipline only when there is continuity and intensity in it. A true aspirant prays only for God-vision. His need is internal and does not depend on external things. So he prays continually. When difficulties come his way, he is ready to face them. Similarly, he prays with intense aspiration. Prayer without intensity has little power. Only a spiritual hero can keep up this kind of intense prayer for a long time—for several years if necessary.

The human soul is surrounded on all sides by the boundless ocean of divine power and light. And yet how few people make use of it! It is not even necessary to pray to a deity. It is enough if one opens one's heart to the divine power and light through a strong prayerful wish, which we may call 'auto-suggestive prayer'. Many of the Vedic prayers still in use are not directed to any

⁷ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, in 8 vols. (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol. 7, p. 91

particular deity. They are mostly of the nature of auto-suggestions.

Finally, it should be remembered that Hinduism does not thrust prayer upon everybody. For those who do not feel the need for it and for those who feel a constitutional dislike for it, Hinduism has opened other paths—self-enquiry, meditation, Kundalini-raising techniques, etc.

However, it is also true that, protected and supported by divine grace, the man of prayer moves faster on the spiritual path than the person who depends solely on his own limited resources. While some toil all their lives rowing their boats against the waves, others unfurl their sails and let the wind of divine grace carry them across the ocean of transmigratory existence.

THE MOOD FOR MEDITATION

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

(v) *Holy company.* There is nothing more powerful than holy company to uplift the depressed mind of a spiritual aspirant and infuse it with the fervour of the spiritual mood. There are times when an aspirant feels no enthusiasm or inspiration for his spiritual practices. For no apparent reason his mind suddenly comes up against an impenetrable wall, as it were, and everything appears to be dry, monotonous, and dull. No amount of study, or chanting of the holy name, or repeated attempts to concentrate his mind, is of any avail. All attempts to keep his mind from falling into the mire of low thoughts and tendencies prove futile, and, as a consequence, he is overcome by a sense of frustration, despair, and defeat. Under these circumstances, the only remedy is the company of the holy. As a piece of red-hot iron radiates heat, so also the holy personalities who remain charged with an intense spiritual mood emit great spiritual fervour, and an aspirant coming into association with such personalities is able to imbibe that mood from them. As evil company is contagious and stirs up the dormant evil tendencies in a

mind, so also holy company easily awakens all the divine propensities in it.

The effectiveness of holy company, however, depends on the right attitude of an aspirant, and the factors which make for the right attitude are the following: First, an aspirant is required to have *śraddhā*, which is faith in himself and in holy company. The opposite of *śraddhā* is cynicism, which is negative about everything. The second factor is humility. As Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Water does not collect on a mound but in low-lying places.' Similarly, the spiritual mood builds up only in a humble heart. One whose feeling of being afflicted is sincere blames no one but himself for his difficulties, and such a person alone is capable of being humble. There is no cure for a sick person until and unless he is tired of his sickness. The third factor is the spirit of service. An aspirant may seek the company of the holy but the holy personalities must be pleased with the sincerity of the aspirant. Holy company is more mental than physical. 'M', the chronicler of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, beautifully highlights this idea and says

that to see a holy man is itself holy company and a holy man is to be seen when he is absorbed in meditation.

(vi) *Right speech.* The growth of the mood for meditation is intimately related to the control of speech, which has been spoken of by Śaṅkarācārya as the first doorway to yoga. Too much talking or indulgence in fruitless controversy dissipates the energy of the mind and distracts it from its purpose, and, therefore, is inimical to the development of the meditative mood. Such control is necessary also for the preservation of the meditative mood. An average person cannot remain without talking even for a single moment. If there is no one to talk to, such a person mentally talks to himself, that is, engages in a continuous inner monologue. Control of speech, however, is not forced silence; nor would such forced silence be desirable or possible. It has been found that if a beginner takes a vow of silence for a day or two, he often indulges in too much talking after his observance of the period of silence has ended, and thereby makes his vow counter-productive. Control of speech means making the speech right by saying that which is true, pleasing, and beneficial to all.

Meditation is the practice of silence and a person who has no control over his speech cannot practise this silence all of a sudden. Therefore a beginner is advised to develop the habit of practising *japa* or repetition of a holy name. Such repetition keeps the mind preoccupied with one single thought and creates a mood for meditative silence. *Japa*, practised mentally matures into contemplation; contemplation further strengthened takes the form of meditation; and meditation when it is effortless becomes the first stage of *samādhi*. *Vṛttis*, or various thought-waves, cannot be stopped by suppressing them. They are to be first neutralised and then overcome by the deliberate cultivation of one single thought, which is accomplished by the practice of

japa. The continuous repetition of a single thought makes its wave grow bigger and stronger, and thus subdues the countless smaller thought-ripples on the surface of the mind.

(vii) *Purity of food.* The influence of food over the mind cannot be exaggerated. The mood for meditation is greatly affected by the purity or impurity of food. Any food which is not consecrated or is contaminated by the touch of impure vibrations is considered impure and, therefore, is not conducive to a spiritual mood. Pure food purifies the blood and the mind. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* describes pure food as that which conduces to the rise of the *sattva guṇa*. The meditative mood comes only in the wake of the *sattva guṇā*. Contrary moods are of two types. They are either *rājasic*, exciting desire for worldly objects and enjoyments, or *tāmasic*, adding to the dullness and darkness of the mind. The rise of the *sattva guṇa* is possible only when an aspirant is able to ensure the purity of the following ten factors which are considered as nourishment for both body and mind: scriptures, or reading material; water, or what is drunk; people, or company; place, which means a dwelling place; time, that is propitious time; work, which means profession; birth, that is initiation into a specific path; meditation; *mantra*, or the holy word which is repeated; and purification.

(viii) *Right method.* The meditative mood has been designated by some texts as *bhāva*, which is an emotional relationship with the Ideal of meditation. The state of *bhāva* is the intensified form of *bhakti* or sincere devotion. The aspirant must have love for his Ideal of meditation, and love comes only as a result of the commitment of the heart to the object of meditation. The aspirant's chosen Ideal of meditation must be compatible with his inner disposition and temperament. There are instances where an aspirant when asked to meditate

on some Ideal which is impersonal does not feel any enthusiasm for such meditation; but the same person when advised to meditate on some aspect of the Godhead which is personal and has form feels great emotional fervour for his practice. Also, a beginner who does not feel any mood for the practice of meditation when he is asked to fix his mind on a concept or image or idea, may find great interest in ritualistic and devotional worship. The method of meditation must, therefore, be appropriate for an individual and in keeping with his heredity, temperament, and spiritual background.

(ix) *One-pointed loyalty.* One-pointed loyalty to the object of meditation is a most important condition for the cultivation of the meditative mood. Such one-pointed loyalty has been indicated by various scriptures as *niṣṭhā*, which alone can give rise to *bhakti*, or love, and *bhakti* when it matures becomes *bhāva*, or fervour, and *bhāva* when it deepens becomes *bhāvanā*, which is a spontaneous loving remembrance. Rāmānuja designates this *bhāvanā* state as meditation. *Niṣṭhā* is a conservative one-pointed loyalty which fosters and intensifies one's spiritual growth. Those who are liberal from the very beginning never grow. *Niṣṭhā* is not a dogma or a narrowness of vision. It is not love for one's own Ideal by hatred toward other Ideals. An aspirant with true *niṣṭhā* has love for all Ideals but keeps a special love and adoration for his own Ideal. A worshipper of Kṛṣṇa, when he goes to a temple of Śiva, for example, tries to visualize his Kṛṣṇa, in the form of Śiva.

One-pointed loyalty helps the aspirant to develop a strong emotional relationship with the object of meditation, and such emotional commitment alone can make the Ideal of meditation living. No meditative mood is possible unless the aspirant is able to have some definite idea that his object of meditation, whether personal or imper-

sonal, is not just a picture or a form or a concept—but a living presence of the Divine within him. According to Patañjali, the state of meditation is reached when such meditation is practised continuously over a long period and with great love. No aspirant unless with an inborn gift, can hope to have this great love from the beginning; he has to cultivate love and the way to cultivate it is to develop *niṣṭhā* or one-pointed loyalty. Adherence to repeated practice, even though it appears to be mechanical in the beginning, in course of time gives rise to love for the Ideal, and one-pointed loyalty alone can make an aspirant adhere to his practice.

(x) *Acts of service.* The practice of meditation has its counterpart in the practice of service. The practice of seeing God with eyes closed must be supported by the effort to see God also with eyes open. What is realized in the depths of meditation must find its application in everyday life. Meditation and action always go together. Service to all beings by looking upon them as a reflecting medium of one's spiritual Ideal makes the practice of meditation spiritually positive and creative, and such spiritual creativity heightens the meditative mood in an aspirant. The practice of service is doing everything with an attitude of worshipfulness. Each act which the aspirant performs is required to be an offering to God. The two sides of the practice of meditation must, therefore, be properly aligned for the cultivation and development of the meditative mood.

(xi) *Right motive.* The mood for meditation is a manifestation of the spiritual emotions. Emotions, on the other hand, are inspired and guided by the intellect, which determines the motive behind all actions and emotions. As is one's motive, so is one's mood; and as is one's mood, so is one's meditation. The motive is therefore a significant factor in arousing the mood for performing any action. In order to feel the

mood for meditation, a spiritual motivation is necessary, because a spiritual motive alone can evoke spiritual fervour. The opposite of a spiritual motive is the worldly motive which always seeks something to acquire or avoid, and, therefore, meditation practised with such an incentive is usually burdened with anxiety about the results of such practice. Spiritual motivation ensues from a spiritually inspired intellect which is firmly convinced about the spiritual goal to be pursued and also about the transitoriness of all worldly objects and enjoyments, here and hereafter. Practice of meditation, as the *Bhagavad-Gītā* points out, must be supported by the practice of dispassion. The aspirant is required to cultivate dispassion by repeatedly focussing his attention on the impermanence of all worldly enjoyments and the bitter disappointments which come in their wake. No real mood for meditation is possible unless one is imbued with the spirit of dispassion.

(xii) *Practice of discrimination.* An aspirant desiring the mood for meditation must be very discriminating in every respect. He is required to discriminate the real from the unreal, love of God from self-love, spiritual conversation from idle gossip, and his whims and emotions from his true spiritual aspirations. The aspirant has to evaluate all things from a spiritual point of view. Anything which is spiritually inspiring is desirable and anything which is not is to be considered undesirable. The guideline of evaluation for him is : 'Does it help me spiritually?' The contemplative mood can neither be developed nor maintained as long as the spiritual goal and everyday conduct are not aligned properly. Moreover, aspirants of meditation often manifest two types of behaviour: either they isolate themselves completely from the external world or they try to be too liberal and universal from the very beginning. Both are extreme behaviour and both bring remorse or reaction in the end. Discrimina-

tion is therefore very necessary at every step.

(xiii) *Devotional music.* Devotional music is considered to be very effective in arousing the dormant spiritual emotions in us. Such music soothes the mind and serves as a spiritual diversion, by which spiritual aspirants detach themselves from the depressive thoughts to which they often cling unconsciously. Singing of devotional songs or listening to them is regarded as one of the supporting practices of meditation.

