



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

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

सुक्षेत्रिया सुगातुया वसुया च यजामहे ।  
अप नः शोशुचदधम् ॥

1. For a healthy body,<sup>1</sup> for the right path,<sup>2</sup> for divine grace,<sup>3</sup> we sacrifice to thee. May the Divine burn up our sin !

*Rg-Veda 1.97.2*

प्र यदग्नेः सहस्वतो विश्वतो यंति भानवः ।  
अप नः शोशुचदधम् ॥

2. The flames of the effulgent Lord stream forth in all directions conquering obstacles. May the Divine burn up our sin !

*Rg-Veda 1.97.5*

त्वं हि विश्वतोमुख विश्वतः परिभूरसि ।  
अप नः शोशुचदधम् ॥

3. With your luminous face turned in all directions, you protect us from everything. May the Divine burn up our sin

*Rg-Veda 1.97.6*

द्विषो नो विश्वतोमुखाति नावेव पारय ।  
अप नः शोशुचदधम् ॥

4. O Thou whose face is turned in all directions, carry us like a boat beyond all obstacles. May the Divine burn up our sin !

*Rg-Veda 1.97.7*

स नः सिधुमिव नावयाति पर्षा स्वस्तये ।  
अप नः शोशुचदधम् ॥

5. May He convey us like a boat across the river of life and may He protect our welfare ! May the Divine burn up our sin !

*Rg-Veda 1.97.8*

\* The *mantras* given here are from a famous hymn addressed to Agni (Fire) and are prayers for the eradication of sin. They imply two facts : 1. Fire here stands for the Divine, and 2. God has the power to destroy sin (*agha*). Spiritual aspirants may recite these *mantras* everyday for purification of mind.

1. *Ksetra*, literally field, here means the body.

2. *Sugātuyā* according to Sāyaṇa means 'beautiful path', i.e. spiritual path.

3. *Vasu*, literally wealth, here means spiritual blessings.

## ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Prayer, worship and meditation are the three successive disciplines on the path of Bhakti. This month's EDITORIAL discusses some of the important theoretical aspects of worship done as a spiritual discipline.

With this issue Swami Budhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, starts a short serial on 'applied religion' entitled PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION. Written with the certitude born of experience and with the clarity born of years of discipline, the article will be of great help to all sincere spiritual aspirants.

In SRI SANKARA ON WORLD THOUGHT Prof. S. S. Raghavachar, former Head of the Department of Philosophy, Mysore University, undertakes a brilliant analysis of Western metaphysics and shows how the three main lines of monistic speculation—the doctrine of appearance, idealism and monism—attempted in the West find their grand consummation in Śrī Śankara's philosophy. The article, which reflects the author's rare mastery over both Eastern and Western philosophies, is based on a speech delivered by the author at the Bangalore Math of Sringeri Sankara Pitham on the occasion of the birthday celebration of the senior Acharya on October 21, 1979.

Readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are familiar with the name of Hazra who

played a minor but very interesting role in the earthly life of Sri Ramakrishna. Through painstaking research Swami Prabhananda, Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia, has collected a wealth of details about this enigmatic character in his article FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : PRATAP CHANDRA HAZRA.

In the third instalment of her article IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE?, Dr. Vinita Wanchoo, M.A., M.A., Ph.D., examines the symptoms of escape which Western critics have found in Vedanta and the causes of escapism. Discerning readers will find her observations significant and original.

St. Teresa of Avila, who is a household name in Catholic countries, is one of the greatest, and certainly, the most influential, of Christian mystics. While her ecstatic experiences opened a new chapter in the history of Christian spirituality, her life, full of physical sufferings and spiritual struggles, has inspired countless people to follow the monastic ideal with courage and hope. Swami Atmarupananda gives an interesting account of the saint's early life in the first instalment of his article ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN. The author, who first joined the Ramakrishna Order's centre at Chicago, is now a member of the editorial staff of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

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## WORSHIP AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE—I

(EDITORIAL)

### *Place of worship in spiritual life*

We have seen that prayer, worship and meditation (*dhyāna*) are the three steps or stages in the path of Bhakti and that prayer, when intensely done, gradually

merges into meditation.<sup>1</sup> But few people are capable of praying with such intensity as to convert it into meditation. For most people who follow the path of devotion an

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<sup>1</sup>. See the April Editorial.



intermediate discipline is necessary in order to attain and sustain the state of meditation. This intermediate discipline is worship.

By worship we mean not only external ritualistic worship but also mental worship, *japa*, *stuti* (adoration), even work done as service to the Lord. In other words, by worship we mean the cultivation of a worshipful attitude—an attitude of offering everything to God. Since human nature is self-centred, this attitude of giving develops only slowly. The natural tendency of the mind is to be always at the receiving end. That is why asking, or prayer, comes first. It is only when, as a result of prayer, the soul starts receiving grace in the form of faith, love and strength that it can truly start offering everything including itself to God.

In other words, worship needs a certain degree of prior qualification and inner training. It is because many people attempt worship without first acquiring this competence that it degenerates into mummery and priestcraft, and seems to lead the worshipper not an inch forward on the spiritual path. Especially in the case of priests doing ritualistic worship in temples and churches, the saying 'the nearer to church, the farther from God' seems to be true. But those who have practised prayer for a long time find worship a great help in unfolding their spiritual potential. As pointed out earlier worship in later Hinduism got united with meditation to form a composite discipline called *upāsana*. Concentration became a test of the intensity of one's devotion, and meditation came to be looked upon as a higher stage of worship. But here we propose to study worship as an independent discipline.

#### *Nature of worship—sacrifice*

Worship is a special kind of I-Thou relationship between the soul and God characterised by sacrifice, adoration, sacred-

ness and cult. In the *Bhāgavatam* the great devotee Prahāda enumerates nine marks of devotion : 'Listening to the stories of the Lord, singing His glories, constant remembrance of the all-pervading Lord, serving Him in His devotees, ritualistic worship, constantly saluting the Lord, doing all work for His sake, friendship with the Lord, and complete self-surrender.'<sup>2</sup> These could as well be taken as an accurate description of the nature of worship. If classified, these nine characteristics could be reduced to sacrifice, adoration, sacredness and cult which distinguish worship from all other disciplines.

There can be no worship without sacrifice. Sacrifice is not just giving. It implies two things. One is giving without expectation of return. Whatever we offer in worship must be for love, and not for barter. Secondly, sacrifice means self-denial. It must entail some loss to the ego. It is not what we offer that matters but how we offer it. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa points out in the *Gītā*, God is pleased even with a leaf, flower or water if it is offered with true love (*bhaktyupahṛtam*).<sup>3</sup> The same idea is contained in the story of the 'widow's mite' in the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

The word used in ancient Hinduism to mean sacrifice was *yajña*. But *yajña* meant not merely offering something to a personal God. It meant defining the individual's relationship with the cosmos at different levels. Hindu scriptures (the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* and *Manu Smṛti*, for instance) enjoin five great sacrifices (*pañca mahā yajña*) as the daily duty of every person : *brahma yajña*, *deva yajña*, *pitṛ yajña*, *bhūta yajña* and

2. श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।  
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

*Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23

3. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 9.26.

4. Mark 12.42 ; Luke 21.2.



*manuṣya yajña*.<sup>5</sup> So great was the importance attached to these duties that Manu goes to the extent of stating that those who do not perform them are not alive although breathing.

What distinguishes man from animals is knowledge. The ultimate cause of all human misery is lack of knowledge. It is through knowledge that man realizes God and attains supreme peace. Therefore it is imperative that knowledge should be kept in circulation in human society. Every man has a duty to impart knowledge to others and this is *brahma yajña*, also called *ṛṣi yajña*.

Offering things to gods and goddesses (*devatoddeśena dravya-tyāga*) is *deva yajña*. During the Vedic period all offerings were made to the fire which was regarded as the mouth of the gods.<sup>6</sup> Later on the faith that gods directly accept offerings became traditional. Propitiating the departed spirits of one's ancestors through special rites like *srāddha*, *tarpaṇa* and charitable acts undertaken in their name is *pitṛ yajña*. Feeding animals and looking after them with kindness is *bhūta yajña*.

Though according to Manu *manuṣya yajña* means serving guests (*atithi*), every form of service to fellowmen should be included under it. Human needs are so varied and social life is so complex that there exist innumerable ways of rendering service to others. In modern times Swami Vivekananda has revived the ancient ideal of service and, by raising it to the level of worship, has converted it into a spiritual discipline and a powerful tool for social change. He focussed the attention of people on the service of the poor and the down-trodden.

From a spiritual point of view, the basic idea behind sacrifice is selflessness. The

greatest obstacle to spiritual progress is selfishness. Giving up selfishness is the true meaning of sacrifice.

What is the cause of selfishness? The ego. Enquiry into the nature of the ego led ancient sages to the discovery that all selves are parts of one Supreme Spirit who indwells in all beings. The great teachers of Bhakti taught that the best way to get rid of egoism and selfishness was to surrender oneself to the will of the Supreme Self or God. Moreover, the very word sacrifice implies a certain amount of deprivation and suffering, and has meaning only to a person who regards worldly goods as real and valuable. A person who looks upon the world as unreal or impermanent and who is therefore bent on renouncing it, does not feel that giving up is a sacrifice. Thus, as the idea of renunciation and knowledge of the real nature of the self spread, the concept of sacrifice gave way to that of self-surrender to God. (A similar change in the attitude towards sacrifice took place in Christianity but along entirely different lines, as we shall see later on). This psychological change in worship can be traced in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In its first six chapters, especially in the fourth chapter, the emphasis is on sacrifice. But in the next six chapters, the emphasis is more on self-surrender. However, the idea of 'giving' is common to both sacrifice and self-surrender, and has always remained as a basic characteristic of worship.

#### *Nature of worship—adoration*

The second characteristic of worship is *ārādhanā* or adoration. This may be expressed through rituals, praise (*stuti*), hymnody (*kīrtana*), etc. What is adoration? Adoration is love plus reverence. Love becomes Bhakti only when it is sublimated by the highest reverence for the Supreme Lord. Reverence comes from knowledge of God's transcendental nature and super-

5. Cf. *Manu Smṛti* 3.70,71

6. अग्निमुखं प्रथमो देवतानाम् ।

*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 1.4.8



natural glories (*māhātmya jñāna*). It is this *māhātmya jñāna* that distinguishes love for human beings from love for God. Even the poor and illiterate Gopīs of Vraja, whose love for Kṛṣṇa is said to mark the acme of devotion, were fully aware of their Beloved's transcendental nature. In one of their prayers, well known as 'Gopī-Gītam', these cowherd women tell Kṛṣṇa, 'You are not a mere son of a milkmaid, you are the inner Self and Witness indwelling in all beings.'<sup>7</sup> Without this awareness of the divine nature of the Lord, their love for Him would be in no way better than that for a paramour, remarks Nārada.<sup>8</sup>

Adoration forms an important part of Christian and Islamic worship. St. Ignatius Loyola bases the whole of his *Spiritual Exercises* on his fundamental maxim: 'Man is created for this end—to praise, renounce, and serve the Lord his God.' And the influential seventeenth-century mystic Berulle has laid down the rule that man's true relation to God lies solely in adoration and adherence, and that these two attitudes of the soul cover the whole range of inner life. Indeed, so great was the importance given to adoration in the medieval church that the monks spent most of their time in the choir singing praises of God from morning to night.

In Hinduism adoration takes the form of chanting the names of the Lord. This is not vain repetition, for each name stands for a particular attribute of God. The well-known *sahasranāmas* ('Thousand Names') about Viṣṇu and Lalitā are a perfect device for compressing a vast account of divine attributes and glories in an amazingly small compass. *Saṅkīrtana* or group singing of divine names popularized by Śrī Caitanya

has for its main purpose remembrance and adoration of the Lord. Nowadays there is an over-emphasis on meditation. But when we study the lives of the great saints of India we find that almost all of them spent most of their time singing the glories of the Lord.

#### *Nature of worship—sacredness*

A third characteristic of worship is sacredness. Everything connected with worship is sacred, and worship itself imparts sanctity to the worshipper and the articles of worship.

The Hindu concept of sanctity has three aspects. The *ādhibhautika* or physical aspect consists in cleaning everything connected with worship by the liberal application of water accompanied by the chanting of *mantras*. According to Hindu belief every object and every organ in the body has a divine form or presiding deity (*adhidevatā*). By invoking the deities of the bell, lamp, conch, flowers, water, etc. these articles get sanctified. This is the *ādhydaivika* aspect of sacredness. The *ādhyātmika* or spiritual aspect of sacredness is associated with the doctrine that the Ātman or real self of man is eternally pure and self-luminous, and sin and impurity affect only the mind. A major part of Hindu worship is devoted to the symbolic purification of mind so that the Ātman may manifest itself in all its intrinsic lustre and glory.

#### *Nature of worship—cult*

The fourth characteristic of worship is the cult. In popular understanding cult is associated with sectarianism and fanaticism. Sociologists use the term to mean man's symbolic response to the Idea of the Holy. For a spiritual aspirant cult means entering into relationship with a god, goddess, Avatār or the supreme Godhead

7. न खलु गोपिकानन्दनो भवा-  
नखिलदेहिनामन्तरात्मदृक् ।

*Bhāgavatam* 10.31.4

8. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* 1.23,24,



regarded as a Person. Whereas every other religion offers only one cult, Hinduism offers a large number of cults. In fact, worship in Hinduism means adoption into the spiritual family of a god or a goddess.

It should, however, be remembered that it is not easy to enter into an intimate personal relationship with an intangible, unknown spiritual being. It needs not only purity and faith but also a certain transcendence of the self over the physical body. Without at least a vague or rudimentary awareness of oneself as a spirit, it is not possible to look upon the Deity as one's own or regard oneself as belonging to a spiritual family.

Again, this relationship is based on the worshipper's psychic make-up. There must be some similarity between the adorer and the adored. A worshipper of Śiva must have some attributes of Śiva in him, and a worshipper of Viṣṇu must have some attributes of Viṣṇu in him. Each man must choose that deity who is the perfect embodiment of those attributes which are present in him at least in an incipient form. This is the rationale of the concept of *iṣṭa devatā* or Chosen Ideal. The cultic division of Hinduism into Śākta, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and other sects has for its basis typological differences in human temperament.

Cult expresses itself in two ways: myth and ritual. Myths are sacred stories about gods, goddesses and Avatārs. The *Devī Māhātmya* or *Caṇḍī* tells us about the life of the Divine Mother, the *Bhāgavatam* tells us about the life of Kṛṣṇa, the New Testament tells us about the life of Jesus Christ, and so on. Some of these stories may be historically true, but the others are not false, for they have a mystic reality and undeniable spiritual validity. Without myth it is impossible to enter into a deep, personal relationship with the Deity.

A ritual is a symbolic act which expresses a mystic relationship between man and Deity. Ritual is a kind of sacred language.

