उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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"

अस्य वामस्य पलितस्य होतु-
स्तस्य भ्राता मध्यमो अस्त्यश्नः ।
तृतीयो भ्राता घृतपृष्ठो अस्यात्रा-
पश्यं विश्वपतिं सप्तपुत्रम् ॥

1. This Sun, the adorable one (*vamasya*), who protects all (*palitasya*), who is the great sacrificer (*hotuḥ*), has a middle brother—the Wind—who is all-pervading (*aśnaḥ*). The third brother is the sacrificial Fire (*ghṛtapṛṣṭhaḥ*). In them I saw the Lord of the universe having seven sons.[1]

Ṛg-Veda 1.164.1

सप्त युंजन्ति रथमेकचक्र-
मेको अश्वो वहति सप्तनामा ।
त्रिनाभि चक्रमजरमनर्वं
यत्रेमा विश्वा भुवनाधि तस्थुः ॥

2. Seven people yoke the chariot which has one wheel. One horse having seven names draws it. The wheel has three navels ; it never becomes old or is destroyed, and on that wheel exist all these beings.[2]

Ṛg-Veda 1.164.2

इमं रथमधि ये सप्त तस्थुः
सप्तचक्रं सप्त वहन्त्यश्वाः ।
सप्त स्वसारो अभि सं नवन्ते
यत्र गवां निहिता सप्त नाम ॥

3. There are seven people sitting on this chariot which has seven wheels. Seven horses draw it. Seven sisters sing songs in which the names of seven cows are hidden.[3]

Ṛg-Veda 1.164.3

* These three stanzas are from one of the most important hymns in the whole of *Ṛg-Veda*. Though not so well known as the *Nāsadiya* and *Puruṣa Sūktas*, it is philosophically more profound than these. Its importance lies in the fact that it contains the germs of most of the metaphysical concepts of later Hinduism. But it is also one of the most obscure of Vedic hymns. The seer and composer of the hymn, Dīrghatamas, must have been a great mystic. But his mysticism is expressed through myths and symbols the meaning of which is now lost to us.

1. Commenting on this stanza, Yāska says that there is only one Deity which is seen as the Sun, the Wind (Vāyu) and the Fire in the heaven, the atmosphere and the earth respectively. The meaning given above is based on Sāyaṇa. He further explains that the Sun, the Wind and the Fire stand for the Paramātmā (Īsvara), the Hiraṇyagarbha (Sūtrātmā) and Vīrāt, respectively. The seven sons according to him are the seven worlds: *bhūh, bhuvah, suvah, mahah, janah, tapah,* and *satyam.* Another commentator, Atmānanda, interprets the three brothers as standing for the three states: deep sleep, dream and waking.

(*Continued on page* 331)

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL discusses some principles of yoga psychology which govern concentration and meditation.

'God is an answering Presence in the world and more so in our hearts,' says Swami Nityabodhananda, head of the Vedanta Centre, Geneva, in his brief but luminous article IS GOD AN ANSWERING PRESENCE IN THE WORLD?

In the fourth and concluding instalment of his article PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION, Swami Budhananda stresses the need to bring our emotions and actions into harmony with our spiritual aspiration, and to convert our whole life into a spiritual symphony.

So great was the influence that Sri Ramakrishna had on Pandit Padmalochan, the chief court pandit of Burdwan, that the great scholar told the Master, 'The holy dust of your feet can turn scores of fools into pandits like me.' An interesting account of the contact between these two souls is given in FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: PADMALOCHAN TARKALANKAR by Swami Prabhananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia.

Youth all over the world are being exposed to new influences, more so in the United States which has become a melting pot of diverse cultures. If Vedanta is to become meaningful to them, it should satisfy their needs and tastes. With this end in view, Swami Yogeshananda of the Vedanta Society of Chicago has prepared a study of the attitudes and behaviour of modern American youth in our HUMAN TRENDS feature, which our readers will find interesting and thought-provoking.

In the third instalment of his essay on INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO, Sri M. P. Pandit elucidates the second key concept of *sādhanā*: rejection.