(xiv) *Chanting of the sacred texts.* Chanting of the sacred scriptures with proper intonation is considered by the traditions of yoga as a potent practice for the cultivation of the spiritual mood. Rhythmic chanting of such texts creates spiritual thought-waves within the mind and builds up the necessary mood for meditation. The sound of rhythmic chanting also creates thought-waves within the mind reminiscent of the spiritual goal. As the chanting continues for some time, such thought-waves gradually prevail over all other contrary thought-waves and evoke the mood for meditation.

(xv) *Ritualistic practices.* Practice of meditation varies from one individual to another, depending upon the method a particular individual has chosen or which has been prescribed for him by a competent teacher. Each such method of meditation is related to certain specific ritualistic observances, which often form part of the practice of such meditation. The development of the mood for meditation is intimately associated with the performance of these ritualistic practices. Anything which an aspirant does regularly and repeatedly eventually becomes a ritual for him, and such rituals greatly help him to summon his spiritual mood. For example, one aspirant may sprinkle holy water before he sits for meditation, and by that he may feel the necessary mood for meditation; while another aspirant may find it easy to sum-

mon his spiritual mood by burning incense ; and still others may like to chant a holy text in a rhythmic way for the same purpose. Each aspirant therefore, must develop his own ritualistic ways which are best suited for him, according to his inner conviction and disposition, and adhere to such practices scrupulously for the cultivation of his spiritual mood. In the absence of any such ritualistic observances, the practice of meditation becomes an altogether casual vocation, the effects of which often prove to be short-lived and even negative.

(xvi) *Regularity and balance of practice.* In order to develop the spiritual mood, one must subscribe to a particular method of meditation and be regular in one's practice. Practice becomes firmly grounded when it is followed for a long time, unremittingly and with devotion. Steadfast adherence to practice without any lapse is itself considered very significant, because even a lapse of one day can very well take the aspirant back to the position where he had been several days before. For a spiritual aspirant journeying toward his spiritual goal, there is no such thing as *status quo*. Either he must proceed or recede. By balance of practice is meant harmonious exertion and practice of moderation in every respect ; it also indicates balance between meditation as a principal practice and other disciplines, such as worship, spiritual study, service, etc., which are its adjunct and supporting practices. The cultivation of the spiritual mood requires the participation of all the four faculties of the mind—willing, feeling, thinking, and acting—and, therefore, the aspirant's spiritual living must be such that all the four faculties develop harmoniously.

(xvii) *Prāṇāyāma.* *Prāṇāyāma*, or control of breath, is considered to be one of the means for evoking the mood for meditation. The flow of breath is an indicator of the mood of the mind. While evenness of the flow signifies a spiritual mood, its uneven

nature indicates a contrary mood. According to the advocates of the yoga system of thought, the mood for meditation can be summoned by deliberately making the breath flow evenly. They contend that there is no use trying to convince a perverted mind about the efficacy of the spiritual goal; for the habits of the mind, which are chronically perverted, cannot be changed by reasoning and discrimination. Therefore, an aspirant is required to adopt means which are external to concentrate his mind, such as the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. But such practice of *prāṇāyāma*, when it is not supported by intense dispassion and purity of character, proves to be ineffective and mechanical and, therefore, positively harmful for the aspirant. As Swami Vivekananda has observed, the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, without first being grounded on purity, renunciation, and worshipfulness, can lead to a nervous breakdown and even derangement of the brain. According to the *Yogavāsīṣṭha Sāra*, one of the authoritative scriptures on yoga and Vedānta, of the four methods of evoking the meditative mood—holy company, practice of discrimination, eradication of desires, and *prāṇāyāma*—*prāṇāyāma* is regarded as the most drastic method and its practice can be justified only when all the other three methods have failed.

(xviii) *Japa.* *Japa* is the practice of the repetition of a holy name or a mystic syllable or word, which is chosen by the aspirant or which has been prescribed for him by a competent teacher. Such a word or syllable, when repeated with devotion and for a long time, becomes charged with spiritual consciousness and is a most powerful aid for the evocation of the mood for meditation. Such repetition may be audible, semi-audible, or silent, and an aspirant is instructed to concentrate his mind on the meaning of the word or syllable along with the repetition. The practice of *japa*, when it becomes continuous, takes the form of meditation. The state of meditation is attained

when concentration becomes effortless. Each *japa* or repetition is like the droplet of a new thought-wave which becomes deposited in the depths of mind, and as such thought-waves increase in number, they bubble up to the surface of the mind in the form of spontaneous remembrance, which is itself meditation. The practice of *japa* is therefore not only an aid for the cultivation of the meditative mood, but also a means to prolong such a mood and maintain it all the time.

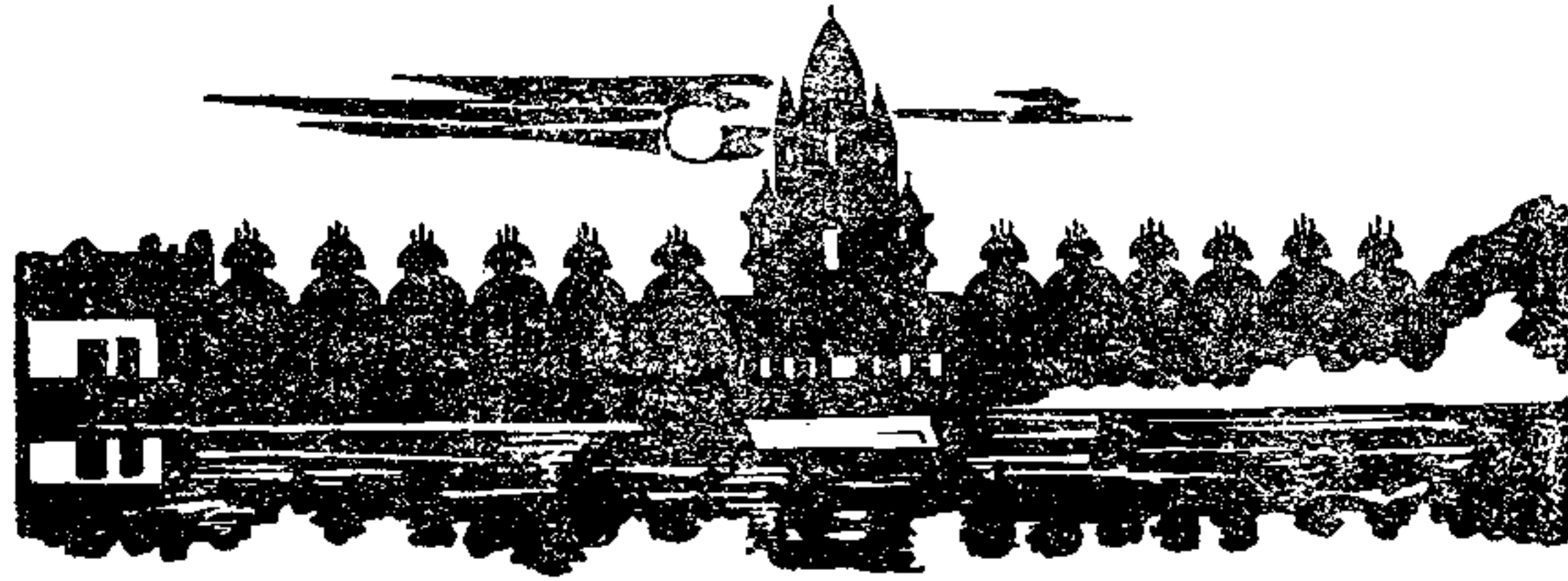
In one of his songs, *Rāmprasād*, the poet-saint of India, describes the spiritual mood as a form of divine inebriation and describes the nature of that inebriation in the following words: 'I drink no ordinary wine, but Wine of Everlasting Bliss, as I

repeat my Mother Kālī's name; it so intoxicates my mind that people take me to be drunk! First my Guru gives molasses for the making of the Wine; my longing is the ferment to transform it. Knowledge, the maker of the Wine, prepares it for me then; and when it is done, my mind imbibes it from the bottle of the *mantra*, taking the Mother's name to make it pure. Drink of this Wine, says Rāmprasād, and the four fruits of life are yours.' Thus an aspirant experiences a genuine spiritual mood only when he has tasted genuine spiritual bliss, which Rāmprasād compares to the Wine of Everlasting Bliss. No one can drink this Wine of Everlasting Bliss unless he has prepared it for himself.

(Concluded)

This meditative state is the highest state of existence. So long as there is desire, no real happiness can come. It is only the contemplative, witness-like study of objects that brings to us real enjoyment and happiness. The animal has its happiness in the senses, the man in his intellect, and the god in spiritual contemplation. It is only to the soul that has attained to this contemplative state that the world really becomes beautiful. To him who desires nothing, and does not mix himself up with them, the manifold changes of nature are one panorama of beauty and sublimity.

— *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
Vol. I, Pp. 186-7.



MAN'S DIALOGICAL NATURE AND THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIONS

DR. JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM

(Continued from the previous issue)

Structure of dialogue

Dialogue is relationship. It is the mutual relatedness of partners open in their concrete existences. It is not mere 'empathy' by which one experiences the other to the exclusion of one's own concreteness. In empathy the actual life situation is extinguished. Dialogue demands distinction and also the maintenance of the identity of each partner. It is not a collective self-seeking either. In selfishness, the 'eros' of monologue, there is no sharing, but only a display or enjoyment of subjective feelings. As Martin Buber says, love without dialogue is Lucifer.¹⁸ In encountering the others it only seeks to exploit them for its own sake.

Dialogue does not take place to provide for a need or to remedy a deficiency. Though it accepts the existence of the partners as they are, including their material limitations and restrictions, it arises from the positive wealth and abundance of the spirit. Its attitude is best exemplified in gift giving, which is the expression of an inter-

subjective giving. The gift is entirely at the disposal of the recipient, yet continues to be that of the giver. The gift I accepted from you is mine precisely because I am yours, and it is ours because we are each others. Hence it is not the giving of *some thing* but the giving of *oneself*.

Similarly, dialogue is not syncretism, which seeks to take the best ideas from every school of thought, lifting them out of their original context to make a composite out of them. The partners in dialogue keep their identity, and the ideas contributed by each one are kept in the perspective of his own thought-structure. But, at the same time, his contributions are at the disposal of his partners, helping them to deepen their own identity and discover the same values hidden away in some corner of their own traditions. Thus it becomes a common search for Truth, that transcends all particular traditions.