Man is not only a knower but also a doer. He can express his feelings through words as well as through actions, perhaps more eloquently through the latter. However, religious rituals are not artificially coded. Like music and dance, ritual too springs spontaneously from a deeper layer of consciousness where man touches the divine harmony of the rhythms of life. Says Susanne Langer in her celebrated book, 'Ritual is a symbolic transformation of experience that no other medium can adequately express. Because it springs from a primary human need, it is spontaneous activity.'<sup>9</sup>

### *Functions of worship*

As a spiritual discipline, the primary function of worship is to prepare the mind for higher meditation. It should be remembered that *dhyāna* or meditation is only the third stage in the process of concentration. The earlier two stages are *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of mind from sense-objects) and *dhāraṇā* (fixing the mind at a centre of consciousness). We have shown that prayer is the Bhakta's way of practising *pratyāhāra*. In the same way, worship may be regarded as the Bhakta's way of practising *dhāraṇā*. The will that is detached through prayer gets fixed or focussed on a divine form through worship. When the will is fixed on a higher plane, thoughts flow in that direction. When this process lasts longer, it becomes *dhyāna* or meditation. Thus worship gives a good training in focussing the will at a higher plane.

Secondly, worship strengthens the I-Thou relationship with God. I-Thou relationship can also be established through prayer and meditation. But worship creates a special relationship with God characterized by self-surrender and service which please Him greatly. Sri Ramakrishna's parable illus-

9. Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), p. 52.



trates this point. A poor tenant farmer goes to see his landlord taking with him a pumpkin as a gift. The master asks him, 'What do you want?' The farmer replies, 'I don't want anything. I came just to see you.' Seeing the poor man's unselfish love, the landlord is highly pleased and makes him sit beside him. If, however, without the permission of the landlord, the tenant had attempted to occupy a seat near the master, he would have been driven out by the servants. In the same way, when God is pleased with the devotion of the devotee, He makes him sit near Him. This sitting near or *upa-āsana* is meditation. Sri Ramakrishna says God's grace is necessary for the practice of meditation. And this grace comes through prayer and worship.

The individual is in dynamic contact with the cosmos at different levels, and the abundance of life is flowing into him in the form of food, material comforts, knowledge, etc. If he tries to retain all these and allows his mind to cling to them, it becomes impure. But by giving to others all that are in excess of his personal needs he purifies his mind. A true devotee accepts all good things as coming from the divine source and offers them to his fellow beings as service to the indwelling God. This is the Bhakta's way of practising renunciation. Service to others done as worship is as purifying and liberating as renunciation. An attitude of worshipful acceptance is indeed far better than an egoistic rejection. What is important in spiritual life is not how many things you have given up but how much of egoism you have given up. The ego blocks the channel of communication with the universal stream of life, alienates the soul from the Supreme Spirit and produces spiritual impoverishment. Worship reduces the ego and clears the channel for the free flow of divine grace.

Higher training for the will, establishing a close relationship with the Deity, purification of mind—these are the primary func-

tions of worship. The ultimate purpose of worship, however, is the direct vision of the Deity. All worship is based on the basic belief that one can contact the Divine through it.

Worship has in addition several sociological functions which, from a spiritual point of view, may be regarded as secondary. One is the sanctification of social institutions. The relation between the husband and wife is sanctified by the marriage ritual. A Hindu may have reverence for Christ, but he does not become a Christian unless he undergoes the ritual of baptism. Many of the annual festivals observed by people are purely social functions, but they acquire sanctity and meaning by association with worship. Another secondary function of worship is social cohesion. Common worship gives people identification with their community, though it is also true that differences in worship are one of the major causes of disharmony in society as a whole. Yet another function of worship is that it gives a sense of security and well-being to people. When examinations are imminent, children with coconuts in their hands make a beeline to the nearest Ganeśa temple. When faced with difficulties, adults rush to temples and churches with votive offerings. Indeed, for millions of people worship gives solace and confidence to face the problems of life, and is the only door to transcendent Reality.

#### *Laws of worship*

Worship in Hinduism is based on three fundamental principles. The first principle is deification of the worshipper. True worship of the Spirit is possible only by the Spirit. True love is possible only between beings of similar nature. A dog's love for man cannot be equated with a man's love for a man or a woman. In order to love or worship a God or a Goddess, man should become a god or a goddess himself. All



souls are parts of one Supreme Spirit, and the difference between men and gods lies in the degree of manifestation of the light of spiritual consciousness in them. The very word *deva* (god) literally means the shining one. Being free from ignorance, the light of Ātman shines brilliantly in the Gods and Goddesses. Man too, by removing ignorance, can manifest this inner light and attain the nature of gods. That is why Swami Vivekananda says each soul is potentially divine.

This is a very ancient Hindu idea. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says, worship without Self-knowledge will reduce man to the position of cattle (*paśu*): 'He who adores another god thinking, "He is different from me, and I am different from him", does not know. As is an animal (to man), so is he to the gods. As many animals serve a man so does each man serve the gods.'<sup>10</sup> The same Upaniṣad later on repeats six times a statement which has become the bedrock of Hindu worship: *devo bhūtvā devānāmapyeti* ('Becoming a god he merges in the gods').<sup>11</sup> In other words, man should acquire an element of divinity in order to worship the Divine. That is why Śrī Rāmānuja holds that in order to qualify for the practice of Bhakti-yoga, one should first gain a vision of one's own true inner self—*ātmāvalokana* as he calls this experience.

It should be mentioned here that deification (*theosis*) of man is an accepted doctrine in Catholic and Eastern Churches, but they restrict it to only those who are baptized in these churches. It is also based on different theological premises.

How does man acquire divinity? This question takes us to the second fundamental

principle of worship known as the *yathā kratu* principle. It is enunciated in a famous *Chāndogya* passage which may be translated as: 'As is one's will, so does he become.'<sup>12</sup> *Kratu* means aspiration or creative will. If we intensely strive for an ideal, we will attain it. By constantly thinking that we are divine we gradually become divine. By constantly meditating on a god or goddess we acquire his or her attributes. A man's destiny is determined by his soul's intense aspiration. Wishful thinking or day-dreaming is not enough. The will must be powerful enough to transform his character and consciousness. The practice of making *saṁkalpa* (sacramental intention) before the beginning of a ritual, the purificatory rite called *bhūta śuddhi* and other practices are based on the *yathā kratu* principle.

The third principle of worship concerns the power of invocation. From the early Vedic period there has survived the belief that gods and goddesses respond to the fervent call of a pure and devout heart. Later on the idea developed that the all-pervading Divine could be invoked in a specially consecrated image.

The principle of invocation has found two kinds of not-very-healthy application. One is the idea of delegated worship—the belief that worship can be done through a priest who acts as a proxy for the real worshipper called the *yajamāna*. The benefit of the worship goes not to the priest but to the *yajamāna*. The countless temples in India and the institution of priesthood owe their existence to this belief. In Christianity priesthood derives its authority from the belief in apostolic succession. A doctrine similar to the above-mentioned Hindu belief is held by the Catholic Church. It is called *ex opere*

10. अथ योज्यां देवतामुपास्ते, अन्योऽसावन्योऽ-  
हमस्मीति, न स वेद, यथा पशुरेवं स देवानाम् ।  
*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10

11. Ibid. 4.1.2-7.

12. अथ खलु क्रतुमयः पुरुषो यथाक्रतुरस्मि-  
ल्लोके पुरुषो भवति . . . ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1



*operato* ('from the work wrought') according to which the effect of worship is independent of the capacity of the priest. That is, whatever be the character of the priest, the sacrament that he administers will have its own effect on the recipient.

The second trend which the principle of invocation has led to is the belief that man could control psychic powers by invocation with the help of appropriate *mantras*. From this arose black magic which, though once restricted to primitive communities, is now being practised by thousands of people in the so-called civilized Western countries. It is not necessary for our purpose to go deep into this weird phenomenon. But it should be stated that modern researches into E.S.P. and psychic phenomena have proved the possibility of a 'psycho-technology' which, like the scientific technology, could be used for the welfare or destruction of human beings.

#### *Types of worship*

Among the great religions of the world Hinduism and Christianity give greatest importance to worship. Islam strictly prohibits ritualistic worship but encourages a worshipful attitude. In fact the daily *namāz* or *salāh* is more an act of worship or adoration than a prayer. In Buddhism the Mahāyāna division gives some importance to worship. Some scholars even claim that Tāntric worship in India was first developed by Mahāyāna Buddhists.

Islam allows only worship of God, and prohibits worship of anyone else including the Holy Prophet. In Christianity the Catholic Church makes a distinction between two types of reverence. 'Latria' is true

worship accorded only to the Trinity. 'Dulia' is veneration paid to the saints recognized by the Church. A third type called 'hyperdulia' or higher veneration is reserved only for the Blessed Virgin as the Theotokos or Mother of God. The Protestant churches permit only the worship of God and reject the rest as idolatry. In Hinduism the Vedantic doctrine of the unity of the individual spirit with Brahman blurs the distinctions between man and God. Not only does it worship several Gods, Goddesses and Avatāras, but allows freedom to worship the Guru, saints and sages, sometimes even with all ritualistic splendour.

Hindu worship is of four types: ritualistic, vocal, mental and manual. The popular notion of ritualistic worship is that through it God will be propitiated and will fulfil one's worldly desires. In this sense it is nothing but *kāmya karma* (work done with desire), and all great teachers have discouraged spiritual aspirants from following it. But ritualistic worship can also be done purely as a spiritual discipline, and it is in this form we are interested here. Vocal worship consists of chanting of hymns (*stotra*) and the singing of devotional songs nowadays called *bhajan*. Repetition of a *mantra* (*japa*) and visualization of the Deity (*bhāvanā*) come under mental worship. Manual worship is doing all work as service (*kainkarya*) to the Lord. We shall next discuss these disciplines of worship in detail. It is, however, important to remember that all these forms of worship are primarily spiritual disciplines and are intended to shift the focus of one's life from the ego to the Divine.

(To be continued)



# PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

A pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a pilgrim, a travelling through a strange country or to some place deemed sacred, in order to observe some religious vow or duty or obtain some spiritual or miraculous benefit. In every religion there is the age-old idea that there are certain places specially holy to its votaries. Making pilgrimages to such places is considered very meritorious. Hence devout people look forward to that great occasion when at least once in their life they would be able to make the pilgrimage. When this is accomplished with great satisfaction and thankfulness, they look upon it as a landmark in their life.

In practice it is seen that those who go on a pilgrimage prepare for it for a long time. Those who are not rich save money little by little, years on end for the purpose. They take vows and pray so that their objective may be fulfilled. They also arrange their affairs in such a manner that they can go away from home for a considerable time, to devote themselves entirely to religious pursuits, without being encumbered by worldly preoccupations. Moreover they all along look forward to this pilgrimage as a great occasion of spiritual promise.

What one is going to get from a pilgrimage entirely depends on one's personal attitude and preparedness. A person may go even to a place of pilgrimage as a tourist, a sightseer, archaeologist or business man. From such a visit to such a place he is not likely to derive any spiritual benefit. To derive spiritual benefit one has to go there as a pilgrim, as a spiritual seeker. There is no other way of entering into the spirit of the place and deriving benefit from it.

Figuratively speaking, the journey of life,

the time spent in passing through the world to what has been called 'the better land' is also called a pilgrimage.

Every form of life, like a river, is on a pilgrimage, flowing towards the great ocean of self-fulfillment which is God. It is the journey of the bound towards liberation, of the ignorant to illumination, of the fearful to fearlessness, of the mortal to immortality.

Whether or not we want it this way, life is this way. We finite beings are pilgrims to infinitude. All our struggles and attainments, joys and sorrows are leaving behind the mileposts on the way. We are all on the move. We are wayfarers, pilgrims.

Even without our knowing it, we are all truly pilgrims. But what makes all the difference in the world is to stay a pilgrim in the threshold of life, knowingly. Such a person considers himself a spiritual seeker. A true spiritual seeker aspires to spiritualize his whole life. Spiritualization of life is possible only through living it as a pilgrim, who deliberately moves towards his destination. How can we spiritualize our whole life?

Obviously, we have to live our life from day to day. Therefore, to be able to spiritualize the whole span of our life, we need to know nothing more or less than the methods of spiritualizing our daily life.

How can we spiritualize our daily life? This can be done by living it as a pilgrim.

We know everyone who goes on a pilgrimage has a destination. What should be the destination of a person who moves on in his daily life as a pilgrim? It can be only the hours of meditation, prayer and devotions, when he exclusively devotes himself to the practice of spiritual disciplines.

A destination, we have to remember, is a place towards which one deliberately moves on and looks forward to reaching.



no matter what the distractions and obstacles on the way. In fact, one tries to turn and shape everything in such a way as may be helpful towards reaching the destination, and enriching the stay thereat.

Here comes the question of attitude and preparedness.

Why do we say that the hour of meditation or prayer is the destination of the daily pilgrim? Because it is from the strivings of these hours or hour, as it may be, that the spiritual aspirant seeks to derive direct spiritual benefits. Whatever we may or may not think, may or may not do during the whole day, has an indirect bearing on our spiritual life. But spiritual practices as such, when done properly, have a direct bearing.

## 2

Those who are well convinced that attainment of spiritual illumination or God-seeing is the ultimate objective of life, and from that perspective have been able to correlate all the facts and forces of life, will readily agree that the most important thing to be done in life is meditation, or worship of God in the ways suitable to us.

It is good to be absolutely clear in our mind on this point as to how meditation is the most important thing to be done in life. In the pedestrian's calculating business language, we may ask: well, what do we gain by meditation?

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says:

Whoever here among men attain greatness, they have, as it were, a part of the reward of meditation. Thus, while small people are quarrelsome, abusive, and slandering, great men appear to have obtained a share of meditation. Reverence meditation.

He who reverences meditation as the Supreme,

as far as meditation reaches, so far has he ultimate freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The *Maitrī Upaniṣad* teaches:

The Supreme is attainable by knowledge, by austerity and by meditation.<sup>2</sup>

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* teaches:

Some by meditation perceive the Self in themselves through the mind, some by devotion to knowledge, and some by devotion to work.<sup>3</sup>

This call of Buddha goes to everyone who aspires for higher life:

Meditate, O mendicant, be not heedless. Let not your thought delight in sensual pleasures, that you may not for your negligence have to swallow the iron ball, that you may not cry out when burning. This is suffering!

There is no meditation for one who is without wisdom; no wisdom for one who is without meditation; he in whom there are meditation and wisdom, he indeed is close to Nirvāṇa.<sup>4</sup>

You may not be anxious for liberation right now—you may like to live on in a lower key—you may want to live a good life in this world as a householder. What purpose does meditation serve for you, then? Meditation serves the greatest purpose for you, even though you may not be wanting

1. . . . य इह मनुष्याणां महत्तां प्राप्नुवन्ति  
ध्यानापादांशा इवैव ते भवन्त्यथ येऽल्पाः कलहिनः  
पिशुना उपवादिनस्तेऽथ ये प्रभवो ध्यानापादांशा  
इवैव ते भवन्ति ध्यानमुपास्वेति ॥  
स यो ध्यानं ब्रह्मेत्युपास्ते यावद्ध्यानस्य गतं  
तत्रास्य यथाकामचारो भवति . . . ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.6.1-2

2. विद्यया तपसा चिन्तया चोपलभ्यते ब्रह्म . . .  
*Maitrī Upaniṣad* 4.4
3. ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदत्मानमात्मना ।  
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 13.24

4. *Dhammapada* 371, 372.



to attain salvation but desiring to live a good life in the world.