Till now Dr. Vinita Wanchoo was explicating the views of the critics of Vedanta in her serial IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE? With this month's instalment she begins her masterly defence of Vedanta.

In the fourth instalment of ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN, Swami Atmarupananda describes the founding of the Order of Discalced Carmelites and the trials and tribulations that the nuns had to face during those difficult early years.

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION —II

(EDITORIAL)

What true meditation is

Dhyāna or meditation is the conscious maintenance of a steady stream of the same thought about an object at a higher centre of consciousness.[1] What we call thinking is the manipulation of a series of thought-waves called *vṛttis* or *pratyayas*. The mind has two tendencies. Its natural tendency is to move constantly from one thought-wave to another. This tendency to grasp diverse objects is called *sarvārthatā*—all-pointedness. But occasionally the mind holds on to a single object; this tendency is called *ekāgratā*—one-pointedness. *Dhyāna* or meditation is a special type of one-pointed activity of the mind.

1. Cf. तत्र प्रत्यय-एकतानता ध्यानम् ।

'The flow of one and the same thought-wave there (i.e. at a particular centre of consciousness) is meditation.' Patañjali, *Yoga-Sūtra*, 3.2.

The English word 'concentration' is a general term which may mean either one-pointedness or the maintenance of a small number of thought-waves, as for instance takes place while playing chess. We have already shown how true meditation differs from ordinary forms of concentration. According to Patañjali, concentration must fulfil five conditions in order to become a means for liberation. The first of these is *śraddhā* which means faiths—faith in the supreme goal of life and the possibility of attaining it. This must be supported by *vīrya* by which is meant energy or enthusiasm produced, not by the activity of instincts, but by the continuous exercise of will-power. The third condition is *smrti* or memory. This must be supported by *samādhi* or one-pointed absorption and *prajñā* or self-awareness.[2]

Of these the most important condition is memory. To maintain a steady stream of the same thought means to maintain a steady memory. However, meditation is not an ordinary process of remembering. Normally a person remembers many things, and some people have wonderful powers of memory. But to keep the memory steady by fixing the mind on a single idea is difficult, and this is what meditation means. Again, ordinary memory is recalling a past experience. To remember is to dwell in the past. A good deal of a normal person's daily life is spent either in remembering the past or in expecting the future. The present is so momentary that, as soon as an experience comes, it rolls on into the past. Meditation is not remembering the past but maintaining the memory of the present. It is not an attempt to call back to mind a past event, but an attempt to prevent the present from slipping into the past, into forgetfulness. True meditation is the fixing of the whole memory process at the present moment.

2. *Yoga-Sūtra*, 1.20.

Very often spiritual aspirants forget the above point. What many of them do is this: they look at a picture of a god or a goddess, then close their eyes and try to remember what they have seen. This holding on to a past event, regarded as a sacred act, does not essentially differ from other types of remembering past events. It makes meditation mechanical, repetitive. It tires the nerves. It opens the door to the past with the result that the aspirant finds a crowd of past memories rushing into his mind. Small wonder then, many people do not derive much benefit from this kind of meditation even after months and years of practice.

True meditation is directly encountering a living Image. When you see a person face to face, you live in the present. If meditation is to become something like this, you must be able to look into the unknown depths of your heart and directly 'see' a living Image there. This becomes possible only when you succeed in focussing the light of your consciousness into the depths of your heart. Beginners find this difficult. That is why they are advised to practise prayer and worship first.[3] Prayer and worship are acts which have meaning only in the present. Prayer cannot slide into the past without your notice. As soon as forgetfulness comes, prayer stops. Spiritual prayer is indeed an intense effort to hold the present moment. Prayer, even when addressed to an unknown Being, makes you live in the present. Worship makes that Being more real and enables you to hold on to the present longer still. When this encounter between the soul and the Image

3. *Vipassana* (the Buddhist technique of constantly watching all movements and thoughts), the Zen technique of maintaining self-awareness, *nididhyāsana* (the Vedantic technique of enquiring into the nature of the Self), and constant repetition of a *mantra* are other methods of holding memory to the present.

in the present is internalized and intensified, it becomes meditation.