Here true dialogue differs from economic transactions, in which there is a certain opposition and mathematical equality between giving and receiving, service and compensation. Debt contracted by receiving is immediately paid off by the giving. But in the intersubjective communication

¹⁸. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. R. C. Smith (London : Kegan Paul, 1947), p. 25.

my acceptance of the others' self-surrender is precisely my own loving surrender to him. I receive the other's self-communication only by giving myself. This is the dominant attitude in dialogue. A mathematical calculation of the ideas proffered and their value for the listener are not the primary considerations. Sincerity and openness of the partners is the important factor. So they are not worried about making a wrong statement or of being misunderstood, since the attitude of openness provides the possibility of being corrected by others and of correcting them without personal offence or loss of face. Hence, a dialogue session is not a supermarket of ideas, a universal giving and receiving. It is basically the expression of men being together as 'I' and 'Thou' in their original togetherness as persons in the same human nature. Exchange of ideas is only one aspect of this togetherness in distinction. The value of dialogue is not, therefore, judged primarily by the importance of the ideas communicated. Human togetherness is fostered by a lot of trivial gestures, like passing salt or sugar at table even though one may easily reach out and take them by oneself, or communicating personally a news that the other may have already received through other sources. These simple gestures serve to confirm one's personal presence to another.

Conditions of dialogue

From this intersubjective structure of dialogue follow a number of consequences that stand for necessary conditions for a successful dialogue between religions today.

(1) Dialogue should start with a sense of the concrete situation in which the partners meet, a recognition of the present historical context and of the historical responsibility of man today. One has to resist the easy temptation of immunizing oneself from the tensions of the actual world. Dialogue

should not start from an urge 'to confront and "contain" the other as part of one's theological existence.' Dialogue is not sought for its own sake as an intellectual *pastime*, but for the sake of man, who has to discover his own identity, weaknesses and strong points, and recover his religious sense in the modern world against the anti-religious forces.

(2) Dialogical attitude demands a certain sense of one's own identity, and firmness in one's own faith. But this does not mean immobility or obstinacy in one's position. A sense of incompleteness in oneself and willingness to be corrected and converted is intrinsic to it. A claim for a monopoly of truth closes the door to real dialogue. This does not mean that one has no confidence in the adequacy of his position. A confidence in the adequacy of one's theological position and soundness of faith at the same time also imply that one cannot fully comprehend or appreciate all their implications and attain the depth of the mystery. A mystery that can be exhausted in conceptual categories is no mystery.

(3) From this it follows that the religious dialogue, and any dialogue for that matter, should not be restricted to the academic or conceptual level. It must, to be adequate, take place on all levels of human experience and social intercourse.

(4) Similarly a dialogue that is carried out within the semantic framework of the terminology peculiar to one religious tradition may defeat its own purpose and end up as one or several monologues. The same reality may be approached from several angles, and the problems framed differently. Restriction to any one framework may obstruct intersubjective communion between persons of different traditions. Only in an atmosphere of respectful tolerance of other opinions and other approaches may one gain an enriching experience of truth itself. Though individuals engage in dialogue, they too are part of institutional

self-interests and actually represent systems of thought that are cultural 'empires'. So, only by consciously breaking defence mechanisms proper to those self-interests and repudiating negativism and aggression may they enter into authentic dialogue.

(5) Another basic fact of dialogue is that each one of the partners may be already in possession of a part-truth of the other's insight or error. Even error is not a total negation. It lives only by reason of the element of truth captivated in it. But the obstacle to true dialogue is that the part-truth from the other is kept within one's own preconceived framework with an implicit rejection of its wholeness as built up by the other. But honest dialogue which accepts and legitimizes the other in his authenticity must take seriously his development of the part-truth. This positive approach to the wholeness of the other will make us 'see faiths-in-relation as the deep test of faith itself.' This contrast of faiths, which may be a paradox or a transcendental unity, will be the arena of the integrity of dialogue.¹⁹

(6) Dialogue should not take one's own authentic identity for granted. The other's presence throws a brilliant beam of light into my own identity, often revealing tensions between my faith and the non-essential cultural milieu. A partisan attachment to a time-space bound cultural framework may affect the authenticity of faith itself. If culture may, on the one hand, strengthen faith, it can, on the other, also particularize and restrict it. Hence, dialogue demands a constant willingness to view one's own existence critically to break open such restrictive barriers. The same evaluative self-analysis is needed to bridge the gap between the abstract and universalist conception of faith and the real,

symbolically charged, and concrete situation of personal encounter in dialogue.

Theological perspectives of dialogue

But this openness to the other in authentic dialogue, accepting and legitimizing his existence, can be exercised only in the presence of the Eternal Thou. The very reason for the dialogue is that one does not have one's fullness in oneself. The basic invitation for dialogue is in the awareness of the 'signs' that continually address us in all that happens. Whenever we look for meaning in things and happenings, they appear as signs and invitations of an Eternal Thou in whom alone one can find totality. Man's individual existence is encased in an armour of selfishness that tends to ward off the 'signs' that come to him from 'the others', since they present a threat to his individuality. Individual's tendency is to dominate the world and to use it as he likes. But by shutting out the signs he is shutting off his orientation to the infinite, his awareness of God who speaks in signs. As Martin Buber says, every man has a tendency to hide like Adam from the face of God: 'To escape responsibility for his life he turns existence into a system of hide-outs' and 'enmeshes himself more and more deeply in perversity.'²⁰ The external conflict between man and man is rooted in this inner conflict that separates man from his eternal source. So true dialogue with men can come only from an inner openness to God.

Buddhist contribution to religious dialogue

Buddhism was the first missionary religion in the world, and so it was also the one to emphasize the importance of religious dialogue. Two basic social virtues preached by Buddhism are *karuṇā* and *maitrī*,

19. Cf. Statement of the Ajaltoun Consultation in 'Between Men of Living Faiths', *Dialogue*, spec. number, 1971.

20. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 14f.

compassion and friendliness. One who has attained final illumination like Gautama Buddha fully realizes the misery of life and of worldly existence and looks upon all things with compassion. But in the midst of this misery, ignorance and bondage he also discovers light and consciousness, at the sight of which he shows friendliness and joy. Only in the light of the final enlightenment do other men and life itself have any meaning.

But the one who formulated the principles of religious dialogue²¹ in the spirit of Buddhism was Aśoka, the emperor. In his rock edicts, he pleads for the peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding of different religions. The point of departure for dialogue according to him is that 'all seek mastery of the senses and purity of mind', though men are 'different in their inclinations and passions' and all cannot 'make lavish gifts', but can only seek virtues of mind and heart. On account of this actual 'unity in diversity King Priyadarśi (Aśoka) honours men of all faiths', and places the emphasis on 'growth in the qualities essential to religion in men of all faiths'. According to him, modesty should persuade religious men not to extol their own faith or disparage the faiths of other people; for by honouring the faiths of others 'one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others.' Only in harmony and concord may one profit by the Dharma presented by the others. So an earnest effort should be made to go beyond one's particular faith and to gain a clear understanding of the doctrines of other faiths. Only in this way, according to Aśoka, can each man's faith be properly promoted and the glorification of Dharma itself attained.

Role of dialogue in religious experience

Aśoka's insistence on religious dialogue brings out the role of dialogue both from the point of view of faith and religious experience and from the consideration of the sociological condition of religious men. Though religion is the experience of the ineffable divine Reality it is still man's experience. No individual's experience is complete without the cumulative experience of others. This was the basic insight of world religions. The *R̥g-Vedic* sage in calling gods and men to the ritual of sacrifice insists on the unity of counsel, mind, thoughts, purpose, resolve and hearts so that the desired fruits of the offering may be achieved.²² Similarly, the greatness of wisdom is not merely in an individual's experience of the Word, even in the heart of the R̥ṣi, but in its sharing in the assembly of true Brahmins who respect their friends and bring them honour and wealth. All do not have the same capacity to understand the Word nor the same function towards it. One may recite the hymns, another may pronounce the sacrificial formulas, a third may propound the niceties of ritual, while a fourth can interpret the deeper metaphysical implications. But all share in the experience of the Word.²³ Though all have to attain the realization of reality in God, it is not granted to all at the same time and in the same manner. The ministry of Gurus, prophets and teachers is needed so that all may arrive at a certain realization of the ultimate reality. In Hinduism realization of the authentic self may be reached only through a long discipleship under a competent Guru, who alone can pronounce the liberating *tat tvam asi*, your authentic Self is that.

In Christianity the central point of religious experience is the Christ event, the

21. N. A. Nikam and R. McKeon, eds., *The Edicts of Asoka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), Rock Edicts, VII and XII, pp. 51-52.

22. *R̥g-Veda*, 10.191.

23. *R̥g-Veda*, 10.71.

historical suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, through which humanity is liberated from sin. But the disciples who were the immediate witnesses of that event had to communicate through their preaching their liberating experience in faith to other communities, and through them to yet others down the centuries in history. Church itself is this community of experience focussed on the Christ event, which points on the one hand to the inner reality of God and on the other to the building up of men into the authentic human family. God Himself is not an impersonal entity, but the dialogal community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In order that men may be constituted into the true people of God they have to accept a relationship of mutual understanding and love modelled upon the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian community. The role and meaning of the Church in the communication of the Gospel of salvation to all men is to function as the true community of Christ's disciples united in the knowledge and wisdom of the Son, and the love of the Holy Spirit.

Today, more than ever, this dialogal structure of religious experience has been paradoxically expressed by Marxism. According to Marx, Feuerbach resolved the religious essence into the human essence, and the human reality into the ensemble of social relations.²⁴ Opposed to dialogue

is alienation and this alienation is basically the biblical idea of sin. According to Marx, man's present existence is marked by alienation, alienation from the object of his labour, alienation of labour from the act of production, and alienation of man from man.²⁵ According to the Bible also, man's sin is his failure to live up to the divine likeness in which he was created, his submitting himself to the slavery of nature rather than dominating it and making it fruitful, his hatred of man, his own brother. According to both Marx and the Bible, this alienation has to be annulled by a collective achievement of dominating nature and overcoming all obstacles to free conscious activity and of creating true brotherhood among all men. But Marx thought that religion was an obstacle to this revolutionary freedom since it offered man a 'pie in the sky when you die', thus rendering him lazy and apathetic in the face of his present slavery.

Theology of the social situation

What makes dialogue more urgently necessary is the theology of the social situation. Every religion is called upon today to carry on within itself 'an inner dialogue, with a view to adjust and readjust itself to the challenges of reality presented by other cultures, religions and ideologies and to the demands of an emerging world society.'²⁶ No religion has come down to us entirely unchanged in the course of history. What each religion is today is the end result of a long process of interaction

only by first becoming aware of his relation to the man Paul as a being of like mind with himself (p. 23).

²⁵. Cf. Lynn de Silva, 'Holy Worldliness', *Dialogue*, new series, 2(1975):1-6.

²⁶. *Religion and Society*, 12(1965), p. 2, editorial on 'Interfaith Dialogue'. The whole number is significant in the analysis of the problem of religious dialogue ten years ago.