- (a) Meditation gives you a better hold on your own mind, with which you can function each successive day more efficiently and effectively in the work-a-day world.
- (b) No life of sanity, probity and dignity is possible for one who never meditates, knowingly or unknowingly.
- (c) Meditation alone can plant within us that protective conquering principle which can help us to outgrow all adverse situations of life, all tests and turmoils.
- (d) A man of meditation is any day a man of better stuff than one who never meditates.
- (e) There is no way of transforming the animal man into a spiritual man except through meditation.
- (f) One cause of the terrific increase of mental diseases in the world is the lack of meditation.
- (g) Those who wish to escape the psychiatrist's costly couch will do well to learn from an authentic teacher how to meditate.
- (h) Peace of mind cannot be for one who does not meditate. And how can anyone be happy without having peace of mind?
- (i) You may not be anxious for illumination, but certainly you want to be happy. In any case meditation is the most intelligent and important thing any human being can do in his daily life.
- (j) No matter who you are, or what you are, meditation will always help you in every situation and stage of life.

## 3

In a war, the performance of a soldier on the battlefield is undoubtedly most important. But the quality of his perform-

ance will depend on the type of training he received in the army barracks outside the battlefield. It is undoubtedly very important how we carry ourselves during the hours of spiritual practice, but the quality of our spiritual practice will depend entirely on how we have thought and acted and prepared ourselves in the hours we were not actually meditating.

Brother Lawrence, the great mystic, wrote to a nun:

One way of becoming recollected easily at the time of prayer, and of remaining so, is to keep the mind under control at other times—that is, keep it strictly in the presence of God. Being accustomed to think of Him often, it will then be more easy to remain undisturbed in prayer, or at any rate to recover from distractions.<sup>5</sup>

Broadly speaking, for effective pilgrimage to the hour of meditation four things are necessary: (a) cultivation of a proper attitude to meditation; (b) general preparation for a meditative life; (c) removal of the causes which are inimical to meditation; (d) performance of such deeds as are helpful to meditation.

For reasons we have discussed, we must consider the hour of meditation as the most precious hour of the day, the true destination, psychologically speaking, where we deliberately get our spiritual destiny moulded, with the powers of our mind placed in the hands of the Lord, as it were.

We must develop a pilgrim's attitude to this hour of meditation. We must consider this hour as the destination: of what we do and what we refrain from doing in our daily life. Everything will be done for meditation to be done.

To this hour we should proceed with faith, reverence and a sense of dedication.

*(To be continued)*

5. Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, trans. Donald Attwater (Springfield, III: Temple-Gate, 1963), p. 37.



# SRI SANKARA ON WORLD THOUGHT

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

It is well known that the spirit of metaphysics found its highest expression in three cultures, those of ancient Athens, modern Germany and India. Our purpose here is to record our homage to Śrī Śaṅkara, one of the highest peaks of the Himalayas of Indian metaphysics. We propose to study Śaṅkara's contribution to world thought vis-à-vis the philosophies of the great masters of Western metaphysics. However, what is attempted is just an enunciation of the main lines of his contribution and not a comprehensive treatment.

## 1

In all serious reflection, either in the field of science or philosophy, the human mind finds itself driven to the problem of appearance and reality. What impinges on human consciousness by way of sense-experience and the resultant formulations of common sense disclose even on meagre scrutiny the nature of the universe as something merely apparent, lacking the substance of truth. The distinction between the apparent and the real is almost the beginning of all serious thinking. It is this discovery that actually shocks man into philosophizing, so much so, that Schopenhauer defined philosophy as the technique of getting 'undeceived'. The greatest of the Greek philosophers, Plato, developed a doctrine of reality, immutable and absolute, transcending perishing particulars of sense-experience. The vision was there but its exposition, as subsequent European thought demonstrated, demanded a fuller and less mystifying articulation. It was given to the German mind to work out in a more rigorous fashion this fundamental insight. In Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the distinction between the

phenomenal and the real is substantiated into a formidable structure of thought. To him, the Western philosophical world owes its doctrine of appearance and reality. But Kant bequeathed a problem with which his successors had to labour hard. He left the nature of the real, the 'things-in-themselves' as he described it, empty of all positive characterization. His successors groped after a tenable conception of the real and they were conjecturing that the transcendent reality may be the basic principle of consciousness itself, which functions empirically as the knowing self in man. Such an identification of the self as the noumenon would complete the doctrine of appearance and reality. In Śaṅkara's metaphysics, this solution reaches its definitive affirmation. The *tat* is *tvam*, and whatever comes in the way of the identification of the two is merely an appearance, a display of Māyā.

This is the celebrated doctrine of Māyā and, in Śaṅkara's showing, it is a cardinal principle of all metaphysical thinking. It is increasingly realized by all serious students of metaphysics that the line of thought initiated by Plato, further developed by Kant, reaches all-round fullness and clarity in the Vedānta of Śaṅkara. One may mention Deussen as a conspicuous exponent of the role of Śaṅkara as marking the culmination of this perennial trend of metaphysics.

## 2

The issue between realism and idealism, or that between matter and spirit, is a persistent one in philosophy. There is no age in which it has not entered into dialectical controversy. As it could be expected from his stand on ultimate reality as against



appearance Śaṅkara champions the cause of spirit. That matter is ultimately unreal as matter, is the conviction of all schools of idealism. But there is an outstanding distinctiveness in his approach in contrast to the positions of the Buddhist Vijñāna-vāda and Berkeley in European philosophy. In all his major works, he defends the reality of the external world against the arguments of Vijñāna-vāda. This is markedly noticeable in his *Sūtra Bhāṣya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Bhāṣya*. Only by ignoring this fact can Śaṅkara be accused of being a Buddhist in disguise. Śaṅkara's polemics anticipate a great deal the modern realistic refutation of idealism by powerful realists like G. E. Moore. What is the central point of this stand of Śaṅkara? If idealism attempts to reduce the material world to the conditioned self, as represented by the Vijñāna-vāda of Buddhism, the reduction is impossible according to Śaṅkara. The conditioned self itself carries a great deal of the external world. To exalt it to the status of metaphysical supremacy is a hasty and premature idealism. Berkeley has no great success either. Apart from the refutation of his position in recent realism, Hume demolished the idealism of his predecessor by his penetrating analysis of the empirical self. It seems that the self to which Berkeley attempted to reduce the external world is not less refutable.

Śaṅkara's manner of establishing the sole reality of spirit is, perhaps, unique in the history of idealism. He demonstrates that empirical consciousness is rooted in a primordial misconception or *adhyāsa*. This *adhyāsa* sets up the empirical ego, and that ego sets up the external world. That is the reason why he opens his *Sūtra Bhāṣya* with the pivotal elucidation of *adhyāsa*. *Adhyāsa* mixes up the real and unreal and projects the world of empirical selves and the physical universe. Between the two projections, there is no difference in point of reality. Thus, Śaṅkara's thought must be

described as transcendent or, better still, absolute idealism. Matter stands annulled from the standpoint of the infinite Self, the Atman. Thus, Śaṅkara's idealism cannot land in subjectivism or solipsism, and it is one for which the finite and conditioned self has melted away. The conventional absurdities of idealism are transcended in this altitude of the Atman. Even as the distinction between appearance and reality receives its most satisfactory formulation in Śaṅkara's philosophy, the idealistic standpoint in metaphysics also attains maturity of expression in it.

## 3

Monism is one of the permanent points of view in metaphysics. It has asserted itself against pluralism and dualism throughout the history of philosophy all over the world. In very ancient Greek thought it was championed by Parmenides. A little later it was propounded by Plotinus in the framework of a mysticism from which practically the whole of European mysticism has sprung. In modern times, it re-appeared in a rationalistic shape in the philosophy of Spinoza. Still later, Hegel took it up and reshaped it into his philosophy of the Absolute Spirit.

Though Śaṅkara's philosophy is often named monism, it is better described as nondualism. Let us note these phases of monism for marking out the specialities of Śaṅkara's thought. We do not have enough material on the philosophy of Parmenides. The fragments that survive clearly make him out as affirming reality as one and eternal and denouncing plurality and temporality. The nature of the one reality is left considerably obscure. Plotinus is a master of mysticism and his ecstatic adoration of the One is an inspiration rather than a rigorously worked out metaphysical system.

Spinoza posits a single substance, God,



with an infinity of attributes. Of these, extension and thought are the two we can know as they represent the universalized essences of matter and mind. Spinoza is a great thinker and does not permit of cheap criticism. But still the crucial difficulty of his monism lies in harmonizing the plurality of attributes with the single substance of God. He denies neither the many attributes nor does he make God a collective totality. The one reality seems to take in *svagata-bheda* (inherent or intrinsic difference), though it is free from *sajātīya-* and *vijātīya-bheda* (difference between the same species and difference between different species, respectively). That extension, the abstract essence of matter, is an integral element in the Divine Unity that materializes it should be somewhat puzzling to a monist. The unity of the central substance does not seem to be well preserved in this otherwise grand structure of monism. Though the individual material entities and minds or selves do not enjoy any ontological solidity, materiality and thought enter into the inmost construction of Godhead. It seems to me that though Spinoza had an unmistakably monistic intention, he could not, in the actual formulation of his thought, get rid of the pluralistic element altogether.

Hegel remarks that Spinoza should not have deified the category of substance but should have ascended to that of the 'Subject' or Spirit. He himself develops a monism of the Absolute Spirit. Hence, his is an idealistic monism. Hegel's Absolute is the highest synthesis of a thesis and antithesis, and each of the lower positions is such a synthesis of a still lower thesis and its antithesis. It is the apex of a pyramid built of lower categories organized in terms of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. This dialectical presentation is characteristic of the entire system of Hegel.

The true universal for Hegelianism is 'concrete' in the sense of being inclusive of

diversities and the Absolute is the highest of concrete universals. In other words, it is a unity in and through diversities. This, in Indian terminology, can only be a form of *bhedābheda* (difference in non-difference) and not pure Advaita. *Svagata-bheda* is not eliminated but 'sublated' in the specially Hegelian sense of being suppressed and preserved. The Hegelian Absolute is not acosmic, *niṣprapañca*, but cosmic, *saprapañca*. This is a conception similar to that of *Bhakti-prapañca*, of which Śaṅkara is highly critical. It is a highly qualified Advaita. Further, the Absolute of Hegel contains in itself a principle of 'negativity', by virtue of which it goes out of itself to its antithesis and returns to itself by overcoming the antithesis. All that is other than the Absolute is generated out of itself and eventually re-absorbed into itself. It is this principle of negativity that accounts for the emergence of matter and the subsequent evolution of spirit out of it. It is evident that Hegel's conception of reality is not absolutely and purely monistic but admits of diverse phases and elements co-ordinated into a single scheme. At best, it can compare with Kashmir Śaivism and anticipates somewhat Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

Schopenhauer pooh-poohs Hegel a great deal and offers his own version of idealistic monism, making 'Will' the central characteristic of the Universal Spirit. Will is so intimately blended with finite life that it is hardly possible to extricate it from the implication of finitude.

In this array of types of monism, we find no system that rescues itself completely from the category of plurality. In world thought, Śaṅkara's Advaita is the only monism that excludes the 'many' completely. It is unique in point of purity and accords to all types of difference and dualism their rightful places in the realm of *Māyā*. This distinctiveness should not be overlooked or diluted in any way. The monistic impulse is carried to its culmination in the



Advaita of Śaṅkara. The Brahman of Śaṅkara is *akhaṇḍa* and *advitīya*.

Unity may, by itself, be compatible with some diversity. In order to obviate even this much of the tolerance of plurality, the school of Śaṅkara styles itself nondualism or Advaita. The negation of plurality is a cardinal point of the doctrine.

This extreme opposition to pluralism seems to be inevitably implied in the basic propositions of the system. Its doctrine of appearance or *Māyā*, its affirmation of the unreality of everything other than the Supreme Atman and the discernment of a basic principle of error or *adhyāsa* as governing the totality of human experience, cognitive, conative and emotional—*jñātr̥tva*, *kar̥tr̥tva* and *bhok̥tr̥tva*—and the consequent dissolution of all that is temporal and material, leave no room for a compromise with plurality. Internal distinctions such as that of parts or substance and attribute or cause and effect have no place in the seamless integrality of Brahman.

Thus, the three lines of metaphysical thinking, the doctrine of appearance, idealism and monism, converge into a grand consummation in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. That its impact on world thought is profound and far-reaching is undoubted. But it is a sacred responsibility of us, the devotees of Śaṅkara, to make it more penetrating and vitalizing to justify our devotion. The task is begun and let us con-

tinue and amplify it, and thus sanctify ourselves in the process.

## 4

The specific impact of Śrī Śaṅkara on world thought lies in his unique message which has a revolutionizing potency. Before the advent of the Ācārya, human understanding took for granted the solid reality of the empirical world with all its materiality, temporality and manifoldness, and was struggling to rise through uncertain speculative reasoning to a Supreme Principle, transcendent and infinite, named was rescued from the realm of *Īśvara* or Brahman. The world was a hard certainty and the Divine Unity was problematic, needing demonstration. His entry into the philosophical scene altered profoundly the entire perspective. The Divine Principle was rescued from the realm of the problematic and was established as the impregnably primordial Reality, as *satyasya satyam* (the Truth of truth). The empirical order, *prapañca*, was brought down to its legitimate status of the uncertain and problematic. All subsequent metaphysics exercised itself in characterizing this elusive phenomenal order in precise terms. Śrī Śaṅkara's contribution lies in this revolution of perspective. For him, *brahma satyam* is the core of metaphysical certainty. May we not say that the proclamation of this paramount verity was the mission of his glorious incarnation?

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“Shankaracharya had caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence. Indeed I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine when he was young, and recovered the ancient music that way. Anyway, his whole life's work is nothing but that, the trobbing of the Vedas and the Upanishads.”

— *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*  
Vol. VIII, p. 278-9

# FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : PRATAP CHANDRA HAZRA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

His name was neither Jaṭila nor Kuṭila,<sup>1</sup> but people who gathered around Sri Ramakrishna used to call him by those names because he reminded them of these two legendary characters of Rādhā-līlā fame. He was Pratap Chandra Hazra, a man of average stature, prosaic in attitude, appearance and manners, and endowed with a peculiar blend of piety and spitefulness. One day Sri Ramakrishna asked Pratap, 'Tell me what you think of the people that come here. How much *sattva* does each one possess?'

Pratap : Narendra has one hundred per cent and I have one hundred and ten per cent.

Sri Ramakrishna : What about me?

Pratap : You still have a trace of pink. You have only seventy-five per cent, I should say.

The people listening to these words laughed heartily.

Sri Ramakrishna's audience hardly ever included a person like Pratap who was always prepared to sneer and snigger at everything. His presence was like a discordant note in the melodious symphony that was produced around the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. A puzzling meddler, Pratap with his sharp tongue and queer attitude was found to be rather amusing by many. One of the biographers of Sri Ramakrishna wrote, 'Like a buffoon in a drama, Pratap finds a place in Ramakrishna's life.'<sup>2</sup> In fact, this was precisely the reason

why Sri Ramakrishna tolerated him and showed sympathy and concern for him. It was he who first hinted at the similarity between the role played by Hazra and that of Jaṭila and Kuṭila. Sri Ramakrishna once observed humorously in a state of partial consciousness, 'Yes, I have found Hazra to be like a piece of dry wood. Then why does he live here? This has a necessity too. The play is enlivened by the presence of trouble makers like Jaṭila and Kuṭila.'<sup>3</sup> On December 23, 1883, Sri Ramakrishna told him, 'But you have hardly any faith; you simply live here to add to the play, like Jaṭila and Kuṭila.'