True meditation, thus, is an act which works against the very tendency of the mind to dwell in the past. Meditation is the movement of a steady stream of consciousness from the 'I' (the subject) to a mental image (the object). When this movement is steady, the object does not change; when it wavers, the object too changes. It is an impulse or movement that originates in the self that determines whether the image remains steady or changing. This self-impulse is the will. When we try to meditate, a number of memories crowd into the mind, and we feel helpless. But it is we who allow the mind to wander in this way. We can fix the mind on any object if we really want to. By training the will we can keep the inner image steady. When this happens our memory gets restricted to the present. And that is meditation.

Meditation always means meditation on an object. There is a popular notion that meditation means making the mind blank by purging it of all images. This is not quite true, for there must always be an object in the mind during meditation. Meditation, as already pointed out, means the maintenance of a single thought and the suppression of all the others. Complete suppression of all thoughts takes place in deep sleep and some higher forms of absorption (*samādhi*) when the mind becomes free from all objects, and the objectifying tendency of the mind itself is suppressed. Without acquiring purity and spiritual power if a person tries to remove all thoughts, the usual results will be not *samādhi* but a kind of sleep or hypnotic stupor. 'When persons without training and preparation try to make their minds vacant,' warns Swami Vivekananda, 'they are likely to succeed only in covering themselves with *tamas*, the material of ignorance, which makes the mind dull and stupid, and leads them to think that they are making a vacuum of the mind.'[4]

It is possible to meditate on the subject, the 'I': this kind of meditation is called *aham-graha upāsanā*. But the subject in this case is not the pure Ātman but only the empirical self, a reflection or image of the true Ātman. The existence of the self is self-evident and does not need any proof, but its real nature as the Ātman is not self-evident. The pure Ātman can never become the object of meditation. During higher *samādhi*, when all thought-waves are stilled, that pure Ātman shines by itself. There is a method of penetrating straight into the pure self through enquiry, but this does not come under meditation. It is a direct path followed by those who practise Jñāna-yoga.

Sometimes a person may spontaneously get into a state of consciousness in which the mind becomes calm and alert. He feels a deep inner silence in which every movement is noticed and every thought appears fresh and meaningful. The mind does not hold a particular image but calmly witnesses thoughts coming and going—like clouds moving across the sky or travellers going through a silent countryside. The person then lives in the present. He observes the silent flow of life without being carried away by the stream. This is a state in which the self becomes aware of the whole mind itself, rather than an object or an image. It is like a fish suddenly becoming aware of the water in which formerly it had noticed only other fishes, worms, etc.

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4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), vol. 1, p. 212. It should be pointed out here that the word 'meditation' is often used, especially in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, to mean not only *dhyāna* but also the next higher state of *samādhi* or absorption. This does not, however, mean that *samādhi* is only a prolongation of *dhyāna*; there is a qualitative difference between the two, as we shall see later on.

When this mood is consciously cultivated, the mind becomes fit for meditation.

In the path of Bhakti this meditative awareness is attained through love. The devotee thinks about the Deity with so much love that his whole being vibrates with that single thought like a gong struck with a mallet. There is no room for any other thought in his mind which gets rooted in the living presence of the Deity and riveted to the present moment.

In true meditation the mind becomes like a violin string stretched between the self and the object, and vibrates in the present moment producing ever-renewing melodies in consciousness.