²⁴. *Selections in Feuerbach*, p. 224; Martin Buber considers this discovery of the real being of man as the most significant contribution of Feuerbach: 'The individual man for himself does not have man's being in himself, either as a moral being or a thinking being. Man's being is contained only in community, in the unity of man with man—a unity which rests, however, only in the reality of the difference between I and thou.' (*Between Man and Man*, pp. 147-48). Marx says in his *Das Kapital* that man 'first recognizes himself as reflected in other men.' Peter recognizes his relation to himself as man

with other religions and cultures. What was unconsciously happening through centuries in the past, we are called upon today to accomplish consciously and deliberately. Today the religious man is challenged by a fast-developing temporal field, by the inadequacy of outdated modes of social organisation and patterns of thought and expression, and by the phenomenon of religious pluralism and secularism.²⁷ Widespread poverty in the world and the ever-widening gap in the standard of life between the people of the developed countries and of the underdeveloped third world has shifted the emphasis from purely religious issues to the total liberation of man through the modernization of the means of production. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru remarked at the dawn of India's independence, the stage when people could sit discussing what they were is today superseded by a stage that asks what they can do.²⁸ All religious men have to enter into a dialogue with their fellow countrymen in this common search for the total liberation of man.

Even for realizing and communicating the religious message the old and especially imported modes of thought and patterns of expression are found to be inadequate. Theology as communitarian reflexion on faith cannot be borrowed from abroad, but has to grow out of the shared experience of people conscious of their living problems. This calls for an ongoing dialogue among

27. P. D. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue* (Bangalore : CISRS, 1965), pp. 174-78. Devanandan's preoccupation ten years ago was with Christianity's need to enter into dialogue with the resurgent religions of India. Today all religions have come to realize this need for inter-faith dialogue.

28. Speech at the Aligarh Muslim University, 1948. Later in life he realized the need to affirm the value of one's being too. 'Apart from material development that is imperative, I believe that the human mind is hungry for something deeper in terms of moral and spiritual development.' R. K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, p. 35.

believers of different traditions who face the same situation and have to resolve the same living problems of human life.

But above everything else, the phenomenon of religious pluralism calls for dialogal co-operation. Those who live together in a community are necessarily also neighbours in faith, though they have their roots in different traditions, and some of them have been uprooted from a particular religious loyalty on account of their new commitment to certain ways of thought and life. Dialogue alone can establish an understanding among these people living and working together, and this dialogue must reach a certain religious depth if it should bring them together as persons open to each other. Besides, clashes between different religions competing for the allegiance of the same people were the greatest scandals in human history, since religion, as the one factor that can unite the minds and hearts of men, became the source of division and conflict. But today, that stage is apparently past, and there is a general realization that all religions in one way or another belong to an integral plan of salvation for all men. To achieve this common task continuous dialogue and sharing of experience among the followers of different religions is necessary. Even secular and apparently antireligious movements like Marxism concentrate their attention on certain burning problems of humanity, to which no religious man can be indifferent. Hence, in working for the integral liberation of all men there is a need to maintain an ongoing dialogue with such movements also.

God's word and religious dialogue

But the basic objection to religious dialogue is often drawn not from the part of human experience and sociology but from the definitive character of the word of God contained in each religion. In Hinduism, Veda is the definitive Scripture, and who-

ever did not accept its authority were called *nāstikas*, non-believers; even each school of Hinduism was intolerant of any interpretation of the Veda other than the one given by its teachers. For Christianity the revelation of God is definitive and complete in Jesus Christ, who through his sacrifice on the Cross and resurrection from the dead definitively saved the human race from sin and thus became the focalpoint of human history. Islam considers the Koran as the definitive revelation of God given to Mohammed for all humanity. With this definitive and ultimate truth in one's possession why should one go seeking for truth in other religions? But, on the other hand, this affirmation of the definitive divine word for humanity claimed by each religion is the most compelling reason for entering into dialogue with other religious traditions and religious men of other faiths. For, though the Veda, the Bible and the Koran are claimed to be the divine word, all admit that they are presented to us in and through human experience in the limited and dated language of man. All the cultural forms, idioms and modes of understanding of all religions will not enable us to exhaust or even to sound the depths of the ineffable mystery presented in them. Only the concentrated effort of the different religious traditions can make the divine message adequately intelligible in the complex situations of human existence. Indeed, from the Christian point of view, a privileged position is claimed by Jesus Christ, who by his work of redemption became the unique turning point of human history as a whole. But the humanity of Christ was the sacrament of God and the instrument of the divine Logos in achieving this. The same Logos is active in other religions also, so that each religion may play its role in its own way in the total economy of human salvation. Those who accept the presence of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth cannot reject him and his Spirit when they are

active elsewhere in human history. Besides, the acceptance by God of the work of the created and history-bound human nature of Jesus Christ was also at the same time the acceptance in and with him of all that is genuinely human and authentic in human history. Hence, the genuine religious contributions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam, of Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed and others can no longer be termed purely human, but must be taken as integral to the one economy of human salvation.

Conclusion

Thus dialogue is a basic dimension of contemporary human experience as a whole and of theological reflexion in particular. Though the global village of humanity progressively shrinking with the communications explosion and the growing social needs of man crying for total liberation are the two factors that emphasize the urgency of dialogue, in it humanity is discovering a long-forgotten aspect of its existence: Man is not an object, but a conscious subject, not an isolated 'I' but an intersubjective 'We', which can attain self-realization only through dialogue. In dialogue he has to fight the inborn obstacles of boredom, irony, pride and duplicity and consciously open his soul to others and to the eternal Thou of God, who is also the deepest Self. On the religious plane dialogue is not a concession or a luxury. A purely individualistic religious experience only imprisons man in his own self-alienation from the world and others. The definitive saving message of salvation enshrined in and recognized by the different religious traditions point to God's saving word to humanity that can be properly understood only with the total past religious history of humanity in view and with all the help that religions can provide us with towards the understanding of the ineffable mystery of God. The sacrificial death and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ

(Continued on page 186)



THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

[The story of Sri Ramana Maharshi is the story of the conquest of silence over the tumultuous uproar of the passions, cruelty and ignorance of this materialistic world. From Australia to Norway sprawls out the nameless territory of this conquistador of the Spirit. He did not have wealth or even an organization to spread his message, nor did he consciously attempt it. And yet the flame that he lit in silence leapt from heart to heart until it reached the ends of the earth. A contemporary of Sri Aurobindo and Gandhiji, he stood alone, calm and self-possessed, but not aloof, silently radiating the light of peace in a world shattered by the World Wars and political upheavals. The utter simplicity of his life was matched only by the utter simplicity of his teachings, which nevertheless contained the profound doctrines of Vedanta. The hundredth birthday of this great teacher was celebrated with great éclat on the third of January at Tiruvannamalai. To honour his centenary we are publishing below a short account of his inspiring life and, elsewhere, some choice teachings of his.—Ed.]

It is the image of an Upaniṣadic sage stepping out of the primeval forests, or of the great Śuka expounding *Bhāgavatam* that comes to our mind when we think of Ramana Maharshi. For though he lived the normal life of an average Indian in a village near a modern town, he was essentially a true representative of the ancient religious tradition of India. The coexistence of ancient and modern values without contradiction and with such inspiring power in one person was extraordinary. But what made his life unique was the incredible rapidity of his conquest of the summits of spiritual realization without the help of a human Guru. It began with a sudden conversion at the age of seventeen, and in about two years he emerged as a full-fledged sage and saint.

Venkatraman—that was the sage's original name—was born on 30 December 1879 as the second son of middle-class Brahmin parents, Sundararama Aiyar and Alagammal,

in a place called Tiruchuzhi, some thirty miles from Madura. As a boy he had robust health and was interested more in sports than in studies. His father, who was a pleader, died when he was twelve years old, and thereafter he lived with his elder brother in their uncle's home at Madura. There he continued his high school studies in the American Mission High School. It was in the year 1896 when he was in his seventeenth year that a great transformation suddenly came upon him. He himself later on described this momentous event as follows :

'One day I sat up alone on the first floor of my uncle's house... There was nothing wrong with my health. But a sudden, unmistakable fear of death seized me... I felt that I was going to die and at once set about thinking out what I should do... The shock of fear of death made me at once introspective. I said to myself mentally, "Now death is come. What does it

mean? What is it that is dying?...” I at once dramatized the scene of death. I extended my limbs and held them rigid, as though rigor mortis had set in... “Well then,” I said to myself, “this body is dead. It will be carried off to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of the body am ‘I’ dead? Is the body ‘I’? This body is silent and inert. But I feel the full force of my personality and even the sound ‘I’ within myself—apart from the body. So I am the spirit, a thing transcending the body. The material body dies but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am therefore the deathless Spirit.” All this was not a mere intellectual exercise. The whole process flashed before me vividly as living truth, something which I perceived immediately without any argument... I or my self was holding the focus of attention by a powerful fascination from that time onwards... Absorption in the self has continued from that moment right up to this time. Other thoughts may come and go like the various notes of a musician but the ‘I’ continues like the basic *śruti* note which accompanies and blends with all other notes...’

This experience so radically altered his inner life and outlook that he could no longer pay any attention to his studies. He withdrew from the company of his friends and began to spend more time alone, often sitting in a yogic posture. This naturally provoked the taunts of his relatives, and he soon found life intolerable in that worldly environment. So one afternoon he secretly left Madura by train and, after getting down at the wrong place, finally reached his destination—Tiruvannamalai, famous for its colossal temple of Śiva and the sacred hill Arunachala.

Discarding his sacred thread and clothes the boy, whose mind had already been partially engulfed by the experience of the superconscious, settled himself in a small

dark cellar in a part of the big temple. The place was infested with ants, wasps and vermin which caused sores on his legs. The mischievous urchins threw stones and harassed him. But utterly oblivious of all these disturbances, the young ascetic sat there absorbed in the Self. Some kind strangers sometimes fed him, and often they had to thrust food into his mouth by force. The body became covered with dirt, nails grew long and the unkempt hair got matted. After about six months he moved to the foot of a tree and later on to a small shrine. Bereft of outer consciousness most of the time, he could not pay attention to his bodily needs. He remained continually absorbed in Samādhi for nearly two years.

News about the remarkable teenage yogi spread and people began to flock to see him. At this time one young devotee by name Palaniswamy took upon himself the duty of feeding the young sage. After staying in one or two other places they finally moved to the sacred Arunachala hill where they lived in several caves, mainly in a large one called Virupaksha cave. Young Venkataraman now became famous as Ramana Maharshi. As one of his early biographers somewhat facetiously points out, the Maharshi’s biography ends here and the rest is the biography of other people whose lives were changed by his contact.

In the meantime his relatives at home had been searching for him everywhere, and after two years they heard that he was living as a Sadhu in Tiruvannamalai. First his uncle and then his elder brother and mother came and tried in vain to persuade him to return home. As a reply to his mother’s earnest entreaties, he wrote on a piece of paper in Tamill: “The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their past Karma. Whatever is not destined to happen will not happen however hard you try. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to stop it. This is certain. The best course therefore

is to be silent.' The mother went home. But a few years later when her eldest son suddenly died, she came back to Arunachala and began to stay with the Maharshi in the cave. By that time a number of disciples had gathered around the sage. At first they used to go to the town and beg their food. But after the old lady's coming, arrangements for cooking were made in the cave itself, and thus was laid the foundation of a new spiritual community on the hill. The Maharshi looked after his mother with tender care. After her death in 1922 he came down to the foot of the hill and stayed near the place where she had been ceremoniously buried. Very soon an Ashrama grew around him without any effort on his part, where he lived for the remaining twenty-eight years of his life.