Born sometime around 1846 in Mahmudpur, popularly known as Margere, in the District of Hooghly, Pratap Chandra Hazra grew up like almost any other person in his native village. The Viṣṇu temple at the northern end of the family courtyard and the annual worship of the Goddess Durgā in the family shrine testify to the religious tradition of the middle-class brahmin family to which he belonged. Pratap's father Narayan Hazra, belonging to the Sadgop community, was a man of moderate means.

Pratap had some schooling, but perhaps not in a systematic way, either in a Sanskrit Tol or an English school. However, as regards his intellectual capabilities we may depend on Swami Saradananda's unerring observations. He said, 'With other good and bad qualities, Hazra had a sceptical temperament. Compared with other persons of similar education, he was quite intelligent.

1. Jatila and Kutila are two trouble makers depicted in Vaiṣṇava literature, in the episode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs of Vrindaban.

2. Akshay Kumar Sen, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*, Bengali (Calcutta : Udbodhan Office, 5th edition), p. 188.

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 5th edition), p. 210.



Therefore, he could understand a little of the discussion of the doctrines of the Western agnostic philosophers carried on by English-educated persons like Narendra. The intelligent Narendra was, therefore, pleased with him and spent at his convenience an hour or two in conversation with Hazra whenever he came to Dakshineswar. Hazra, of course, had to bend his head before Narendra's keen intellect. He listened with great attention to Narendra's words and sometimes prepared a smoke for him. Seeing that attitude of Narendra towards Pratap Hazra, many of Sri Ramakrishna's admirers said jokingly, "Mr. Hazra is Narendra's friend [friend]." <sup>4</sup> Pratap had married and begot one son, Yatindranath, before meeting Sri Ramakrishna. His religious propensities often urged him to the path of religious piety, and a spirit of renunciation occasionally dominated his mind; at such times he sought the company of holy men and devotees. Nonetheless, his mind was a motley combination of religious thoughts and worldly ambitions. He kept a shrewd eye on materialistic gain in all his dealings.

In or before 1879<sup>5</sup> Sri Ramakrishna went to Natabar Goswami's<sup>6</sup> at Beldiha (Belte), a village adjoining Phului-Shyambazar (not far away from Kamarpukur), and lived there for seven days. The bliss of *samkīrtan*

accompanied by Sri Ramakrishna's repeated upsurges of spiritual mood drew crowds of people day and night. Sri Ramakrishna recollected later, 'Once I visited Hriday's house at Sihore. From there I was taken to Shyambazar. I had a vision of Gauranga before I entered the village... For seven days and nights I was surrounded by a huge crowd of people. Such attraction! Nothing but *kīrtan* and dancing day and night. People stood in rows on the walls and were even in the trees. I stayed at Natabar Goswami's house. It was crowded day and night. In the morning I would run away to the house of a weaver for a little rest. There too I found that people would gather after a few minutes.'

As the 'mart of joy' became almost a threat to the health of Sri Ramakrishna, Hriday secretly took him with him to Sihore. During Sri Ramakrishna's stay there, Pratap Chandra Hazra came one day to see him whose deeply spiritual life and ecstasies had already created a sensation in the locality. Rumour had it that the saint of Dakshineswar was falling dead and rising up again. During this visit Pratap asked Sri Ramakrishna an interesting question: 'Repeated and continuous calling on Hari often leads to the suspicion whether Lord Hari has any hearing capacity at all.' Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said, "You must try to understand the reason for it. You have seen peasants bringing water to the sugarcane field. The fields have ridges on all sides to prevent the water from leaking out, but those are made of mud and often have holes here and there. The peasants work tremendously hard to draw water along the drains but it leaks out through the holes and doesn't reach the destination. Desires are like the holes. Your practice of austerities and your calling on God practically go in vain, for the holes of your desires sap them up. Minds freed from worldly desires naturally look up towards God. Faith and devotion to God will find the way

4. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2nd edition), p. 764.

5. According to the *Great Master*, p. 316, Sri Ramakrishna visited Natabar Goswami's house in 1879; but the *Gospel*, p. 502, claims it to be 1880. However, it is agreed that the first meeting between the two took place at Sihore at the house of Hridayram Mukherjee, the Master's nephew.

6. Natabar Goswami lived at Belte, a village next to Phului-Shyambazar. A well-known Vaiṣṇava devotee, he had met Sri Ramakrishna earlier. The latter stayed in his house for about a week.



out of the bush.’<sup>7</sup> This brief explanation by Sri Ramakrishna and his lucid treatment of the subject greatly impressed Pratap, and he benefited in spite of himself. However, disparities between precept and practice in his life stood in the way of changing his personality and stoutly opposed any deliberate transformation by the Master. Indeed his defence mechanism was so adamant that Sri Ramakrishna himself warned the lay devotees of its incipient dangers.

Sri Ramakrishna, now forty-four, possessed an irresistible charm which made people adore him, love him and finally accept him as a dear and near one. He had already attained the rare experience which made all religions look like a spectrum of divine wisdom and love, a universal vision rare in any religious tradition. Considering himself a child of the Divine Mother, he would speak and act spontaneously as She spoke and acted through him. He spoke in parables which seemed to be deceptively simple. For him, the spiritual development of each human being was unique. He could definitely assess the spiritual potentiality and attainments, if any, in a man. He would then guide him along the path best suited for him and finally lead him to the infinitude of blessedness.

One characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna’s spiritual leadership was his unique ability to release aspirants from their narrow outlook or sectarian approach to the Divine. He could and did transmit the spirituality and joy which flooded his being to any spiritual aspirant according to the latter’s receiving and retentive capacity. He would get hold of a man where he stood and push

7. *Punthi*, p. 118. We find Pratap asking the Master a similar question on September 19, 1884; and the Master assured him a hundred times that God listens to man’s prayer for Bhakti, provided it is genuine and earnest (see *Gospel*, p. 502).

him forward. As a teacher he could immediately come down to the level of the pupil and share his experience with him. He used to develop a distinct relationship with each disciple, maintain it throughout his life and communicate spirituality directly through words, touch, wish or even a glance or smile. Everyone experienced ineffable joy in his company and gradually discovered in himself the transformation that he was already going through.

Pratap came in close contact with Sri Ramakrishna sometime after his first meeting at Sihore. Before Hriday left Dakshineswar for good, Pratap Hazra came there in the company of Natabar Goswami of Phului-Shyambazar.<sup>8</sup> It was definitely before June 12, 1881. Sri Ramakrishna received both of them cordially. He allowed Pratap to live with him at Dakshineswar and took good care of him. He used to tell others, ‘Hazra is not a man to be trifled with. If one finds the big *dargā* [Muslim shrine] here, then Hazra is the smaller *dargā*.’

But a great spiritual master like Sri Ramakrishna could see through the mind of a man. He could immediately recognize the spiritual status of Pratap, his foibles and future possibilities. Later at Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna was heard to observe, ‘He [Pratap] is steadfast in his devotion.’ He practises *japa* a little. But he also behaves in a queer way.’ Somewhat contrary to this he once told Narendra, an admirer of Pratap, ‘He is a rogue. He is a rascal. You don’t understand him.’<sup>9</sup>

Following the illness of Pratap’s mother, Sri Ramakrishna tried to persuade him to go home and serve his mother. Pratap was less than pleased, and instead he went to Sinthi, Bhatpara and then to Baidyanath. On hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna was annoyed. In ecstasy he quarrelled with the

8. *Punthi*, p. 276.

9. *Gospel*, p. 744.



Divine Mother saying, 'Why do you bring such worthless, wayward people here? I cannot do so much. Let there be at the most one fourth or so of a seer of water to one seer of milk; my eyes are burning with smoke as I continue pushing the fuel into the fire. If you like, go and give personally. I cannot do so much pushing of fuel into the fire; don't bring such people any more.'<sup>10</sup>

Calculative Pratap weighed his every step even in the practice of religion, and was obsessed with the idea of acquiring some miraculous power by means of austerities. The Master's advice of giving up such ulterior motives was not acceptable to him. Though kind and sympathetic towards Pratap, Sri Ramakrishna had to warn his young disciples, saying, 'That fellow Hazra, has a very calculating mind; don't give ear to him.' These two persons, living at a distance of, say, ten yards from each other, hardly showed any similarity in their approach to life's goal; but in spite of it there was no lack of warmth between them.

Equally striking is the fact that Pratap soon made a position for himself at Dakshineswar. Posing himself as a follower of the path of knowledge, he loudly repeated now and then '*soham, soham*'. He spent quite some time in telling his beads. Observing his conduct Sri Ramakrishna once observed, 'Hazra with all his austerity and *japa*, doesn't allow an opportunity to slip by for earning money as a broker.' Pratap had a debt of about one thousand five hundred rupees which made him very much worried.

He had devotion to his ideal, but he was conceited. He told Sri Ramakrishna, 'You don't care for me now, but later you will be seeking my company.'<sup>11</sup> It was because of this defect in Pratap's character that he

ignored all sense of propriety and decorum. Unlike other devotees he was almost impervious to the spiritual influence ever radiating from Sri Ramakrishna. Pratap used to believe that God would grant him wealth because he had devoted himself to *japa* and meditation. His exaggerated self-esteem and bolstered pride prevented him from appreciating, not to speak of relying on, the assurance kindly offered by Sri Ramakrishna in these words: 'One day I was returning from the pine-grove, when I saw you telling your beads. I said to the Divine Mother, "Mother, what a small-minded fellow he is! He lives here and still he practises *japa* with a rosary! Whoever comes here will have his spiritual consciousness awakened all at once; he won't have to bother much about *japa*..."'<sup>12</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna advised him, 'People with a craze for ritual purity do not attain knowledge. Follow conventions only as much as necessary. Don't go to excess.' Contrary to this valuable advice, Pratap became a strong advocate of the petty religious conventions and rules of conduct, and he criticized others including Sri Ramakrishna. At times he thought of Sri Ramakrishna as a great soul, but soon thereafter he would slight him. After he got himself settled at Dakshineswar he came forward to advise even Sri Ramakrishna. Observing that Sri Ramakrishna was not practising formal worship, telling of beads, marking the forehead, etc., Pratap one day said, 'Look, this is not good. If you continue this way for long people will disrespect you. Please do something—at least tell beads as I do, to satisfy the visitors if not for anything else. So many people visit here. If they find you telling beads they will think that you have gone through some spiritual practices at least.' Laughing heartily, Sri Ramakrishna called Latu, Harish, Ramlal and others and told them

<sup>10</sup>. *Great Master*, p. 605.

<sup>11</sup>. *Gospel*, p. 747.

<sup>12</sup>. *Gospel*, p. 552.



Pratap's words.<sup>13</sup> Sri Ramakrishna's patience with him, as he tried to give Pratap comfort and happiness, defies description. With all his intelligence, Pratap could hardly appreciate the saint's compassion towards him. Sometimes he appeared to the Master as a pest. Sometimes he became mellowed in the presence of the Master, but the next moment he was his old self again.

Conceited and vituperative, Pratap used to uphold controversial and heretical views. He would say, 'What does it matter whether an incarnation of God exists or not!'<sup>14</sup> Compassionate as he always was, Sri Ramakrishna thought, 'Why should I blame the poor man? How is he to know?'<sup>15</sup> Sri Ramakrishna observed sympathetically, 'Hazra is not to blame. During the period of struggle one should follow the method of discrimination... but the state of perfection is quite different. After reaching God one reaffirms what formerly one denied... After the realization of God, He is seen in all beings. But His greater manifestation is in men. Again, among men God manifests Himself more clearly in those devotees who are sattvic, in those who have no desire whatever to enjoy "women" and "gold". Where can a man of *samādhi* rest his mind after coming down from the plane of *samādhi*? That is why he feels the need of seeking the company of pure-hearted devotees, endowed with *sattva* and freed from attachment to women and gold. How else could such a person occupy himself in the relative plane of consciousness?'<sup>16</sup> Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly advised Hazra not to find fault with others. One day he told him, 'Don't speak ill of anyone. It is Nārāyaṇa Himself who has

assumed all these forms.' But Pratap did not pay heed to the advice.

Pratap was inconsistent, often reversing his own stand; but then, he had to evolve his own understanding like others, and he was allowed to correct his wrong notions under the loving care of Sri Ramakrishna. The adept Master assured Pratap on September 19, 1884, 'What you are doing is right in principle, but the application is not correct. Don't find fault with anyone, not even with an insect. As you pray to God for devotion, so also pray that you may not find fault with anyone.' Pratap, however, was perhaps not serious enough to take such advice. Though he would openly declare, 'The world is unreal, like a dream,' he had a penchant for money, material things and people's attention. Such lack of sincerity was no doubt the biggest stumbling block to his spiritual progress. And he was fond of arguing. Sri Ramakrishna sometimes pointed him out as an example of barren argumentation, as when he said: 'Hazra used to practise much *japa* and austerity here. But in the country he has his wife, children and land. Therefore, along with his spiritual disciplines he carried on the business of a broker. Such people cannot be true to their word. One moment they say they will give up fish, but next moment they break their vow.'<sup>17</sup>

The shrewd Pratap was perspicacious enough to draw the attention of Sri Ramakrishna's well-to-do devotees and tell them his high-sounding religious views. He even succeeded in endearing himself to some of the devotees, including the brilliant Narendra. Simultaneously he could alienate himself from the rest of the devotees for he was, in fact, outstanding for his pretentiousness and idiosyncracies. Many pooh-poohed him for the contradiction between his words and conduct.

Thinking too highly of himself, Pratap

13. Chandrasekhar Chattopadhyay, *Sri Sri Latu Maharajer Smriti Katha*, Bengali (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 2nd edition), p. 106.

14. *Gospel*, p. 175.

15. *Gospel*, p. 168.

16. *Gospel*, p. 264.