Psychological basis of meditation

The human mind is perhaps the most wonderful thing in the whole universe. All the knowledge and mystery of the universe are hidden in its depths. Those who wish to practise meditation should know how their minds work. The mind is not a machine which we ourselves have built and can operate in any way we like. It has come to us ready-made, and it started influencing us long before we became conscious of its working. The individual mind does not work in isolation. Each is a part of the vast cosmic mind, works in accordance with certain universal principles, and is impelled by the same cosmic energy called *prāṇa*. In his famous lecture on 'The Powers of the Mind' Swami Vivekananda says, 'All minds are the same, different parts of one mind. He who knows one lump of clay has known all the clay in the universe. He who knows and controls his own mind knows the secret of every mind and has power over every mind.'[5]

Just as physics and chemistry are based on precise laws of the physical world, the working of the mind is also based on certain universal laws. The credit for first discovering these is attributed to the sage Kapila. They were well known in India long before Buddha's time. Later on Patañjali codified the principles of mental science into his system of yoga which is now gaining worldwide attention. Perhaps in the twenty-first century mankind's main preoccupation will be not with science but with yoga. In India itself, owing to the obsession of the people with metaphysical speculations for the past thousand years, much of the knowledge concerning yoga has been lost. Fortunately, however, enough of it has been incorporated into the system of Vedanta to survive as a living tradition to this day. Those who attempt meditation must have a clear understanding of five fundamental principles of yoga psychology which form the basis of Vedantic meditation.

The first principle is that consciousness belongs to the true self of man known variously as the Puruṣa, Ātman, Jīva, etc. It is its very nature. Everything else in the universe—the entire material universe and all individual minds—belongs to Prakṛti which is unconscious (*jaḍa*). *Prakṛti* is neither material nor mental stuff; it is the unmanifested primordial stuff of which mind and matter are only two different manifestations. Prakṛti is unconscious but is not dead or inert. It is an unconscious power animating the whole universe. It is not self-luminous. It is known only when the light of Puruṣa falls on it. But Purusa or Ātman is self-luminous, and does not need anything else to reveal it.

The distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness, one of the great discoveries made in ancient India, is an important point in spiritual life. Those who want to practise meditation must have the basic knowledge that the self alone is conscious and that, in the absence of self-awareness, all mental and physical activities

5. *Complete Works* (1976), vol. 2, p. 17.

go on unconsciously. Circulation of blood, digestion and assimilation of food, and other physiological activities go on without our being aware of them. If we study our mental life we find that a major part of it goes on automatically. We talk, read, eat, walk and play, hardly being aware that we are doing these activities. When we sit for meditation the same automatism continues within us. Having spent a major part of the day more or less unconsciously, we find we have very little control over the mind during meditation.

The more we hold on to the self, the more conscious we become. And the more conscious we become, the greater becomes our control over our thoughts and actions. This kind of self-awareness, popularly known as alertness, is essential not only for those who follow the path of Jñāna but also for those who follow the path of Bhakti. The self is the abode of consciousness. Spiritual aspirants must learn to open its doors and allow consciousness to flow into their mental activities more and more. It is desires and other impurities of mind that obscure the self and drive us through unconsciousness. As the mind becomes purer, the light of the self manifests itself more, giving us greater self-awareness and self-control.

The second basic principle of yoga psychology is that knowing is the result of a mental modification. In order to know an object the mind must take the form of that object. This modification of the mind is called a *vṛtti*.

Cognition or knowledge is the relation between the self and the object. The pure self or Ātman cannot directly know an object. Between the self and the object must intervene the mind. Even this is not enough; the mind must take the form of the object. When the light of Ātman falls upon this *vṛtti* or thought-wave, knowledge results.

Vṛttis are of different types. When you look at a tree, the mind goes out and takes the form of the tree. That is how you know the tree. When you close your eyes, the mind reproduces the image of the tree, and that is how you remember. What we call life or existence consists of worlds within worlds. Just as there is an external physical universe, so also there are subtle inner worlds peopled by gods, goddesses, spirits and disembodied beings. When the mind is projected towards those beings we come to know about them. All these modifications of the mind are *vṛttis*.

There can be no knowledge without *vṛttis*. In deep sleep, the mind being overpowered by *tamas* does not produce any *vṛtti*. So in deep sleep we know nothing, and on waking up say, 'I did not know anything.' But according to Patañjali and some Advaitins, during deep sleep a particular kind of *vṛtti* called *nidrā vṛtti* exists. In the highest superconscious state called *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the mind gets absorbed in the Self and the Ātman alone exists. It is not a state of 'knowledge' but one of pure existence. Except this non-dual experience, every form of knowledge—from the feeling of emotions to the highest spiritual vision—is the result of *vṛtti* or thought-waves.