Though he never moved out of Tiruvannamalai and never attempted to propagate his message, his name and teachings spread all over India and across the oceans to other lands. When the flower blooms bees come from far and near. In the same way attracted by his great life, spiritual power and the simple practicality and universality of his teachings, a large number of people became his devotees. Their number went on increasing and by the time of his Mahāsamādhi in 1950 his Ashrama had become a world famous spiritual centre. He did not formally initiate anybody. But a number of men and women belonging to different castes, countries and walks of life sought his advice and guidance and accepted him as their Guru. For many he became the sole refuge and chosen Ideal. He occasionally gave oral advice but more eloquently taught by his own example.

His great life was so simple that it would be difficult to simplify human life further in modern times. It was lived in the open, before the gaze of the public. His renunciation of what Sri Ramakrishna called *kāminī-kāñcana* ('lust and wealth') was total and perfect. His daily routine was

uneventful. From early morning till night his time was spent either in assisting in Ashrama work, like dressing vegetables, or answering questions put by devotees or visitors. He wore nothing but a loin cloth and never touched money. He took normal food like all others, and always insisted on sharing with others whatever offerings were brought to him. He showed perfect equality in his treatment of people and maintained perfect equanimity under all circumstances. He did not observe caste in accepting food or disciples, which in those days was a revolutionary step. He bore without a word of protest the troubles created by some jealous local ascetics, and the attack on his person by some robbers. Once, while walking in the forest he inadvertently stepped on a nest of wasps which at once started attacking his leg. He kept his leg there as an act of self-punishment until the fury of the wasps abated.

Though by nature solemn, silent and indrawn, Ramana Maharshi had a tender heart and took keen interest in the welfare of his devotees. His biographers have recorded a number of anecdotes which reveal his deep love and compassion for the poor and the suffering. Once he saw a shepherd girl standing on a high rock weeping. On enquiry he came to know that one of her sheep had fallen into the deep cleft below. He at once went down the precipice and came up with the sheep on his shoulders, which even as a physical feat was something remarkable. Another day there was a festival in a local temple and a good quantity of sweets and other eatables had been sent to the Asrama. When these were about to be distributed, an old woman, evidently very poor and belonging to a lower stratum of society, sauntered in with two *dosais* wrapped uninvitingly in a leaf. The cakes were half-baked and the other devotees tried to persuade Ramana Maharshi not to eat them. But he ate them with great relish, disregarding the sweets and

talking endearingly to the poor old woman who sat near him with tears in her eyes. Nor was his love restricted to human beings. He treated cows and dogs as if they were human beings. Monkeys and squirrels used to accept food from his hands without any fear.

As a teacher the great achievement of Ramana Maharshi was the resuscitation of Jñāna-mārga, the path of knowledge, in modern times. Though Advaita had been the dominant religious philosophy of India for several centuries, its practical technique had never been quite clear or well known. The credit for revitalizing the ancient Upaniṣadic technique of *nididhyāsana* or *vicāra* or self-enquiry as a direct path must go to Ramana Maharshi. He achieved this partly by simplifying it and separating it from scriptural scholarship, but mainly by his own direct experience and example. He made it an important and indispensable spiritual discipline universally valid irrespective of differences in religion and creed.

He did not, however, condemn other spiritual techniques like prayer, *japa*, self-surrender, meditation, yoga, etc., but taught them as aids to the direct method of self-enquiry. He regarded supreme knowledge and supreme devotion as one. His poems (about a dozen in all) are sublime expressions of intense devotion and the mystic love of the soul for the supreme Lord of the universe.

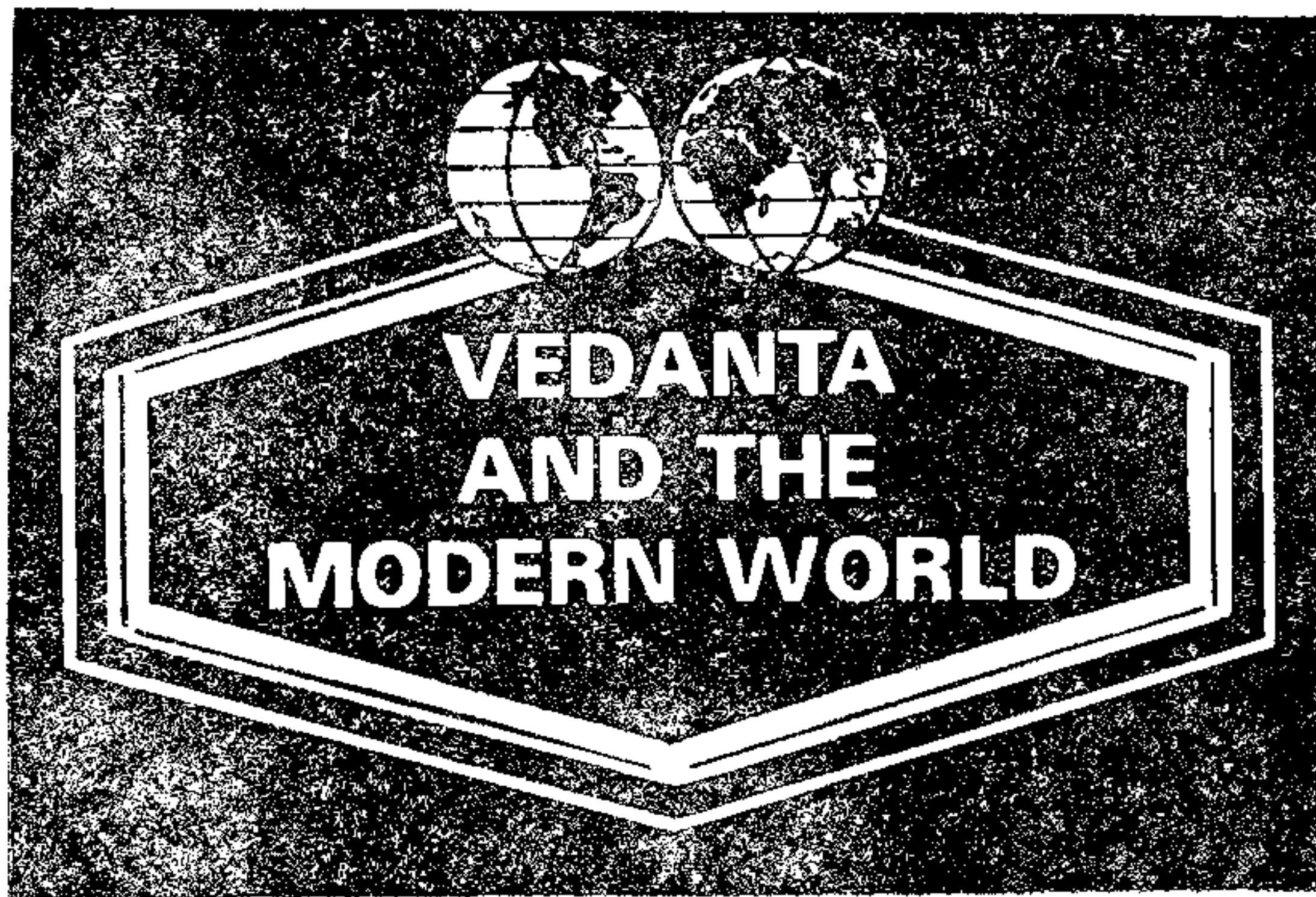
He was not a social reformer, nor did he found a sect or school of thought. And yet he did immense good to humanity in a more enduring way than many of his noted contemporaries. His message is timeless and universal. In a subtle and deep but pervasive way, his life and teachings continue to inspire and guide thousands of sincere spiritual aspirants, and are a significant influence on world thought today. His great life was a symbol of the eternal verities of Vedānta, an authentication of the ancient religious tradition of India and a proof of the undying spiritual vitality of Hinduism.

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is not the exclusive property of any particular group or tradition, but it is the clear and definitive word of God that humanity's religious future is one, that in him all that

is genuinely human and religious is accepted and taken up into the one universal plan of salvation of all men.

(Concluded)



IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE?

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

This fourth method of escape,¹⁰ which consists in avoiding confrontation with painful or threatening situations, may be broadly classified as either social or psychological. In the social aspect, protection from fear and pain due to external and internal dangers may be sought, not only by going into complete seclusion, but also by achieving independence from others as they affect one's internal or external needs.¹¹ Independence from internal needs is achieved by attempting to become emotionally detached from people, so that nothing will hurt or disappoint. 'If I withdraw, nothing can hurt me.'¹² Independence from external needs is achieved either by stock-piling in an irrational quest for possessions for their own sake, or by restricting one's needs to a minimum.

The psychological aspect of this method operates on the supposed principle that, since satisfied instincts and desires lead to happiness, by influencing these impulses one may escape some degree of

suffering. This method of defence seeks to control the internal sources of our needs, and, in extreme forms, it appears as the annihilation of instincts—as practised by the yogi, for example. 'When it succeeds, it is true, it involves giving up all other activities as well (sacrificing the whole of life); and again, by another path, the only happiness it brings is that of peace.'¹³ In such a method of actual or figurative destruction of the world and its relations, the individual escapes the feeling of fear and powerlessness and remains in 'splendid isolation', not crushed by the power of anything outside, because there is no need for comparison.¹⁴

Yet another method of escape is that of authoritarianism.¹⁵ The individual ego fuses itself with somebody outside in order to acquire strength—that is, the feeling of weakness and consequent fear is overcome by reducing the self to zero, by submission to an external or an internalized power. This saves the individual from the pain of doubt, indecision and responsibility for his own fate, and from the troublesome task of finding out the meaning of life or who he is. The finding of satisfaction by submitting

10. The first three methods, which were discussed in the first part of the article, are; the way of narcotizing the individual organism through drugs, the way of rationalizing the fear, and the way of excluding painful situations from awareness by denial of their reality.

11. Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Times*, p. 98.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 32.

14. Erich Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 154-59.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 121ff.

to or losing oneself in something greater, dissolving the self, getting rid of its doubts, conflicts, pains, limitations and isolation, is called by Nietzsche liberation from *principium individuationis*.¹⁶ The aim is to achieve a union of the individual self with another, greater self, in such a way that each loses its separate integrity and becomes dependent on the other. The individual's activity after such a union becomes rooted in the sense of his own powerlessness. He acts in the name of God, the past, nature or duty, but his whole life is rooted in desperation, lack of faith, and leads to nihilism or denial of life.¹⁷

A statement of some modern psychological theories which attempt to explain the phenomenon of escapism in human life is a fitting introduction to a modern assessment of Indian thought, more specially that thought which is comprehended under the name 'Vedanta'. For Oriental scholars, the most sympathetic as well as the most critical, are more or less unanimous in judging Indian thought (almost from its inception after the period of the *Rg-Veda*) to be permeated with the spirit of escapism. The attitude of mind denoted by such a characterization is not normal or healthy. Modern psychology has devoted special attention to this attitude, especially in its more abnormal phases. How far any or all of these psychological theories may be explanatory of the alleged 'escapism' of Indian thought is a matter for individual judgement. The critics, though not psychologists, agree that such a state of mind is a product of a combination of psychological and non-psychological factors and conditions. An examination of the causes adduced by them to explain this phenomenon might profitably be preceded by a statement of the exact

characteristics which go together to produce this character of Indian thought. In the terminology of medical science we might call these elements the 'symptoms' by which the diagnosis of the disease of 'escapism' is made possible.