17. *Gospel*, p. 352.



was always hypercritical of others, particularly of some of the youths living under Sri Ramakrishna's care. At times he was even mischievous. He tried to distract others from their particular spiritual attitude and upset the faith of the young men living under the guidance of Sri Ramakrishna. To cite a few examples of his arrogant views: he held that Totapuri was an ordinary man;<sup>18</sup> he spoke slightingly of Śrī Caitanya as a 'modern incarnation';<sup>19</sup> he opined that 'a man cannot be liberated unless he was born in a brahmin's body';<sup>20</sup> he could not be persuaded to believe that Brahman and Śakti are one and the same, a fundamental teaching of Sri Ramakrishna; he addressed pure Ātman as 'Īśvara'.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of all Hazra's limitations, Sri Ramakrishna lent him his love and sympathy so that Pratap could advance in his journey towards the Divine. Sri Ramakrishna advised him in 1884, 'What will you achieve by mere study of scriptures? ... Gather all information and then plunge in. Suppose a pot has dropped in a certain part of a lake. Locate the spot and dive there. ... After the realization of God, how far below lie the Vedas, the Vedānta, the Purāṇa, the Tantra! ... I had all the experiences that one should have, according to the scriptures, after one's direct perception of God. ... I would see God in meditation, in the state of *samādhi*, and I would see the same God when my mind came back to the world. When looking at this side of the mirror I would see Him alone, and when looking on the reverse side, I saw the same God.'<sup>22</sup> Sri Ramakrishna used to push men up from the point where they actually stood. Kind and benevolent as he was, he assuaged Pratap's sorrow by once allowing him to massage his feet—

a privilege given to a rare few—for he had noticed that his earlier refusal had hurt Pratap greatly.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the myriad contortions in Pratap's psyche which deserved only a mild sneer, there was one area which cried out for severe castigation. Annoyed at Pratap's interference in the training of the young aspirants, Sri Ramakrishna one day prayed to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother! Hazra is trying to upset the views of this place. Either give him right understanding or take him away from here.'<sup>24</sup> Sri Ramakrishna was fed up with him and was no longer willing to argue and quarrel with him to straighten out his ideas. Deeply concerned as he was with the young men growing under his loving care, he sheltered them from all alien thoughts and deeds like an aggressive mother-bird brooding over her chicks. But his infinite compassion could never be kept long in check. He once said to Mahimacharan, 'Now and then he [Pratap] teaches me a lesson. Sometimes I scold him when he argues too much. Later, when I am lying in bed inside the mosquito curtain, I feel unhappy at the idea of having offended him. So I leave the bed, go to Hazra, and salute him. Then I feel peace of mind.' Sri Ramakrishna gave him a long rope, but unfortunately Pratap misused it. His egotism, instead of being checked, got inflated all the more. He became quite incorrigible and was sometimes an out-and-out nuisance. Upset by Pratap's conduct, Sri Ramakrishna complained to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, see what a fix I am in! Hazra scolds me because I worry about those young men.'

Sri Ramakrishna one day prayed to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, if Hazra is a hypocrite, then please remove him from here.' Later on he told Pratap of his prayer. After a few days Hazra laughed

18. *Gospel*, p. 298.

19. *Gospel*, p. 554.

20. *Gospel*, p. 555.

21. *Gospel*, p. 623.

22. *Gospel*, p. 505.

23. *Latu Maharajer Smriti Katha*, p. 107.

24. *Gospel*, p. 529.



at him saying, 'You see, I am still here.' But strangely enough, he soon had to go away from Dakshineswar.<sup>25</sup> With the irritant gone, Sri Ramakrishna had some respite and could guide the young aspirants without interference. Yet Hazra wasn't gone forever, for we find him at the Cossipore Garden in the last week of December 1885.

In spite of a false sense of spiritual growth which induced complacency in Pratap, Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual greatness was so palpable that it impressed itself even on Hazra's mind at times. One day he told Sri Ramakrishna in the presence of Mahimacharan, 'You, sir, are incomparable. You have no peer in the world. Therefore nobody understands you.'<sup>26</sup> We find him also making salutations to Sri Ramakrishna, acknowledging his guardianship and seeking his protection. A mood so congenial for spiritual development, however, never persisted in him for long, though we find him remaining near Sri Ramakrishna wherever the latter went.

On January 1, 1886, at the Cossipore Garden, Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed by the urge of divine grace, blessing Girish Chandra Ghosh and many others among the thirty-two devotees present, exclaiming, 'What more need I tell you? Be illumined!' Those blessed persons felt that Sri Ramakrishna had for the first time revealed himself directly as a divine incarnation. Pratap was absent when this happened. On his return in the evening he heard all about the wonderful grace showered by Sri Ramakrishna. Full of remorse he went to Narendranath, who had coined the humorous name 'Thousand-a' the enlightened one, for him.<sup>27</sup> Narendranath,

specially sympathetic and friendly with 'Thousand-a', came to his rescue and took him to Sri Ramakrishna who was lying seriously ill. Despite Narendranath's persistent request, Sri Ramakrishna refused to grant any special grace to Pratap just then, for he knew that such grace would be too much for Pratap to stand. The kind-hearted Master, however, took a very sympathetic view and assured Pratap of enlightenment before the latter's physical death. Poor Pratap could not believe it, perhaps, for only five days later he fasted for the whole day and caught hold of the Master's feet, begging him for his special grace. Only with great difficulty could he be made to spare Sri Ramakrishna.<sup>28</sup> But now Pratap felt that his enlightenment was assured, and he was happy.

Sometime thereafter, he left for home. His eldest son Yatindranath had come to Calcutta and persuaded his father to accompany him to their native village. He returned home but tried to lead a life bereft of worldliness. Apparently he could not reconcile himself to the worldly life even though he felt a keen urge for it. He lived in the parlour of his house for quite some days and then returned to Dakshineswar. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, his egotism swelled up further. It reached its apotheosis when he had the effrontery to ask Saradaprasanna (later Swami Trigunatitanānda), 'What do you think of me?' Lata Maharaj later reminisced, 'Following Sri Ramakrishna's passing away Pratap developed the idea that he was a great incarnation of God; he was greater than Sri Ramakrishna himself.'<sup>29</sup>

Even so, some serious change did come over him. He was able to stem the tide of hypercriticism to a certain extent, though he could not easily straighten all the

<sup>25</sup>. *Gospel*, p. 744.

<sup>26</sup>. *Gospel*, p. 623.

<sup>27</sup>. In Bengali, *hāzār* means 'thousand'; so 'Hāzrā' becomes 'Hāzār-a'. See Mahendranath Dutta, *Srimat Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Bengali (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 3rd edition), vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>28</sup>. *Udbodhan* 76 (Agrahāyan 1381 B.S.): 528-29.

<sup>29</sup>. *Lata Maharajer Smriti Katha*, p. 107.



many twists and turns in his crooked character. He went home and lived there, begetting another son, named Saratchandra, and a daughter. A recent search in the locality revealed that few of his descendants survived. The present head of the Hazra family is one Chandi Hazra, forty-eight, a descendant of Pratap's first cousin Yatindranath.

Though outwardly Pratap did not admit that Sri Ramakrishna was anything more than a holy man, he gradually developed dependence and finally took refuge in him. We learn from the memoirs of Mahendranath Dutta that Pratap used to spend much of his later days with Iswarchandra Mukherjee, a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna at Mechuabazar Street, Calcutta. In 1894 when Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was celebrated at Dakshineswar, Pratap took his seat on a carpet spread on the northeast verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room. He told his beads throughout the day. No doubt he was an adept in *japa*.<sup>30</sup>

And the last days of his life presented a dramatic picture of the transformation he had already undergone. In the month of Chaitra 1306 B.S. (March-April 1901), he was in his native village. For three days he suffered from slight fever; a village doctor attended to him. One evening Pratap asked his wife to request the villagers to visit his home next morning, for he was going to die at about 9 a.m. Accustomed to such high-sounding pronouncements, she didn't pay heed to his words. Next morning, however, he persuaded her to go to the villagers. Some laughed to hear it, and some again came to see the fun.

At about 8-30 a.m. people found him telling beads as was his wont, but some noticed a change in him; his face was lit up. Pratap seemed delighted and loudly said, 'Welcome! Most welcome! Here comes Thakur! After such a long time

Thakur has kindly remembered me!' He asked his wife to spread a carpet for Sri Ramakrishna. After some coaxing she reluctantly obliged him. Pratap said, 'Thakur! You may kindly take your seat and wait for me till I breathe my last.' Again Pratap devoted himself to telling his beads. Soon thereafter he exclaimed, 'Welcome! Ramdada! Here is Ramdada! How fortunate I am!' His wife obeyed his request to spread another seat and he requested this invisible guest also to take his seat and wait. Again he concentrated his mind on *japa*. Suddenly he shouted joyously, 'Welcome! Most welcome! Here is Yogin Maharaj! Oh! what a joyous day!' Pratap made a similar request to Swami Yogananda too. Then with folded hands he addressed Sri Ramakrishna, 'Since you have been so kind to me, please do me another favour. Please accompany me to the *tulsi* plant where I want to give up my body!' With Sri Ramakrishna's consent Pratap asked his wife to spread the carpets near the *tulsi* plant in the courtyard. He asked her to spread his bed there too. Then going to the *tulsi* plant, he requested the three visitors, unseen by others, to take their seats. He lay down on the bed and began telling his beads again. His face was beaming with joy. But doubt dies hard: everyone thought this was just some more of his usual bombast; they believed him only when they heard him say 'Hari' thrice and breathe his last. They were shocked as also amazed. None was prepared for such a turn of events.<sup>31</sup> Hazra was sixty-two to sixty-three years of age.<sup>32</sup>

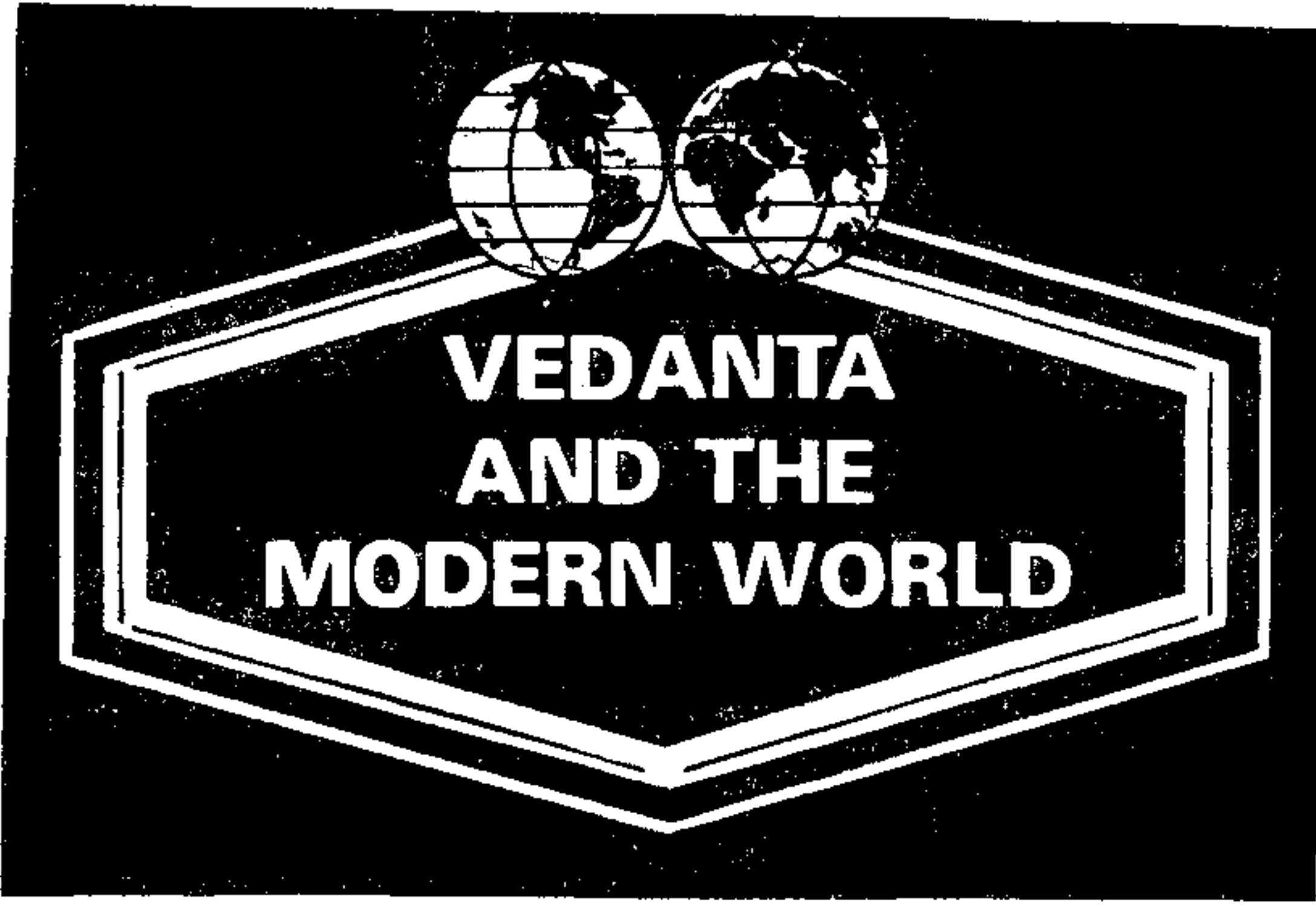
Swami Adbhutananda observed that it was  
(Continued on page 230)

31. *Tattvamanjari* 7 (no. 9): 214-16.

32. Subodh Chandra De, *Sri Ramakrishna*; Bengali (1334 B.S.), p. 276. According to M, Pratap Chandra Hazra passed away in the month of Baisakh 1307 (April-May 1901) when he was sixty-three or sixty-four years of age; see *Tattvamanjari* 4 (no. 4): 73.

30. *Jibaner Ghatanabali*, p. 107.





## IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE ?—III

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

### SYMPTOMS OF ESCAPISM (contd.)

#### *Non-Ethical Character*

The most striking of all the symptoms of escapism in Vedanta, according to the critics, is its non-ethical or amoral character.<sup>1</sup> The more extreme critics not only levy the charge of indifference to morality, but active encouragement of immorality.<sup>2</sup> They refuse to admit the presence of any moral virtues whatsoever. However, since the Smṛtis, Purāṇas and Itihāsas are so full of mention of virtues, cardinal and non-cardinal, these are interpreted in the light of asceticism, ritualism, superstition or mythology, and, thus, dismissed. The altruism of the highly prized virtues of hospitality, forgiveness, truth, purity, compassion, is sought to be neutralized by discovering an illogical, antisocial, defective character in the conduct enjoined and practised.<sup>3</sup>

Critics find it particularly hard to reconcile themselves to the supposed absence of

social and cultural ethics in Vedanta. Paradoxically, Hinduism which is characterized as a social system (represented by *dharma*) is said to allow little place for society in its theory and practice of philosophy. The highest goal is salvation pure and simple, and to this goal the world and its duties are incidental, not essential. *Dharma* has reference only to the individual's own perfection (*ātmasiddhi*); there is no recognition of social duties; that is, humanitarian moral ideals are not present in any positive sense, but only the virtues of passive and negative tolerance.<sup>4</sup> Non-social self-sufficiency is the keynote of the law of karma which prevents development of the idea of suffering for the sake of others and makes positive moral aid to others self-contradictory. Self-rule, *svarājya*, alone supplies the principle of moral conduct; neither society nor state nor even God can supply the rule. The zeal is for self-improvement without reference to society. Each is to be a lamp unto himself.

1. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, pp. 361-62.

2. Cf. N. N. S. Gore, *A Rational Refutation of Hindu Philosophical Systems*, p. 278; also G. A. Jacob, *Manual of Hindu Pantheism*, p. 122.

3. E. W. Hopkins, *Ethics of India*, pp. x-xi, gives a summary of J. MacKenzie's criticisms.

4. Cf. Rudolf Otto, *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*, p. 84. The negative form of the golden rule is found in *Yājñavalkya Samhitā*, 2.65 :

न तत् पदस्य समदध्यात् प्रतिकूल्यम् यद् आत्मनः,

but not the active (positive) form of command to love one's neighbour.