True knowledge is called *pramā*, wrong knowledge is called *bhrama*. A thought-wave which produces true knowledge is known as *pramāṇa*, and one which produces wrong knowledge, *viparyaya*. According to Patañjali, attachment, hatred, fear and other emotions are all *viparyaya-vṛtis*. There is also another kind of knowledge which is neither true nor false. Abstract ideas like goodness, beauty, infinity, etc. do not have an objective content. Nevertheless, they are not wrong but serve a practical purpose. A thought-wave which produces this kind of knowledge is called *vikalpa*.[6] When you

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6. Cf. *Yoga-Sūtra*, 1.6-11.

sit for meditation and try to visualize a god, your knowledge is not true because you do not actually see him. At the same time, it is not false either because your imagination is not about something which does not exist. Strictly speaking, most of our meditations should be classed under *vikalpa*, though they depend on memory. When through prolonged meditation you get a direct vision of the deity, the *vikalpa* changes into a *pramāṇa*, true knowledge. This true knowledge of supersensuous Reality is called *sākṣātkāra* or *yogi-pratyakṣa*, and to attain it is the goal of meditation.

Mind has different levels or layers, and each of these has its own *vṛttis*. The *vṛttis* that occur in the outer layers are gross and are concerned with external objects. Poetic intuition and philosophic insight have their origin in higher layers. In the deeper layers of the mind exist subtle *vṛttis* through which one knows supersensuous truths of the spiritual world. Most people are aware of only gross forms of thought. When, through purification and meditation, the spiritual aspirant learns to go deep into his mind, he becomes aware of subtle thought-waves.

We have seen that what is called knowledge is the reflection of the light of Puruṣa or Ātman on the *vṛttis*, Gross *vṛttis* reflect very little light, and there is little self-awareness associated with them. Subtle *vṛttis* reflect more light. The images they produce are brighter and there is greater self-awareness associated with them. As the aspirant goes deeper into his mind, he gets closer to the Ātman and sees more and more of its light. The Ātman is the same in all people. The difference between one person and another lies in the types of *vṛtti* that dominate their minds. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, each soul is potentially divine but the degree of manifestation of this divinity varies from person to person. Those who are pure and spiritual have pure *vṛttis* in their minds and reflect more of his inner light. The Sanskrit word for 'god' is *deva* which literally means 'the shining one'. Gods are those beings whose subtle bodies are so pure and transparent that in them the light of Ātman shines in all its dazzling brilliance. Through purification and meditation every person can attain to that state.

Why should we know all these details about *vṛttis*? The fundamental problem in meditation is to produce and maintain the right type of *vṛtti*. If you want to realize or 'see' a god or goddess, you must produce the pure *vṛtti* that will reveal his or her true nature. The purpose of meditation is to produce that particular *vṛtti*. Till you succeed in doing it your meditation is only a form of imagination. As soon as you succeed in producing the right *vrtti*, meditation terminates and direct experience begins. Here a question naturally arises why is it so difficult to produce the right type of supersensuous *vṛtti*? This question leads us to two important concepts (which form the third and fourth basic principles of yoga psychology with which we are dealing here).

One concept is that there is an invariable relationship between word and knowledge. You cannot think without words. Suppose you suddenly wake up from deep sleep: you at first *notice* 'somebody' standing before you. Then you *understand* that it is your mother. Your first experience is *cognition*; it is just sense-perception. Your second experience is *recognition*: it is the result of thinking. And thinking needs the use of words: recognition of mother comes from the word 'mother'. Similarly, when you hear or utter within yourself the word 'mother', the image of your mother rises in your mind. From childhood we have learned to associate objects or forms (*rūpa*) with names (*nāma*) so much so that we cannot think without words.