SYMPTOMS OF ESCAPISM

Pessimism

According to the critics, pessimism is one such striking symptom pervading the whole of Indian thought. Optimism may be understood as the state of mind in which a man refuses to find any evil in life in spite of obvious hardships and difficulties—that is, the attitude implied in the statement that this is 'the best of all possible worlds'. Those men may be called 'natural optimists' who are born with a sense of immediate happiness in life, while philosophical optimists are those who arrive at the reasoned conclusion that the state of things in the world is, in the final analysis, good; and evil is either excluded from the world or ignored by them.¹⁸ As opposed to this, pessimism is the overwhelming consciousness of life's evil. It, too, may be natural, as when a man has a congenitally gloomy and morbid view of life, or philosophical, in which case it is the speculative conclusion that evil is the essential nature of things, in spite of the apparent presence of good things in life. Each mental state has a valuation of the world peculiar to it. The optimistic outlook attributes decided worth to the world and human life and represents it as good, beautiful, pleasant, while the pessimistic outlook denies any true value to life and represents it as unworthy, unsatisfactory and deplorable.¹⁹

Western scholars hold that Indian phil-

¹⁶. Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Times*, p. 270.

¹⁷. Erich Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, pp. 154-59.

¹⁸. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁹. James Sully, *Pessimism*, p. 5.

osophy and religion originated in a pessimism based on belief in the evanescence and sorrowfulness of the world.²⁰ The original Aryan faith was joyous and active, the mood of the *R̥g-Veda* being marked by a natural, sunny optimism. But that joy of life was changed into its logical opposite, and in the Upaniṣads the mood of sombre despair and weariness of life prevailed. Nothing but sorrow is found in this life, and no good can relieve its gloom. This, according to critics, is not the 'divine discontent' which rejects some false or seeming good in order to bring into the focus of attention some higher, genuine good, but the purely pessimistic view which sees nothing but the evil of life, and, hence, rejects it. The excessive gravity of their problem—namely, the everlasting sorrow and bondage of human life—influenced the profound spiritual questionings of the Upaniṣadic thinkers, demoralizing them and affecting their solution to the problem.²¹ Unlike Greece, philosophy in India originated not in 'curiosity' but under pressure of this actual and pressing need of relief from suffering, so it was not 'love of truth' but the remedy of a disease, merely a means to an end. Fear of repeated birth and the consequent suffering which ends in death (*jarāmaraṇa*) runs through the whole of Indian philosophy; and thus 'philosophy is meant to be preparation for a happy death or euthanasia.'²² It is admitted that the earlier Upaniṣads show only a moderate pessimism—a mild expression of the unsatisfactoriness of the finite as compared to the infinite—and not absolute empirical despair of the world;²³ yet the tendency is sufficiently marked even there, and it later

deepened to influence the Vedanta through the whole course of its development towards extreme pessimism.²⁴

Denial of life

Inevitably connected with this gloomy view of life is the element of life and world-negation, because pessimism carries the implicit belief that the world is operating abnormally, almost an atheistic conviction that the world is irrational or unreal. World- and life-affirmation consist in the view that life—experienced within oneself and developed outside oneself—is of value in itself, and a consequent striving to let it reach perfection in oneself whilst, within one's own external sphere of influence, trying to preserve and further it.²⁵ An attitude of world- and life-negation regards existence as something meaningless and sorrowful; accordingly, the pessimist resolves to bring life to a standstill by mortifying his will to live and renouncing all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in this world. The most profound affirmation is difficult to sustain with a vision of things unbiased by illusion; on the other hand, negation is sometimes developed in theory despite a naturally serene disposition and happy circumstances.²⁶

As the Aryan mind turned from the outer world, in the *R̥g-Veda*, to the inner mystery of the self, in the Upaniṣads, the anthropomorphic nature of the gods dwindled in importance; there occurred a disvaluation of ritualistic theology and also of the visible world of nature connected with it.²⁷ This tendency was to appear in later Vedanta either as the denial of the reality of the

20. Cf. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, part I, p. 45.

21. W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 26.

22. Max Müller, *Vedanta Philosophy*, p. 12.

23. A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of Veda and Upaniṣads*, part I, pp. 521 and 581.

24. Cf. Archibald Edward Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 29.

25. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, pp. 1 and 3.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Heinrich Zimmer, *The Philosophies of India*, p. 356.

subjective and objective world (nondualism) or, if the world-reality was affirmed (theism), then as the denial of the world's value, because it was not viewed teleologically as moving towards the goal of perfection. The Upaniṣads and later Vedānta philosophy—Advaita and Vaiṣṇava—had as a definite aim to escape sorrow, and not to overcome it; Mokṣa was a deliverance from the bondage of the painful, fleeting, finite experience, a refuge from life's problems, not a bettering of things. Though it is admitted by the critic that the spirit of world-denial was mitigated by various factors—such as the very necessity of living, the practice of the priestly calling, propagation of the race, discharge of social debts, demands made by the cult of the manes²⁸—yet he insists that attention shifted from this world, which had nothing to attract man, to another world. Yearning after eternity made India a stranger to this world,²⁹ for eternity is attained only by renouncing and quitting this world of death. This is the basis of the characterization of the Indian mind, by unsympathetic critics, as dreamy, hopeless, unpractical,³⁰ completely untouched by the world and, by sympathetic critics, as spiritually otherworldly.³¹

Asceticism

Denial of life is exemplified chiefly by the exaltation of asceticism in Indian thought. All possible ascetic methods were practised with great thoroughness and were developed into a theoretical and practical technique of yoga. The asceticism of the *Rg-Veda*, practised even by the gods

(‘Puruṣa Sūkta’), was productive of magical potency (*tapas*) or it was a form of productive labour, akin to the intellectual, which was considered the necessary preliminary knowledge. The hymns mention yogis who were lifted into ecstasy by drinking *soma* juice, by mortification of the flesh and self-hypnosis. Later, the spiritual element came to the forefront, and all the four *āśramas* were ascetically regulated. As asceticism was primarily the method of producing extraordinary spiritual states in which alone salvation could be achieved,³² it comprised conduct transcending *varṇa-dharma* (caste-duty) and meant flight from the world into contemplation and ecstatic states.

Western critics judge the results of yoga conscientiously practised to be nothing but folly and idiocy.³³ The aspiration to attain states very much akin to annihilation was the sign of a people unhappy and tired of life because of its unremitting cruelty. The speculative daring of the Indian mind, its belief in the power of the mind to subdue matter, further emphasized the sense of suffering and weariness.³⁴ In turn, asceticism was bound to have a further depressing effect because no middle point was found between the mental excitement of ecstasy and the torpid indifference when outside it, and all products of the Indian mind show this stamp of monotony, compounded of satiety and ungratified zeal.

Spiritual and ethical development has two aspects—negative effort and positive effort. The value of exercise and discipline was well understood in India, and it constituted the negative element in spirituality. But Indian spirituality demanded excessive mortification of the flesh, exercises in self-

28. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p. 40.

29. Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 9.

30. G. W. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, p. 16.

31. Max Müller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 9.

32. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.9.3; *Kena Upaniṣad*, 33; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2.23.

33. Cf. Henri Bergson, *Religion and Morality*, p. 212; also T. H. and Julian Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 71.

34. Cf. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 65.

submergence, annihilation of the senses through mental effort, silence, fasting, self-torture, even to the point of cutting off all desires. All this was meant to overcome the distractions and temptations of life, but no commensurate effort was made to develop positive qualities or to find expressions for individual and social activities. But asceticism is meaningless except as a step towards moral affirmation.³⁵ Vedantic asceticism was purely individualistic, consisting of personal discipline only, without reference to the social motive or the social order, opposed to all mundane ends since these led only to advantage in the present and future life but not to the highest goal.

Critics declare that among the many religious motives of ascetic practices—such as desire to propitiate the unseen in times of trouble, the wish to work out salvation by conquering the flesh, the desire to prepare for union with the Divine by purification, or despair arising from disillusionment and defeat in the battle of life³⁶—the last is the motive of Vedantic asceticism. The element of asceticism and world-surrender involved in the idea of *sannyāsa*—imposed as it was on the whole of Indian society, and involving labour, fatigue, pain—is interpreted by critics as implicit proof of a pessimistic outlook on life. The conclusion is that Vedanta texts virtually became the evangel of world-weariness, and this is the unheroic side of asceticism.

Quietism

The emphasis on gnosis and ascetic ecstasy was not conducive to the development of an adequate, rational methodology for conduct in the world. Since both denied the ephemeral and meaningless appetites and activities of everyday life, they were

bound to give rise to an attitude of mind both passive and other-worldly. The truly religious man led a 'workless' life of mendicancy for, in highest meditation, his consciousness had to be emptied of all consciousness of relations and cares of life. For the common man also there was no way of deriving a philosophy of conduct for his everyday life from the goal set before him; rather, his conduct was regulated by traditional and ritualistic rules of caste.

Quietism was, according to the critics, the outcome of the highest religion and philosophy in India,³⁷ since the desire was to attain the goal of rest from the rounds of rebirth in a state of profound and death-like trance in which all powers of the mind, emotion and will ceased to operate. Asceticism and knowledge were here not the means to the end of subduing the lower powers for a higher good, but the very cessation of life, the withering of all powers, talents and actions, and finally, of character itself.³⁸

Psychologically, the amount of active impulse affects the attitude towards life. The full flow of vigorous activity gives rise to a hopeful view, whereas inactivity, disinclination to movement, if combined with a naturally depressed temperament, gives

(a) expression of organic hardihood, disgusted with too much ease; (b) temperance in food, clothing, chastity, non-pampering of the body, which is fruit of the love of purity shocked by what savours of the sensual; (c) fruit of love, i.e. sacrifice to the Deity; (d) ascetic mortification due to pessimistic feelings about self and theological beliefs concerning expiation, escape from suffering by penance; (e) psychopathic mortification carried to irrational lengths to get interior consciousness feeling right again; (f) perversity of bodily sensibility, i.e. pain-giving stimuli are actually felt as pleasure.

37. Cf. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism* part I, p. 44.

38. Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *World as Idea and Will*, pp. 490, 494, 500.