In the moral discipline for *mokṣa* the bias is towards service of God and not towards service of man. Vedanta in its non-dualistic phase leaves out altogether the relation of man to man and makes the religious relation consist only between the individual soul and God; identity with the Divine is achieved in a solitary state and not in society. And even theistic Vedanta, while admitting the soul's membership in a fellowship of devotees and sharing of mutual joys and sorrows, does not insist upon the world of human relations as a necessary corollary of the service of God. Theistic service is merely submission to the will of God, independence from a world of human relations in which one might perform works of charity and love. It provides only for religious virtues and activities. Hence Vedanta fails to provide for a philosophy of society on moral lines and leaves tradition as the only guide in these matters. Such lack of socio-moral activities is a sure symptom of denial of life and world.<sup>5</sup>

The critics discover that the goal and scope of ascetic discipline allow no scope for individuality. In Advaita the very recognition of an individual soul is a logical inconsistency, a concession made to the empirical and temporary state of being; and Śaṅkara formally denies the existence of an individual soul<sup>6</sup> or depreciates it.<sup>7</sup> This approach results in a complete devaluation of personality.<sup>8</sup> The chief problem of Vedanta being the disjunction of the phenomenal self from the transcendental, it aims to remove this separation by rejection of phenomenality altogether. Search for reality does not take

place through self-development and self-expression or through one's contribution to the world, but through the obliteration of the obstacles and allurements of self.<sup>9</sup> There is not only the attempt to rise above selfishness but even to rise above self; the two are confused and equally condemned.

The destruction of individuality is effected by suppression of all desires and volitions. While most people struggle for satisfaction of desires to a certain point, the Indian mind finds little zest in the struggle and looks only to the ending of all desires. No possible worth is recognized in desires, and the blame is put on the faculty itself, as well as on its working.<sup>10</sup> Any desire, however good, is tied up with the separative ego; therefore, the ideal man is the *akāmyamān* (desireless one).<sup>11</sup> Through yoga and *sannyāsa* the twin evils of desire and plurality-consciousness are suppressed, after which all action ceases to affect the man.<sup>12</sup> This is objected to by the critic on the ground of psychological impossibility, since all natural motive, meaning, and material content have been removed, as well as on the ground of its being a worthless and sterile ideal likely to produce nothing but hardness of heart. The attempt of the *Gītā* to reinstate the ideal of perfect action through devotion to God and discharge of one's social duties is a mere rationalization to hide the non-ethical and world-negating principle.

Critics take most serious exception to the supermoralism of Vedanta: its tendency to transcend empirical moral distinctions and standards. Vedanta not only holds the way to salvation to be open but also posits the attainment of the goal as an actual experience. Critics find that the only use

5. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*, p 243.

6. See Śaṅkara Bhāṣya on *Brahma Sūtra*, 1.1.19; 1.4.22.

7. See *ibid.*, 2.3.50: *upādhis* of the Self are neutral.

8. Cf. Alfred Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, II, p. 86, where he quotes Vamadeva Sastri.

9. Cf. Archibald Edward Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 11.

10. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.33; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 8.1.1-6.

11. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.5; 4.4.22; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4; *Katha Upaniṣad*, 4.5.

12. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 4.14.



of the ideal of perfect freedom in life (*jīvanmukti*) is that it gives a sort of 'moral holiday', because such a being is consciously released from the call of duty in this world. The liberated man is a law unto himself, he has no more religious duties, or even moral and social duties; he has crossed sin by achieving identity with the *Ātman*; his limitations are ended.<sup>13</sup> At the final state of attainment the ethical progress achieved by karmic ascent is simply left behind. Perfection being a higher concept than good, the highest state is opposed to the ethical state, according to the critics; and it is dangerous to hold the principle that one who has realized reality cannot sin. Vedanta does not guard against the morally disastrous effects of this, for if past and future good and evil have no effect on the saint, they can be practised without effect; so the danger of antinomian conduct is not averted by the ideal of *dvandvātīta*.<sup>14</sup> If there is no incitement to evil, neither is there any to the good, nor is it possible for the enlightened man to do good since he has risen above all desires and motives. The highest state does not give support to morality, it does not bear any fruit in the conduct of life. If such a transcendental ethics is the determinant of the morality of every man, then this is no better than immorality.

#### CAUSES OF ESCAPISM

The above symptoms taken together constitute what is generally regarded as the escapist nature of Vedanta philosophy. The critics are not slow in discovering the causes of these 'undesirable' traits. We will

<sup>13</sup>. See *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.22-23; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.5-9; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 1.2.8; 4.14.3; *Kena Upaniṣad*, 34; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.9; *Prasna Upaniṣad*, 5.5; *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, 6.8.

<sup>14</sup>. See *Kausitaki Upaniṣad*, 3.1; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.12.3; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.23.

consider only the more theoretical or philosophical causes adduced by them.

#### *Intellectualism*

Many critics object to what they call the 'intellectualist' character of Vedanta. All Indian philosophies, they say, have a common presupposition, almost amounting to a dogma, that knowledge is the single absolute means to the highest perfection. This is not knowledge of the things of the world or even of nature or social life, but a philosophical gnosis by which the essence of the world is realized. From this intellectualism certain consequences follow in the outlook and conduct of the people.

Vedantic intellectualism operates in a peculiar form, divorced from conation, though allowing for play of affective elements.<sup>15</sup> The error of intellectualism lies in its belief that the reality of the subjective and objective world is to be sought in conscious thought alone.<sup>16</sup> The extreme form of such a belief is seen in nondualistic Vedanta, which finds its only indubitable certainty in affirming the sole reality of the consciousness of the philosophical subject, after the elimination of all internal and external, adventitious and changeable elements during the philosophizing process.

Nondualistic Vedanta advances the postulate of two kinds of knowledge. The lower contains all ordinary experiences, but it stops short of the Absolute, while in the higher knowledge the unity of reality is so firmly established that it is not knowledge in any ordinary sense. It may be allowed that the standpoint of philosophy is different from the purely common-sense or even scientific standpoint, but Vedanta provides

<sup>15</sup>. Cf. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 9, p. 812.

<sup>16</sup>. Cf. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, pp. 132, 134.



for no meeting point of the two, which are found to be absolutely separate in their aims, beliefs and functions.<sup>17</sup> The weakness of Vedantic intellectualism is that it cannot relate the two and dictates a total annihilation of the lower sphere instead of its sublimation in the higher.<sup>18</sup> This method is wasteful and negative since, by it, conclusions of the intellect at the lower level are not preserved or fulfilled in the higher intuition, but merely cancelled. Were the negation of the lower to imply that inadequate teaching may lead to more adequate, there would be scope for further intellectual effort; but if the total falsity of the lower is averred, it cannot lead to anything, and the impossibility of certainty in that sphere means that the intellect must lose heart. Intellectualism ends in pessimism as it becomes conscious of its own limits. The mind is completely shut up to itself and the goal is to know the self undisturbed by knowledge of the outside world.<sup>19</sup> The abstract method results in utter neglect and lack of interest in outside facts.

Vedantic intellectualism leads, perforce, to an abstract, agnostic view of reality. Finding all categories insufficient, non-dualistic Vedanta denies all these to reality, and at the same time the idea of bare unity and simplicity so fascinates the mind that any breach of that unity in the Absolute is regarded as a degradation of it. On the principle that 'all determination is negation' the conclusion of the unknowability of reality follows, since it is not knowable in terms of any empirical category. Due to its abstracting procedure, Vedanta reaches the conclusion of agnosticism; and from this abnormal treatment of human nature, intellectual hopelessness is bound to result.

Such intellectualism may satisfy the

17. See *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.1.10; 3.2.

18. W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 116.

19. Cf. Dorothea Jane Stephen, *Studies in Early Indian Thought*, p. 104.

intellect but is too detached from the practical realm of facts. The doctrine of the unreality of the lower level of existence and knowledge obstructs all attempts to grapple with and to surmount its difficulties. Vedantic intellectualism suggests the method of escaping reality and its evils by thinking them out of existence, and not by trying to solve them by the higher knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

Critics find the Vedantic concentration on truth and the consequent neglect of the values of goodness and beauty to be defective and unsound.<sup>21</sup> The conclusion that reality cannot be known since the world does not depict its nature means that man must attain some sort of mystical condition, which has no reference to social life and ordinary human concerns. In fact, all contact with the world is felt as a disturbance of ecstasy, and the desire to operate in or to explain it vanishes. 'Highest knowledge of self is achieved by two techniques, a systematic disparagement of the world as illusion or an equally thorough-going realization of the sheer materiality of it all.'<sup>22</sup> The negation of life and world is the inevitable consequence, and knowledge is prized as a means of escape.

Intellectualism or gnosis taking the mystical form has a further consequence in the form of asceticism, which is its essential prerequisite. It is not so much a balanced asceticism of moderation amidst the sensual pleasures and temptations of life in the light of its higher elements, but mere 'moral suicide' due to speculative dogma and thoroughly pessimistic in relation to the present life.<sup>23</sup> Since the world does not

20. Cf. W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 248; also W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 153.

21. Cf. R. E. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 30; also M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 262.

22. Heinrich Zimmer, *The philosophies of India*, p. 12.

23. J. Sully, *Pessimism*, p. 46.



represent the pure truth for which the knower is striving, it has to be overcome altogether. Intellect asserts its sole reality by annihilating all other factors of human nature through the mental power of meditation. The path of knowledge and the dawning of knowledge act as a suppressor and quietener of all desires, volitions and relations.

The intellectualist method of Vedanta is further aggravated by its individualistic and aristocratic bent. It treats of the individual instead of the community and preaches a salvation only from the individual standpoint, society being treated only as a means to an end. Formation of a 'redemptive aristocracy' is bound to result, because gnosis is not accessible to everyone.<sup>24</sup> The highest reality of Advaita has no regard for the religious needs of the common man but is preserved for a few true philosophers; for the majority a lower level is assigned. Theistic Vedanta has a less patronizing and exclusive attitude, as it offers a concrete reality which may combine both metaphysical validity and religious satisfaction at the highest level. But the critics find Vedanta to be essentially exclusive in that its highest truth is a jealously guarded privilege of the few high-born individuals, possessing the very pure, elevated and spiritual qualifications for the pursuit of the Vedantic path, which is much beyond the reach of the common man.<sup>25</sup> Since the larger part of humanity is excluded from the highest religious goal and must consent to remain in ignorance, this creates a sense of hopelessness and despondency in them. While in the best of the privileged few there is a chilling of mind and heart since they cannot share their blessed state with others, in the worst of them there is

arrogance resulting from conviction in their superiority.

As Vedanta puts its whole faith in the power of thought, it follows that the basis of religion and philosophy in India is metaphysical, not moral.<sup>26</sup> The absolute disregard of emotion and the minimal scope given to emotion in Vedantic intellectualism was bound to have eventually an adverse effect in the field of conduct. The corrective effect of will and practical action being absent, there was nothing to check the exaggeration of abstract thought in monistic Vedanta or to prevent the extreme emotionalism of later theistic Vedanta.<sup>27</sup> Since Vedanta aims at the destruction of the empirical and psychical mechanism and appeals to nondual consciousness in its aspect of pure knower, there is an absence of proper morality in it. Bondage is described as false thinking and the suffering consequent upon it, but not wrong willing. Hence liberation is sought in the form of new knowledge only, but this is an unsatisfactory idea unless the effect of that knowledge on the will of the knower is made clear.<sup>28</sup>

The conception of knowledge as the means of *mokṣa* is found everywhere in Vedanta; and religious ritual, worship and even good conduct are no longer required. At best, the effort is to be delivered from one's own's sins and not to aim at overcoming evil and sin in society at large. Knowledge does overcome evil,<sup>29</sup> but critical thought is turned upon morality to prove its non-validity for those who have reached the highest knowledge. The conclusion is not that the knower becomes virtuous but that 'knowl-

24. Max Weber et al., *The Religions of India*, p. 331.

25. W. S. Urquhart, *The Vedanta and Modern Thought*, p. 73.

26. Cf. Alfred Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 46 and 86, quoting Vamadeva Sastri.

27. Cf. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 9, p. 812.

28. Cf. Paul Deussen, *The System of the Vedanta*, p. 177.

29. See *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 5.10.9-10; 5.24.3; *Kausitaki Upaniṣad*, 3.1.



edge cancels past sins and permits the knower unblushingly to continue in what seems to be much evil with impunity.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding the insistence on good conduct in many places, knowledge of a doctrine is more powerful to save than commission of moral fault is powerful to destroy.<sup>31</sup> The search for the Divine in intellectualist Vedanta is apart from con-

duct and ethics, since the doctrine of Ātman is continually coming in conflict with our consciousness of moral distinctions and necessity of choice between good and evil, which are seen as mere verbal distinctions at the level of partial knowledge. Critics hold that the doctrine of *jñāna* may not produce evil living, but its neglect of morality produces bad results on untrained minds.<sup>32</sup>

(To be continued)

30. R. E. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 60.

31. Dorothea Jane Stephen, *Studies in Early Indian Thought*, p. 106.

32. Cf. N. N. S. Gore, *Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems*, p. 276-77.

(Continued from page 224)

through the friendly assistance of Narendranath that a hypocrite and peculiar man like Hazra, in spite of all his many shortcomings, was blessed by Sri Ramakrishna. Now Sri Ramakrishna's promise was fulfilled, and Hazra was bathed in tranquillity at the time of death. A study of Hazra's role in Sri Ramakrishna's divine play on earth is of great value. His relationship with Sri Ramakrishna yielded a wealth of instruction and inspiration for other sceptics, cynics and men who cannot overcome their crookedness in spite of themselves. Sri Ramakrishna's treatment of Hazra was a vivid illustration of how marvellously he

could assist a handicapped aspirant who grossly misused his talents, patiently helping him to strengthen his spiritual consciousness and leading him to the shrine of eternal joy.

Wherever Sri Ramakrishna is remembered in the following centuries, there Pratap Chandra Hazra will be remembered with love and a laugh for the vivid colour and lively humour he added to the Ramakrishna Līlā.<sup>33</sup>

33. Akshay Kumar Sen, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Mahima*, Bengali (Calcutta : Udbodhan Office, 2nd edition), p. 63.



## ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

Sitting high on the barren Castilian plateau in central Spain and encircled by forbidding medieval walls, the town of Avila seemed to grow up out of the lifeless soil. It was said that *en Avila, santos y cantos*—'in Avila, saints and stones'—for there wasn't much else immediately visible. Saints, because the many churches, monasteries and convents bore their names and honoured their memory; stones, because the austere-looking town was constructed of them. Indeed, it had a fortified appearance, and even the gothic cathedral looked more like a fortress than a place of worship. 'Avila of the Knights and Liegemen' had been for centuries a frontline post in the struggle of the Christians against the Moors. The struggle had ended in 1492 when, after eight centuries, the Moors had finally been driven out from the peninsula; but it had left as a legacy a spirit of strength, determination, fortitude, and a high code of honour.

Don Alonso de Cepeda held a position of respect in this small but proud town. Though of Jewish descent, he was a Christian and, like many of the Christianized Jews in Spain, he was a moderately wealthy man. His first wife passed away after giving him three children. In 1509 he married again, this time the beautiful and well-born Doña Beatriz de Ahumada. And on March 28, 1515, with the first glimmers of dawn, Doña Beatriz gave birth to her third child. The baby girl was given the name Teresa. (It was then the custom in Spain that some children take the name of their father's line, and some,

their mother's; thus, Teresa became 'Teresa de Ahumada'.) Soon little Teresa became her father's favourite; and indeed, there was an irresistible charm about her which won the hearts of all.