35. Cf. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 44.

36. Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 291. Asceticism has many motives:

rise to the view that life is unalterably bad and beyond redemption. So men drift into pessimism due to weariness and distaste for exertion. Hence, Vedanta philosophy was a rationalization of the lack of energy and exertion which resulted from intense heat, which made peace seem the greatest bliss and meditation the highest duty. Death, disease, famine and pestilence brought tragedy, so man's effort to better his lot consisted in providing the fewest possible hostages to life—that is, he desired to divest himself of all possessions, to put a halt to all activities. An opposite explanation of 'quietism' is that the kindness of nature in India and simplicity of life in which needs were fulfilled in small social organizations, were bound to develop the inactive and non-combative, the reflective and non-social side of human nature.³⁹

It will be noted that the charge of quietism is brought from two angles. The practical discipline or the means employed by

Vedanta were such as to prevent the operation of active manly virtues.⁴⁰ Secondly, after the attainment of the goal, no work was left for man to do. Since he had conquered karma, his soul became perfectly quiescent; every action would derogate from the state of rest and involve him further in the world of suffering. At best, forms of conduct were prescribed for helping the soul to attain deliverance, but stilling of karma—that is, quietism through renunciation and surrender of will—was the goal of both monistic and theistic forms of Vedanta. The purgative or ascetic value of work was admitted but not the meritorious; there were no 'fruits of work'. The striving was for inactive action, passionless life, so that all work as such was regarded as useless and futile. In the absence of a gospel of work, of love and mercy, compassion and charity, there was bound to be a further deepening of the depressing effect.

(To be continued)

39. Cf. F. M. Müller, *India, What Can It Teach Us?* p. 1.

40. Cf. F. M. Müller, *Collected Works*, p. 192.

Hints to Seekers of God

SELF-ENQUIRY*

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Question : How is one to think of the Self?

Maharshi : The Self is self-luminous without darkness and light, and is the

reality which is self-manifest. Therefore, one should not think of it as this or that. The very thought of thinking will end in bondage. The purport of meditation on the Self is to make the mind take the form of the Self. In the middle of the heart-cave the pure Brahman is directly manifest as the Self in the form 'I ... I ... I.'

* The teachings given below have been compiled from *Talks with Ramana Maharshi, Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi* and other books published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 606 603, and are published here by permission.

* * *

Question : What exactly is this Self of which you speak? If what you say is true, there must be another self in man.

Maharshi : Can a man be possessed of two identities, two selves? To understand this matter it is first necessary for a man to analyse himself. Because it has long been his habit to think as others think, he has never faced his 'I' in the true manner. He has not a correct picture of himself, he has too long identified himself with the body and the brain. Therefore I tell you to pursue this enquiry 'who am I?'

You ask me to describe this true Self to you. What can be said? It is That out of which the sense of the personal 'I' arises and into which it will have to disappear.

Q : Disappear? How can one lose one's sense of personality?

M : The first and foremost of all thoughts, the primeval thought in the mind of every man, is the 'I' thought. It is only after the birth of this thought that any other thought can rise at all. It is only after the first personal pronoun 'I' has arisen in the mind that the second personal pronoun 'you' can make its appearance. If you could mentally follow the 'I' thread until it led you back to its source, you would discover that just as it is the first thought to appear, so it is the last to disappear. This is a matter which can be experienced.

Q : You mean that it is possible to conduct such a mental investigation into oneself?

M : Certainly. It is possible to go inwards until the last thought, 'I', gradually vanishes.

Q : What is then left? Will a man then become quite unconscious or will he become an idiot?

M : No. On the contrary, he will attain that consciousness which is immortal, and he will become truly wise when he has awakened to his true Self, which is the real nature of man.

Q : But sure the sense of 'I' must also pertain to that?

M : The sense of 'I' pertains to the person, the body and brain. When a man knows his true Self for the first time something else arises from the depths of his being and takes possession of him. That something is behind the mind; it is infinite, eternal, divine... When this happens, a man has not really lost himself; rather, he has found himself.

Unless and until a man embarks on this quest of the true Self, doubt and uncertainty will follow his footsteps through life. The greatest kings and statesmen try to rule others when in their heart of hearts they know that they cannot rule themselves... What is the use of knowing about everything else when you do not yet know who you are? People avoid this enquiry into the true Self, but what else is there so worthy to be undertaken?

* * *

Q : Does the enquiry 'who am I?' lead to any spot in the body?

M : Evidently, self-consciousness is in relation to the individual himself and therefore has to be experienced in his being, with a centre in the body as the centre of experience. It resembles the dynamo of a machine which gives rise to all sorts of electrical works. Not only it maintains the life of the body and the activities of all its parts and organs, conscious and unconscious, but also the relation between the physical and the subtle planes, on which the individual functions. Also, like the dynamo, it vibrates and can be felt by the calm mind that pays attention to it. It is known to the yogis by the name *sphurana* which in Samādhi scintillates with consciousness.

Q : How to reach that centre where what you call the ultimate Consciousness—the 'I . . . I . . . I'—arises? Is it by simply thinking 'who am I?'

M : Yes, it will take you up. You must do it with a calm mind—mental calmness is essential.

Q : Is the 'I ... I ... I' consciousness Self-realization?

M : It is a prelude to it.

* * *

That which arises in the physical body as 'I' is the mind. If one enquires whence this I-ness first arises, it will be found that it is the Heart or *hṛdayam*.

* * *

Restraint of the outgoing mind and its absorption in the Heart is known as *antar-mukha-dṛṣṭi* or inwardness. When the mind becomes absorbed in the Heart, the 'I' or ego vanishes; and pure Consciousness or Self which subsists during all the states of the mind alone remains resplendent. This state where there is not the slightest trace of the 'I'-thought is one's true *svarūpa*.

* * *

Q : What is meant by saying that Atman is Light?

M : The Atman is not a light like the Petromax light. It is called light because everything else becomes known through it.

* * *

Q : Even though I have listened to the explanation of the characteristics of enquiry in such great detail, my mind has not gained even a little peace. What is the reason for this?

M : The reason is absence of strength or one-pointedness of mind.

Q : What is the reason for the absence of mental strength?

M : The means that make one qualified for Self-enquiry are meditation, yoga etc.

One should gain proficiency in these through graded practice, and thus secure a stream of mental modes that is natural and helpful.

* * *

Divine grace is essential for realization. It leads one to God-realization. But such grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true devotee or yogin who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path toward freedom.

* * *

Q : What is self-surrender?

M : It is the same as self-control. Control of mind is effected by the removal of *saṁskāras* which imply the functioning of the ego. The ego submits only when it recognizes the Higher Power. Such recognition, which is surrender, is self-control.

... A passenger in a train keeps his load on the head by his own folly. Let him put it down, he will find that the load reaches the destination all the same. Similarly let us not pose as the doers, but resign ourselves to the guiding Power.

... Surrender itself is a mighty prayer.

* * *

Q : Then you mean that the Self is God?

M : You see the difficulty. Self-enquiry ('who am I?') is a different technique from the meditation : 'I am Śiva' or 'I am He'. I rather emphasize self-knowledge, for you are first concerned with yourself before you proceed to know the world or its Lord. ... The moment you get into the quest for the self and begin to go deeper, the real Self is waiting there to receive you, and then whatever is to be done will be done by *something else* and you, as an individual, have no hand in it.

* * *

Your idea of will-power is success insured. Will-power should be understood to be the strength of mind to meet success and failure with equanimity. It is not synonymous with success. Success often develops arrogance and one's spiritual progress gets arrested. Failure, on the other hand, may be beneficial if it opens the eyes of the person to his limitations and prepares him to surrender himself. Self-surrender is synonymous with eternal happiness. Therefore one should try to gain equipoise of mind under all circumstances. That is will-power. Again, success and failure are the result of *prārabdha* and not of will-Power.

* * *

Renunciation is always in the mind, not in going to forests or solitary places, or giving up one's duties. The main thing is to see that the mind turns, not outward, but inward. It does not really rest with man whether he is to go to this place or that or whether to give up his domestic duties or not. All that happens according to one's destiny. All the experiences that the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject them. The only freedom you have is to turn your mind inward and renounce activities there.

OUR EDUCATION AND REARMAMENT IN FAITH

PROF SANTOSH KUMAR CHATTERJEE

The Kothari Commission has done a very good job in making a wide and comprehensive survey of our entire education system, which admittedly needs change and vital readjustments. We have to move with the times, and an unthinking adherence to the past cannot but retard our progress. In fact, it would certainly spell disaster for the nation. The Commission has rightly pointed out that our education has to be science-technology based, but in coherence with India's cultural, and spiritual traditions.

Balance has to be struck between the claims of science and those of our spiritual heritage. Advance in science and technology should always be accompanied with a recognition and appreciation of the great claims of our broadbased religion and humanism. Science has to work for a new science of living where love replaces hatred and self-seeking greed. The joy of life would be more in 'giving' than in 'taking'.

Education is futile if it cannot foster in our youths a sense of social consciousness and inspire them with a spirit of service to their fellowmen.

Swami Vivekananda's dynamic social mission should be a source of abiding inspiration to us all. Our tomorrow's education can ill afford to forget the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads, which look upon man not as a mere body-mind complex but also as an embodiment of the Spirit Divine. The very first *śloka* of *Isopaniṣad* is the bedrock of India's spiritual tradition.

Vedanta is a universal religion which teaches that man's real nature is divine. The unfoldment of this divinity is the aim of man's life. This Vedanta is a bond of universal love because it recognizes the same Divinity and oneness in all beings. Vedanta awakens love and compassion, and inculcation of the truth of Vedanta has to be an essential constituent of our education.

Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Auro-

bindo have all been our great educators and they have left us their great legacy, their great ideals in education which are our noblest heritage. Their ideals are not unrealities. Each of them set forth his best endeavour to give a body and a shape to the idea that was nearest to his heart. Belur, Santiniketan and Pondicherry do yet stand as emblems of our cultural and spiritual traditions and reverberate with imperishable ideas that can perhaps work for man's regeneration. They all accepted the Divinity in man. Man is a particle of the Divine, and in man lie immense potentialities which have to be awakened. Seeds of greatness are already there. The dormant spirit has to be aroused, the veil has to be lifted and the shell has to be broken. This was the central teaching of Swami Vivekananda. In his famous Calcutta address, Swamiji said :

That Atman which nothing can destroy, in It is infinite power only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy. Whether dualistic, qualified monistic or monistic, they all firmly believe that everything is in the soul itself. Therefore, this Śraddhā is what I want, and what all of us here want, this faith in ourselves, and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. *Be strong and have this Śraddhā, and everything else is bound to follow.**

We must not forget and fight shy of telling our children that they are potentially divine and that they come, 'trailing clouds of glory ... from God who is our home.' They are children of light, they come from heaven and they can make a heaven of this our earth, if in their budding and formative years of life they can be rightly moulded and nursed into a faith that strengthens and

* *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. III, p. 320.

purity that ennobles. They have to be told and retold that the Kingdom of God is within them. Vivekananda spoke of three P's : Purity, Patience and Perseverance.

This is Vedanta in practice, this is Advaitism in its essence, and this is the eternal truth that underlies all creeds and forms, which are but the externals of religion. This is the fundamental of all religions, which can strive to unite mankind and lead to the attainment of the ideal of Universal Brotherhood. Love of God as the Supreme Spirit manifesting Himself in His endless creations, a ceaseless striving towards a direct communion with the Divine, a never-ending effort to experience in this very life our unity with this eternal Spirit and to feel our link with the entire created world—these in brief form the basis of the universal religion which is to reshape today's and tomorrow's man.

A bewildering confusion has surrounded us today and an enveloping gloom seems to be all around. We have passed and are still passing through various political and economic vicissitudes. All the same, if we are still alive and if we still hope to survive, it is due to the strength of the spirit which has come down to us through the centuries.

In our hours of depression in the sphere of religion, in our moments of confusion amidst changing values or shrinkage of moral standards in life and conduct, we have to call back to our mind the teachings of our sages who exhorted us to hold to our spiritual moorings which are nothing but the fundamentals of our religion embedded in the teachings of the Vedanta. The *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads are not merely to be read. They have to be lived and practised.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has very tersely given us what he considers to be the essentials of religion. He says, '... direct communion with the divine, incapacity of the human mind to fathom the depths of the divine, an attitude of compassion which is an expression of inward grace—all these three

things constitute the essentials of religion. All others are mere appurtenances. It is these aspects that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda emphasized. It is time that we realized them not merely in theory but in practice.'

Mr. U. Thant, formerly United Nations Secretary-General, once in speaking to an audience of diplomats, journalists and political leaders, significantly said, 'There is no peace in the world because there is no peace in the minds of men.' He said that the technological progress of the Western world which has been working miracles must be admired, but that the Eastern appreciation of such qualities as love and the spirit of give and take also deserve recognition and appreciation by the rest of the world.

U Thant has reminded us of Vivekananda's message to the world, which in brief was that science coupled with Vedanta is to be the future religion of humanity. Science has to work for man's peace, concord and harmony. Universal love, peace and brotherhood are the precious gifts coming from a realization in life of the great Vedantic truths.

A right understanding of this Vedantic truth leads man to self-realization. In his striving towards this realization man discovers a new relationship with his fellow-men and he has a new sense of moral values and social obligations. This Vedantic outlook on life is a step towards the broadening of the mind, an expansion of the heart and gateway to tolerance. Vedanta is certainly a religion of love and tolerance. It

is a fountainhead of hope, strength and energy. There is nothing sectarian in it and it is far above all creeds, forms and rituals.

This conception of Vedantic religion in its broadest sense can never be inconsistent with the principles of our accepted secularism. Our secularism should never present any difficulty in the way of basing our education on this universal religion of love and tolerance.

Vivekananda emphasized the importance of manmaking education, by which he meant a system of education which infuses strength, self-reliance, courage and faith in the young people. The architects of our present-day education should seriously reflect today on how best they can rehabilitate our education in the midst of so much confused thinking. In the midst of today's disintegrated life, shrinkage of moral standards and spiritual bankruptcy, Dr. Radhakrishnan was one of the few who ceaselessly tried to renew our faith in the teachings of our great religious teachers.

Our educators and teachers in all levels would do well to listen to the exhortations of great men like Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan and guide our youth to find higher fulfilment. We have to harness all our energy and efforts for a rearmament in faith, Śraddhā, which alone can save our youths from ruinous frustration and appalling wastage. Youths reclaimed and reshaped, armoured in faith, faith in themselves and their fellow-beings, can be our precious assets for the building up of a better India and a better world.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GANDHARA AND ITS ART TRADITION:

BY AJIT GHOSH. Published by Mahua Publishing Company, 20A, Gour Laha Street, Calcutta-700 006. 1978. Pp. vi+47. Rs. 32/-.

In India, art has always been closely associated with religion. *Aitareya Brahmana* says that arts are the instruments for the refinement of spirit, *atmasamskrtir vava silpani*. Among the great trends in Indian art, Buddhist art is perhaps the most enthralling. The first sculptural representations of the Buddha belong to the Gandhara school and date from about the first century A.D.

Presented in a lucid and absorbing style, the book under review contains a wealth of information regarding the glorious art of Gandhara, its varying images and motifs. The book is divided into four chapters. In the first, the author presents a moving account of the archaeological explorations undertaken by different scholars of the East and the West at various times. The second chapter deals with the historical background of Gandhara, bringing into clear focus the references to it and descriptions of it found in the epics and classical literature of ancient India. The third chapter describes the surviving specimens of Gandhara art and their importance. In the last chapter the author has broached the much debated topic of the Hellenic appearance of Gandhara art. Many historians and antiquaries are of the opinion that Gandhara art shows Graeco-Roman influence. But the present writer challenges this prevalent idea. He argues, 'These sculptures . . . bear no similarity to Greek style and ideals—they are more akin to Indian standard and ideals.' It may be mentioned here that in 1900 at the Congress of the History of Religions held in Paris, Swami Vivekananda declared long before Havell and Coomaraswamy that the then accepted theory of Greek influence on Indian art was a myth.

The Bibliography and black-and-white plates enhance the value of the book. The get-up and printing are excellent. The book will certainly be appreciated by all who love beauty and art.

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BENGALI

BHARATIYA DHARMER ITIHAS : BY DR. NARENDRANATH BHATTACHARYA. Published by General Printers and Publishers, 119 Lenin Sarani, Calcutta-700 013. B.S. 1384. Pp. 460. Rs. 35/-.

The author of this Bengali book is a renowned professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture at the Calcutta University. In twelve chapters he deals with all the religious movements of India, starting from the Pre-Vedic Age up to the nineteenth century, evaluating their social importance. Detailed information is given about various religious sects and saints who influenced people in different parts of India. He has also described the non-Vedic religions that secured a foothold in India and developed side by side with the religion of the Hindus, resulting in the co-existence of Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism on Indian soil.

But what will disappoint the readers in general is the fact that the writer has tried to minimise the value of the Upanishads, which deal with transcendental truths. By not giving recognition to the vast importance of such truths the writer has largely ignored the thoughts of the most recognized teachers of religion, namely, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya and others, whose interpretations of the Upanishads are the life-lines of Indian religion. He has also ignored the tremendous influence of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a book widely circulated through translations into the regional languages of India for ages, and appreciated in other countries for centuries. Finally, it is unimaginable how an Indian religious history could be considered complete without giving a short life and description of the contributions of the great Acharya Shankara. Concerning the treatment of the history of ancient India a scholar has rightly said: 'Ignorance may not be bliss in historical studies, but it is certainly folly to be wise where wisdom is based on imperfect knowledge and serves merely as a cloak for dogmatism.'

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA LUCKNOW

REPORT FOR APRIL 1977 TO MARCH 1978

Religious and Cultural : On April 17, 1977, a colossal bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled in the main hall of the Vivekananda Polyclinic by Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President-General of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. In connection with the unveiling, Puja and Havan were performed and Prasad was distributed; in the evening a large public meeting was held, presided over by Dr. Karan Singh, former Health Minister, Government of India.

Daily Puja and Aratrika were held in the Ashrama shrine; Ram-nam and Shyam-nam Sankirtans were held on Ekadashi and on Amavasya and Purnamasi. Discourses on the *Gita*, held by the Swami-in-charge every Sunday, were well attended. On the birth-anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, special Puja was performed, Prasad was distributed and the poor were fed. Durga Puja was performed in the image as in previous years, and other special religious festivals were fittingly observed.

Educational : The Sevashrama conducts a public library and a free reading room. Besides the general section, the text-book and children's sections continued to provide needed and much-appreciated services. By the end of the year the library had 14,959 books; and the number of books issued was 19,511. The reading room received 11 dailies and 79 periodicals.

Scholarships and other help given to deserving students amounted to Rs. 5,532, in addition to Rs. 5,666 granted for various purposes to other needy persons.

Medical : In a developing country like India, with its limited resources and teeming population, it is hardly feasible to provide adequate indoor hospital beds for medical treatment. The Vivekananda Polyclinic was conceived with this in mind; and since it opened in 1970 it has given

a new lead in placing emphasis on domiciliary treatment in the out-patient departments, a system more suited to the Indian economy. The out-patient departments remain open for eight hours on all working days, providing full facilities for radiological, pathological and other tests; treatment by specialists is also available for out-patients, and even detailed medical records are maintained for them. This system has reduced the pressure on indoor beds, of which there are 100 for those who really need hospitalization.

Private practice by medical and other personnel of the Polyclinic is strictly prohibited. Medicines are supplied to the patients at minimal rates, and the charges for pathological, X-ray and other examinations are similarly low. Free treatment is given, after necessary screening, to those who have no paying capacity; and those who do pay, do so at subsidized rates. Well-to-do indoor patients who desire private wards are required to pay somewhat higher charges for accommodation and treatment.

The following sections were functioning in the Polyclinic during the year: Tuberculosis Chest Diseases; Non-tubercular Chest Diseases; General Medicine, including Gastro-intestinal Diseases; Paediatrics; General Surgery; Ear-Nose-Throat; Orthopaedics; Pathology, including Biochemistry; Radiology; Physical Medicine, including Physiotherapy and Medical Gymnastics; Gynaecology; Maternity; Dentistry, including Dental Prosthesis; Ophthalmology; Homoeopathy; Leprosy; Social Welfare and Patient Guide; Medical Records; Blood Transfusion; Ayurvedic.

The year 1977-78 was a year of growth for the Polyclinic, the total number of out-patient cases was 7,37,879, compared to 6,48,071 in the previous year. The number of admissions in the Indoor department was 3,108, an increase of 26.8% over the previous year.

The beneficent public is kindly requested to help the Sevashrama continue its multifarious services by sending generous contributions to: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vivekananda Puri, Lucknow 226-007.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

India in World Affairs

Ever since India attained independence, this country has been trying to find its rightful place in the comity of nations. In spite of its economic backwardness, the non-violent way by which it won freedom and its bold acceptance of a democratic way of government, which made it the largest democracy in the world, attracted the attention of the world community and compelled its admiration. It is well known that for a large number of Afro-Asian countries Indian independence was a source of inspiration. The political leaders of new India showed active interest in world affairs and raised their voice against acts of international injustice. With the verbal defence of Egypt against Anglo-French aggression, India shot into prominence and became a leader of Third World countries.

On the whole, during the first decade after Independence, India's international interests were heavily weighted in the regions of the Middle East and the West. Though this earned for it the good will of Arab and African countries, India neglected its base in Asia. Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and even Japan, had had strong cultural ties with this country from ancient times. And to this day these are the only countries where the image of India is respected. The Indian leaders' failure to capitalize on this advantage by strengthening the country's ties with these nations and consolidate her position in Asia was indeed a grave mistake.

The early phase, often called the '*bhai bhai* era', came to an abrupt end with the perfidious aggression of two neighbouring countries upon her territory. These wars clearly showed that India had very few friends and had an isolated position among the nations of the world. The inability of the leaders to unite the people under a common ideology, the failure of Five-Year Plans, natural calamities, increased defence needs, and food shortages made the next decade the darkest period in her post-Independence history. Paradoxically enough, this was the period when Indian religions, philosophies and culture penetrated deep into Western society, partly owing to the great social change that swept through Western society, especially American society, during the sixties.

With the Green Revolution and industrial boom India rose again during the third decade, and has now become a power to reckon with. The recent events in Afghanistan have, however, created a new geo-political situation of grave consequence and have altered her role in international politics. She has to play her part with great caution, wisdom and dexterity. She can ill afford to forget the lessons of the recent past, and has no option but to strengthen her defence.