Her parents were not only very pious, but Don Alonso was also devoted to learning, his home boasting books on religion, philosophy and other subjects. He was determined that his children should learn to spell at a tender age, and be able to read by the age of seven. Thus it was that little Teresa was soon able to read the lives of saints together with her favourite sibling, Rodrigo, the elder brother closest to her in age. She was fascinated by the word 'eternal' which appeared over and over. 'It means for ever,' her mother explained. Teresa would indulge her sense of the mysterious by repeating again and again, 'for ever-ever-ever, Rodrigo!'

As she read the lives of women martyr-saints, she would think how easily they had purchased heaven: by patiently suffering just a short period of torture, these martyrs had won the right to enter heaven, for ever and ever! And nothing seemed so wonderful to her childish imagination as the glorious life in heaven as described in these books.

'What if we should go to the land of the Moors, Rodrigo, to be martyred? Then we too should be taken up into heaven to live for ever in glory with the angels and saints!' La niña, 'the little one', was not so much inspired with the love of God; she was enamoured of the thought that she would be clothed in golden raiment by the angels.



'It's not so easy Teresita! You don't know what a stoning is like!'

'But Rodrigo, it only takes a little determination. On our way we'll beg our bread, and once we reach the land of the Moors they'll behead us. It'll all be over in a moment. Just remember the rewards we'll get in heaven!' That settled it, for what were Rodrigo's common sense and age worth when pitted against the persuasive powers of la niña?

At daybreak the six-year-old Teresa and her ten-year-old brother sneaked silently out of the house, their only provision a few pieces of bread tied up in a napkin at the end of a stick. First they went to the hermitage of Lazarus and prayed before the Virgin Mary's image for Her blessings. Then, totally innocent of geography, they passed through the city gates and took the road towards Salamanca, thinking that the land of the Moors couldn't be too far. But there the truants were met by their Uncle Francisco who hurried them home, where Doña Beatriz and the other children were in tears as the servants dragged the well in an effort to find the missing ones.

Rodrigo suddenly forgot his pledge to die at the hands of the Moors and began to fear an imminent spanking. 'I told you we shouldn't, Teresa!'

'O Rodrigo! how could I know?'

Foiled in her quest of martyrdom, Teresa turned to the hermit-saints. With the help of Rodrigo she would build hermitages in the garden by piling up stones, but they would immediately tumble down again. Or she and other little girls would transform the courtyard into a convent and play nuns, la niña no doubt being the prioress. But this sort of play was quite natural for, in the Spain of those days, only two doors were open to women—marriage with its consequent total submission to a husband, and the convent.

Trained by the example of her compassionate father, Teresa would give tiny

alms. And from her pious mother she acquired a love to go off by herself to say her many daily prayers, especially the rosary. Thus all her childhood instincts were moulded in purity and religion.

But as she grew a little bigger, la niña picked up another liking from her mother. The beautiful but frail Doña Beatriz, though only in her late twenties, was suffering the fate of many wives of that period—exhaustion from repeated pregnancies; so could she be blamed for trying to find a little relief and entertainment by reading the tales of chivalry? Now as Teresa would come to sit alone by her mother, Doña Beatriz would still speak to her of the saints and the Mother of God; but she also began to speak of her favourite hero whose glories were related in the latest novel she was reading. For Doña Beatriz, who lived almost as a recluse these days, loved to share with the appreciative Teresa all her private enthusiasms. 'Private', because the austere Don Alonso would not have tolerated the reading of romances in his house for a moment; so the submissive Doña Beatriz kept her books hidden.

Teresa was a girl of high spirits, and these stories began to catch her imagination. Hearing of the love between a knight and lady she would ask, 'And they loved each other for ever and ever?' 'Yes, for ever,' the well-intentioned mother replied.

Then, in 1528, at the age of thirty-three, Doña Beatriz passed away, leaving behind seven sons and two daughters of her own, besides the now grown-up children of Don Alonso's first wife. She died so peacefully that she seemed to be but sleeping. Her will read, 'I bequeath my soul to Almighty God who created and redeemed it with His precious blood. I bequeath my body to the earth from which He formed it...'

Teresa found herself alone in a world from which her mother had protected her. She went once again to the hermitage of Lazarus, knelt before the picture of Mary



the Mother of God, and with tears asked Her to take the place of her earthly mother.

Now the thirteen-year-old girl suddenly became aware of her natural graces, which were considerable. She found that the heads of young men turned irresistibly as she passed by, and she felt a confusion of joy and shame. Had she not been initiated into the chivalric romances, she perhaps would have avoided this dangerous pleasure of flaunting her beauty. But as it was, she was now no longer happy unless she had a new novel. The martyrs and hermits of her childhood were replaced by Amadis de Gaule and other heroic knights. Inspired by these new ideals, she began to feel such pleasure in hearing people praise her beauty that she took great pains with her clothes and jewelry, hair and hands.

Don Alonso had always tried to prevent outsiders from entering his home, in order to keep his children away from impure influences. Only his brother Francisco's children were allowed entrance. But among these cousins of Teresa, there was one girl a little older than her who was so frivolous that Doña Beatriz had tried to prevent even her from entering the compound. Now that Doña Beatriz had passed away, no one was successful in keeping this girl out, and soon she became the great favourite of Teresa, who was bubbling over with the joy and excitement of blossoming womanhood. The girl began to fritter away Teresa's time with her idle chatter, and Teresa herself began to engage more and more readily in frivolities.

There was another cousin, a young man somewhat older than Teresa, who soon took a liking to her. And Teresa was not indifferent to him. (At that time cousin-marriage was permitted in Spain.) Abetted by the servants and encouraged by the frivolous girl-cousin, their affair developed secretly. For la niña's part, even in dream she couldn't do anything dishonourable; she had a twofold instinct for purity:

purity of the body and purity of reputation. She merely loved to be loved. But though their relationship never went beyond sweet conversation, the danger was always present. And she fell further and further from the good instincts of her childhood.

Luckily, three months after this affair began, she was sent to a convent. Her elder half-sister Maria had just been married, and there was no responsible woman left in the house to watch over la niña. Besides, Don Alonso was beginning to worry about his sixteen-year-old Teresita's inventive and fiery spirit; though he could believe no evil of this his favourite child, he thought it safer to give her care to the Augustine convent, Our Lady of Grace.

Our Lady of Grace, located outside the walls of Avila, enjoyed great prestige. Girls of well-to-do families were sent there for their education, which consisted more in the practice of virtue, the deepening of their religious faith, and learning to manage a home than it did in formal book-learning.

For the first week there, Teresa was most unhappy; not so much from being in a convent, but because of wounded honour: she was afraid that others knew of her vanity. However, she herself had already tired of frivolities; so after a week she was happier than she had been outside. Here also she soon became the favourite of all; and in the company of these devout nuns, the good instincts nurtured in her childhood returned to protect and guide her. Still, the spirited girl had an intense aversion to the idea of becoming a nun herself.

At home she had become an excellent cook, skilled at embroidery, a stunning dancer, and had even written a chivalric novel which was praised highly by all her relatives and friends. But here at the convent she found something she could not do: weep for God; and she felt jealous to see the nuns doing so. This sense of lack began to act as an acid to corrode her inordinate self-satisfaction.



There was one very devout nun in charge of all the young girls studying at the convent. She even slept with the girls; and though strict, she commanded the love of them all. This nun, Sister Maria, took a special interest in Teresa: perhaps she saw something of solid worth in this girl of charm and talent. Teresa, her defences somewhat weakened now, responded to Sister Maria's affectionate care. She began to pray that God show her in what state she might serve Him best, though at the same time she hoped that it wouldn't be in a convent! Didn't people in Avila say, 'Teresa de Ahumada? She'll marry whomsoever she likes'?—for she was perfect in every way. Yet she disliked the idea of lifelong slavery to a husband even more than enclosure in a convent. For now that she was away from her cousins, she found that human love was not 'for ever and ever' after all. Thus this pretty and charming young girl found herself trapped. The hand of Time was pushing her forward towards only two doors, both of which looked forbidding: imprisonment in a convent, and slavery to a husband.

Gradually her resistance was further weakened, so that after passing over a year at the convent, she was reconciled somewhat to becoming a nun. These Augustinians, however, frightened her with their austere way of life; so she decided that if she finally did enter a convent, it would be the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation outside Avila, where a close friend now lived and where the life was a bit more accommodating.

While she was still vacillating between the possibilities of marriage and the nun's veil, she fell ill and was taken home by her father. After recovering somewhat, she was sent for recuperation in her older sister Maria's in the countryside. On her way, Teresa stopped at the house of her uncle, Don Pedro, a virtuous widower who spent his time in the practice of devotions, acts

of charity and reading good books, and whose conversation was about God and the vanity of the world. He must have been pleased with Teresa, as everyone who ever met her was. Perhaps in an effort to give a good turn to her youthful enthusiasm, he asked her to read to him. Though she wasn't keen to do so, she smiled and took from him a big volume—the letters of St. Jerome, one of those Christian writers who excelled at scaring people out of their wits. As she read aloud, she was impressed again and again with the message, 'All is vanity, all is nothing, all things pass away.' This thought, which she had vaguely sensed in her early childhood, now reverberated through her mind and nerves. She was also moved by the not-so-noble fear of hell which St. Jerome inspired in her. And she began to think that, had she died during her recent illness, that's exactly where she would have ended up! This fear of hell determined her to force herself into a convent.

After recuperating in the countryside, she returned to Avila. Once again she was the life of Don Alonso's home, but within her the words still resounded, 'all is nothing.' She told her father that she wanted to take the nun's veil. The pious gentleman was shocked. He loved God and the Church, but must he sacrifice the heart of his heart, his beloved Teresa, the very sight of whom filled him with joy? No, she must wait until after his death, then she could do as she pleased.

Teresa wasn't the type to be so easily dissuaded. Just as she had once talked the older Rodrigo into going with her to seek martyrdom, so she now inspired her younger brother Antonio with a desire for the religious life. In the fall of 1536, at the age of twenty-one, Teresa set out before dawn with the fourteen-year-old Antonio, much as she had left with Rodrigo for the land of the Moors. But there was a difference: as she silently shut the door of the



house behind her, careful not to let anyone know what she was about, her heart was filled with deepest misery instead of the excitement of adventure: as yet she had no love for God to subdue her love for father and kinsfolk. She was leaving because she knew she must, and her sense of honour was so strong that once she had told her father and friends that she had decided to do something, nothing could turn her back—her reading of the tales of chivalry had not been for nothing. But as the door shut to, she felt as though all her bones were crushed. Only the innocent little Antonio's presence forced her to pull

herself together, for her code of honour would not allow any show of weakness in front of a younger one. She had made Avila's motto her own: *Antes quebrar que doblar*, to break oneself rather than yield, to die rather than give up.

Antonio escorted her to the Convent of the Incarnation, outside the town walls, and then proceeded to the Dominican convent to become a friar preacher. As the Incarnation doors were bolted behind her, Teresa reassured herself that 'all is nothing'. Inside, her friend and the other nuns were there to greet her.

(To be continued)

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE AUTHENTIC YOGA: BY P. Y. DESHPANDE. Published by Rider and Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6JD. 1978. Pp. xi + 163. £ 3.75.

The traditional six systems of Indian philosophy are often classed into three pairs—Nyaya and Vaisesika, Sankhya and Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta—the first pair being material, the second psychological, and the third metaphysical. Of these six systems, Sankhya and Yoga have often been so closely identified that they seem to be two poles of one system, Sankhya being the philosophy and Yoga the practice. In fact, Yoga, is almost never referred to as a Darsana or philosophy; it is usually considered to be a system of practical mysticism based on Sankhya Darsana, though a few 'minor' differences are normally pointed out. For example, contrary to Sankhya, Yoga postulates the existence of a kind of Iswara; and Yoga lays emphasis on *dhyana* whereas Sankhya emphasizes *vicara* or discrimination.

*The Authentic Yoga*, however, challenges this hoary association of Sankhya with Yoga. The author says that not even the venerable Vyasa, in his commentary on the *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali, has answered the question, 'What is Yoga?' But, he continues, the answer is indicated in the very title of Patanjali's work: *Yoga Darsana*. Nowhere in the *Sutras* does Patanjali mention

'Sankhya' or any other Darsana; and shared terms like *prakrti* and *purusa*, claims the author, have different meanings in the two systems. Because no one has treated Patanjala Yoga as an independent Darsana, the system has never received the attention it deserves. The author offers this new book as a remedy.

Deshpande says the word 'authentic' used in the title is not intended to be provocative. It is used to 'indicate the astounding originality of Patanjali's approach to Reality, which carries with it the perfume of existential authenticity.' And original is Deshpande's approach to Patanjali. He gives us no direct clue as to external influences on his own thought. From the 'central importance he gives to ideas like 'choiceless awareness' and cultural 'conditioning', however, he appears to have imbibed some of the thought of J. Krishnamurti, who has given a certain popularity to these terms.

It is generally said that the first four *Sutras* contain the whole essence of Patanjali's spiritual vision, and that for the *uttama-adhikari* or aspirant of the highest competence, these four *Sutras* give sufficient understanding for liberation. The rest of the *Sutras* are only explication for aspirants of lower competence. Similarly, Deshpande's view of Yoga can be comprehended by a close study of his commentary on the first four *Sutras*. For our purposes here, however, it will suffice to examine his interpretation of the second



Sutra (*yogas-citta-vrtti-nirodha*), in which Patanjali defines Yoga. For there we will catch hold of the whole trend of Deshpande's thought.

His translation of this Sutra is: 'Yoga is that state of being in which the ideational choice-making movement of the mind slows down and comes to a stop.' This requires a bit of explanation.

As the author says, there are no 'alternatives' or 'choices' in the factual situation presented to the mind in experience, but only 'facts'. The mind, however, being shown these facts, refers them back to built-in likes and dislikes which are structured by past experiences of pleasure and pain. Thus it chooses those 'facts' which promise pleasure and avoids those which suggest pain. So deeply has this process become ingrained in us, that instead of seeing facts we see only choices; and we can't imagine any freedom other than the freedom to choose. Yoga, however, shows us the only authentic freedom—freedom from choosing. According to the author, this Yogic freedom can't be effected by wilful control or suppression, for such egocentric control is just another form of exercising the same old false freedom—that of choosing. The only escape is to cease from choosing, rest in 'choiceless awareness', wait and watch the mind come to an inevitable stop. Then man is established in his true existential identity; that is, the *existential* is no longer degraded by the choosing mind into the *ideational*, and at long last man finds himself 'alone' as a pure seeing entity. This is the state of Kaivalya or Aloneness.

Such, in brief, is the 'authentic yoga' according to Deshpande. Naturally, the book is more philosophical than practical, since one of Deshpande's main reasons for writing it was to give Yoga the status of an independent Darsana. But all of us are not so dissatisfied with tradition as Deshpande seems to be. The ancient tradition carried on by such commentators as Vyasa and Bhoja can certainly stand some rethinking and updating in the light of modern thought and modern needs; but it can hardly be relegated to oblivion in favour of choiceless awareness. Yet, just as two eyes set at a small distance from each other are necessary for seeing objects in perspective, so this new and original interpretation can help even traditionalists to understand Patanjali better.

The book is well written and well worth studying. Some of the insights are particularly illuminating, such as the discussions on Pranayama and Kriya Yoga. Another valuable aspect of the book is its general plan: the Sutras are

divided not only into the four traditional 'Padas' or chapters, but these Padas are subdivided into groups of related Sutras—usually from four to eight under a topic heading. Under each topic the Sutras are first given in transliterated Sanskrit, followed by a translation which is sufficiently expanded to give a lucid meaning in English. And below the group of Sutras, an extensive commentary is given in which the meaning of each Sutra is discussed within the context of the topic. The beauty of this arrangement is that it enables one to see the logical connection between the Sutras and between the groups of Sutras; and the development of thought through the four Padas stands revealed.

As very few in the world know Sanskrit, this new translation and interpretation is particularly valuable. Though the book is controversial, no one can come away from reading it without many ideas and a mind creatively unsettled from its accustomed ruts.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA  
*Mayavati*

SANKARA'S CONCEPT OF GOD: BY P. KRISHNA MOHAN. Published by Nelamutala Publishers, Mulapet, P.O. Nellore (A.P.) 524 003. 1978 (2nd edition). Pp. 131. Rs. 15/-.

*Sankara's Concept of God* is an excellent effort at investigating the deep spiritual personality of Acārya Śankara, in the light of his exposition of the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Brahma-Sūtras*. In the first chapter, the author gives a brief historical note on the evolution of Indian spiritual thought and describes the chaotic conditions in religion at the close of the seventh century A.D. The official patronage on which Buddhism had thrived in India for the early few centuries declined with the advent of the Gupta period—the Golden Age in Indian history—but spiritual leadership among the Hindus was lacking till Acārya Śankara came on the scene. The doctrine of Advaita, which had its roots in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads was being developed by the Acārya's predecessors, but it was left for Acārya Śankara to expound it logically and establish it on a sound footing.

The author points out the various ideas about God and acquaints us with the general philosophical thought contained in the Vedas, Vedānta, Buddhism and the early theistic Hinduism. The second chapter deals with certain biographical facts about Śankara and also the cultural background of his thought. Although the idea of



sannyasa was prevalent in Hindu society as an integral part of the *āsrma dharma*, the author believes that Śankara's inclination and acceptance of the holy order of sannyasa was an evidence of the impact of monastic Buddhism of the preceding centuries. According to him, there is no evidence of the organized monastic orders of the Hindus before Buddhistic times.

Śankara could revive and re-establish Hinduism in its pristine glory because in his philosophy he could bring together varied sects of Hinduism into one fold. In this revival he attacked some of the rigidities and orthodox practices of Hinduism. The author believes that Śankara was greatly influenced by Buddhist philosophy and at the same time understood carefully where Buddhism failed. This knowledge helped him in placing Hinduism on a firm footing.

The author further examines some important concepts in the Upaniṣads and elucidates the concept of Brahman and Atman in the light of the Acārya's exposition. This serves as an essential background for understanding Śankara's concept of God, dealt with in the fourth chapter. According to Śankara, the only reality is the Atman or the individual self. This individual self is the deep consciousness that never leaves us, one with the absolute Self, which is present even in dreamless sleep. But the individual self is associated with the ego. It is the ego which is covered with ignorance (*avidyā*) and therefore unable to realize the absolute Self.

The author points out the distinction between Śankara's and Berkeley's views about the external world. Berkeley regards the world as unreal because its existence depends on one's perception. According to Acārya Śankara, the world is unreal in the sense that the fundamental reality of the world can be understood only with reference to the ultimate mystical experience of an illumined soul. The author believes that Acārya Śankara has room for both Īsvara and Nirguṇa Brahman in his thought. The former is seen in the theistic aspect of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the latter is similar to the doctrine of void in Buddhism.

A chapter is added to draw out a comparison between Śankara and Spinoza. Here the author says that Spinoza appears close to Śankara when we draw a parallel between Spinoza's substance and Śankara's Nirguṇa Brahman, and between Spinoza's God and Śankara's Saḡuṇa Brahman. The author very skillfully points out the distinction between Spinoza's and Acārya Śankara's thoughts about the world, God and nondualism.

The book is well organized and serves as a

good introduction to the study of Advaita philosophy.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND MORAL CONDUCT. Published by Ramakrishna Math, Domalguda, Hyderabad 500 029. 1979 (first revised edition). Pp. xiii+77. Rs. 3/-.

Swami Vivekananda, the illustrious Patriot-Prophet, was, as it were, the embodiment of the Soul of India, with his comprehensive, intimate, and mature experience and knowledge of the civilizations and cultures of India and the world. With a penetrating insight into the personality and essential divine nature of man and his goal in life, he gave out his thoughtful and foundational ideas for the all-round regeneration of India and the elevation of 'man the brute into man the God'. His profound ideas contained in his speeches, letters, and writings in India and abroad have been compiled into the eight volumes constituting his *Complete Works*. Some of these ideas relating to 'universal ethics and moral conduct', without which no society can progress and prosper, either in the secular or in the spiritual field, are brought together in this booklet.

Swami Vivekananda was one of the greatest nation-builders who awakened our nation from its deep and long slumber and gave direction and purpose to its national life. He exhorted us to flood the country with spiritual ideals before flooding the land with social and political ideas, for thus alone a healthy social, economic, and political life could be built up on broad, noble foundations free from selfish wranglings and conflicts. It was the same age-old poignant exhortation which the great Vyasa had made: *Dharmad arthaśca kamaśca, sa kimartham na sevyate*. In his wake a host of other great persons, like Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, worked for the regeneration of India on moral and spiritual foundations.

But, unfortunately, after independence, short-sighted, Western-oriented, and often selfish politicians in the name of socialism, secularism, and other imported ideologies, set aside or grossly neglected the country's cultural, moral, and spiritual values and pursued only economic prosperity as an ideal. Further, religious and moral instruction was excluded from the educational curriculum. This resulted in degeneration of character, pursuit of material ends by any means, and all-round corruption. This state of



affairs brought home to the Government of India the fact that even material prosperity cannot be achieved without a moral foundation and men of character. Consequently, some remedial measures were thought of to impart moral and ethical instruction to students. These scattered teachings of Vivekananda, who equated education with character-building, man-making, and manifestation of the perfection already in man, were brought together as a help in this task by Swami Ranganathananda at the instance of the Government of India. They cover the different theoretical, practical and ideological aspects of morality and ethics in the context of man's development and progress towards social and spiritual fulfilment in a broad, non-sectarian, universal spirit. We hope this book will be widely popularized among the youth of this country.

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**CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION :**  
BY SWAMI PARAMANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, 11 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras 600 004. 1979 (first Indian edition). Pp. 130. Rs. 4.50.

The marvellous developments in science and technology over the past few centuries have diverted the mind of man to external nature, and man has become more and more extrovert and machine-bound, especially in the West. The religious and spiritual values pertaining to the inner life of man have been replaced by materialistic and hedonistic values which cater only to his external personality. But man is primarily a Spirit dwelling in a body, and the goal of life is to realize one's spiritual nature and manifest it in day-to-day life by the proper disciplining and control of the body-mind complex. Not only externally has man become slave to the machine, but also internally to the psychophysical mechanism. Naturally, the Spirit within is restless, finding no expression; and man is unhappy in spite of all material advancement. Life seems to be meaningless and mere boredom, for matter can only be a medium which can be acted upon: by itself it has no goal or purpose. Man is frustrated and his mind is distracted, disintegrating, and wandering aimlessly.

This situation has led some to seek means and methods of harmonizing the inner and outer life

of man. The attention of many thinkers and sensitive people has been turned to the higher spiritual values of religion—as distinguished from its dogmas, rituals and other outward expressions—and the disciplines inculcated by the different religions towards their realization and mental integration. In this process the Eastern religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, have a great appeal and attraction; for they have approached religion in a scientific spirit of investigation and realization of spiritual truths through systematic yogic methods of disciplining the mind. As such, numerous books, treatises, and translations of authoritative texts concerning concentration, meditation, mental control, etc., have been appearing, especially after Swami Vivekananda's scientific exposition of *Raja-Yoga* towards the end of the last century.

The book under review is by Swami Paramananda, the youngest and brilliant disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who went to the U.S.A. in 1906 and preached Vedanta for thirty-four years, till his passing away in 1940 at the age of fifty-six. He founded the Ananda Ashrama at La Crescenta, California, and the Vedanta Center Boston. During this long ministry as a spiritual teacher and guide to a large number of followers, he wrote several books which are highly popular and are well known for their simplicity, insight, and profundity. *Concentration and Meditation* is one of them which was originally published by the Vedanta Center, now at Cohasset near Boston. It is now reprinted by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, for the benefit of the aspirants in India, at a cheap price. It treats, in eight chapters, of the theoretical and practical aspects of concentration and meditation and their goal, covering the topics: Key to Concentration; Power of Concentration; Aids to Meditation; Superconscious Vision; and The Groundwork of Thought. The last chapter provides some Practical Hints. The treatment is non-technical but mature, and makes use of the experiences from other religious traditions, modern psychology, and the wise sayings of those who attained to greatness.

This is a reliable book, being the product of an experienced Vedantic spiritual teacher. The printing and get-up are good.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### CENTRE VEDANTIQUE RAMAKRISHNA

77220—GRETZ, FRANCE

REPORT FOR 1979

The year 1979 was a good period for the Centre. The work went well and a noticeable increase in interest was experienced. The number of people attending Sunday lectures grew, as did the number coming to the Ashrama for retreats; and also those asking for instruction in meditation. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Buddha, Jesus, Sri Krishna, St. Francis of Assisi, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as Durga Puja, Kali Puja, and Shiva Ratri were celebrated. The birthdays of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were marked by talks given by the resident young men of the Centre.

During the year Swami Ritajananda, the President of the Centre, visited India, the United States, Guatemala, the branch in Germany at Fulda, and various places in the south of France. In January Swami Vidyatmananda gave a talk and led a discussion at the Paris branch of Alcoholics Anonymous, held at the church of St. Michael.

The quarterly magazine *Védanta* came out regularly. The latest number was sent to about 500 subscribers, of whom 80 live outside France. Beginning in January 1980, *Védanta* is publishing in three volumes a French translation of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* according to M's own English version. This is the first time that the Gospel will have appeared in the French language.

In September the fifth annual catalogue of books and religious goods were sent out; it is available at the Centre or purchasable by mail. The volume of spiritual literature, incense, and photographs distributed increases each year. The German branch, which is called Vedanta-Zentrum Wiesbaden, has published in German the condensed *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* translated by Swami Nikhilananda, *The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta* by Swami Prabhavananda, *Meditation According to Yoga-Vedanta* by Swami Siddheswarananda, and a booklet on meditation by Swami Ritajananda.

During the year many improvements were made in the Ashrama grounds and physical plant. The Ashrama farm, which feeds the inmates and the many retreatants who come throughout the year was also significantly improved.

Membership dues continue at 250 francs per year. With membership one receives the quarterly review *Védanta* free. Members are also permitted to use freely the rental library and to participate in various membership activities. In 1979 the number of active members increased to 168.

### THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

During the four decades of its existence, the Vedanta Society of St. Louis (205 S. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63105, USA) has spread its influence far and wide through lectures, discussions and interviews, and through the books and pamphlets it publishes. Its activities for the year are given in brief below:

*Religious Activities*: Regular weekly services expounding the basic teachings of Vedanta were conducted every Sunday morning at 10-30. Tuesday evenings at 8-00 there was a silent meditation followed by a talk on the Patanjali Yoga Aphorisms. Thursday evenings at 8-00 there was a class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Many interested individuals as well as groups from educational centres and churches of various denominations came to the Society to learn about the fundamentals of Vedantic teaching and practice. The Sunday School room was utilised regularly for children whose parents were attending the service, and the Sunday afternoon class for young people was held during part of the year.

The birthdays of Sri Shankara, the Buddha, Sri Krishna, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamis Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Shivananda and Premananda were duly observed with morning devotions in the shrine; during most of the worships a ten-item Puja was performed. Several other festivals such as Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Easter and Christmas were also humbly observed.

*Publication Department*: Swami Satprakashananda's seventh book was published by the Society: *Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to the Present Age*, in 249 pages. It was distributed gratis to all members and several friends of the Society as well as to the heads of all Vedanta Societies in Europe and America, to Belur Math, and to fifty-four centres in India, Bangladesh, Mauritius and Fiji. More than 300 copies of the Swami's books were distributed to university and college libraries as well as to public libraries all over the United States. A booklet entitled 'An Introduction to the Works of Swami Satprakashananda with a Review of Each' was sent to the printer.

The Society's library (1,757 books) was well utilized by members and friends during the year. The small bookshop adjoining the library kept for sale Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature, as well as books on other religions.



## LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

### *Caste Feud in India*

Among the several dubious distinctions that India has got, the most unenviable one is that it is the only civilized country in the world with the institution of caste and the social superstition called untouchability. The existence of irrational social prejudices side by side with the most rational philosophy of Vedanta which speaks about the unity of all souls is one of the several paradoxes bedevilling the ethos of this nation.

Caste is bad enough. But when it oversteps all limits of sanity and takes the form of a feud and erupts into frenzied mob violence and carnage, it becomes a matter of grave concern to all thinking people. Caste in India is no longer a matter of conscience; it is fast becoming a menace to national integrity. The recent attacks on Harijans by caste Hindus in some Bihar villages have shown how easily caste prejudice can inflame the animal instincts of man and whip up mob hysteria. In one case a band of armed men attacked the Harijan village of Parasbigha around midnight, set fire to the houses and gunned down the fleeing people. In another case, a 500-strong armed mob attacked the Harijan quarters of the village Pipra at night and continued arson and slaughter for six hours. When it was all over, fourteen people lay dead. The most tragic part of the story is that the majority of the dead were women and children. Similar incidents have been reported from some other states in India.

The Harijans too occasionally hit back, sometimes in self-defence, sometimes in revenge. There is nothing strange in this. The well-known contemporary psychologist Erik Erikson in his thought-provoking book *Identity, Youth and Crisis* points out: 'Therapeutic as well as reformist efforts verify the sad truth that in any system based on suppression, exclusion and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image they are made to represent by those who are dominant' (p. 54). And 'there is ample evidence of inferiority feelings and of morbid self-hate in minority groups' (p. 303). As black militancy in the U.S. has proved, when a group accepts for itself an evil self-image it can easily be motivated to follow the path of violence.

Formerly the blame for social injustice used to be laid at the door of Hindu religion, Brahmanism and priestcraft. But the recent incidents had nothing to do with religion. Though the immediate cause that triggered off the trouble is said to be dispute over land and wages, the real cause seems to be the resentment of the land-owning community at the rise of the depressed classes.

If Hindus do not want to own these neglected children of Hinduism who still cling to their religion with pathetic tenacity, it should be remembered that there are many other social agencies ready to absorb them. The net result of attacks on the depressed classes would be to drive them into the arms of the Naxalites and the missionary.

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