The exact relationship between names and forms is a matter of controversy among Indian philosophers. According to some, this relationship is artificial, being based on convention. But according to ancient Sanskrit grammarians (like Bhartṛhari), Mīmāṁsakas and Tantric philosophers, the relationship between names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*) is eternal. They believe that the basic structure of the human mind is verbal. Knowledge is the result of an inner formulation in words. When you look at (or try to remember) an object, you *know it by* formulating the words corresponding to that object.

In meditation special words called *mantras* are usually used. *Mantras* differ from ordinary words in an important respect. If you hear the word 'rhinoceros', but have never seen that animal (or at least its picture), it makes very little sense to you. In that case, even if you go on repeating that word all through your life, you are not going to know that animal. When you sit for meditation and repeat a divine name or *mantra,* it brings to your mind only an image of the real deity, for that is all that you had experienced. But—and this is where the *mantra* differs from ordinary words—if the mantra is repeated with faith and purity, it will gradually awaken the subtle, pure *vṛtti* which will directly reveal the reality which it symbolizes. This is an important concept which we shall discuss in detail sometime later when we deal with the science of *mantras.*

Here it is enough to understand that our normal thinking is impossible without both forms and names. What is called *vṛtti* consists of two parts: the form of the object, and its name. Meditation is the maintenance of a single *vṛtti,* which means the maintenance of a single name and form, and the exclusion of all other names and forms.

We now come to the fourth principle of yoga psychology: every experience leaves behind an impression called *saṁskāra* which has the power to produce that *vṛtti* again. The unconscious cellars of the mind are the storehouse of countless *saṁskāras.* These latent impressions are continuously sprouting into desires, emotions, memories and ideas, which go on disturbing the mind all the time. That is why it is difficult to maintain the right type of single *vṛtti* during meditation. Considering the important role that *saṁskāras* play in the life of a spiritual aspirant, we shall discuss this topic in greater detail later on. What we need to note at present is that *vṛttis* produce *saṁskāras,* and *saṁskāras* produce *vṛttis.* This cycle can be broken only by destroying *saṁskāras. Saṁskāras* can be destroyed only by the light of higher spiritual illumination. But their power can be reduced and kept under check through purificatory disciplines. Without purification of mind true meditation is difficult.

The fifth fundamental postulate of yoga psychology is that the mind is continuously changing and can never be stopped completely. According to all schools of Hindu thought, everything in the universe except the self is always in a state of flux. *Vṛttis* are continuously appearing and disappearing in the mind. When the mind is distracted different *vṛttis* appear and disappear but when the mind is concentrated one and the same *vṛtti* appears and disappears continuously. In deep meditation the image of the Iṣṭa Devatā appears to be stationary, but this is because the same *vṛtti* is continuously reappearing in the mind with uniform frequency. Meditation is not the stopping of all the *vṛttis* but the maintenance of the steady rise and fall of the same *vṛtti* over a long period of time.

It is only in some of the highest forms of *samādhi* that all *vṛttis* are stopped. But even then the mind does not stop. According to Patañjali, even when all the *vṛttis* are stopped, the *saṁskāras* go on changing in

the unconscious depths of the mind. If this change of *saṁskāras* also is stopped, if the *whole* mind is stopped, the mind will not last long as mind. It will get resolved back into its cause, the *Prakṛti*. But this happens only at the time of final liberation.

A proper understanding of the above mentioned five principles of yoga psychology will enable spiritual aspirants to understand the workings of their minds and make meditation a fruitful spiritual practice.

(to be concluded)

IS GOD AN ANSWERING PRESENCE IN THE WORLD?

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

How can we recollect His Presence in dark and difficult moments? We sometimes feel that He has not answered our prayers. Is it that He has not heard us or is it that we have not heard what He said? These are the questions we shall try to meditate upon in this article.

Amongst the many passages of the *Gītā* where the Lord promises His Presence, the following one stands out for its relevance to the present context :

> Whatever may be the form a devotee seeks to worship with faith, in that form alone I make his faith unwavering. Possessed of that faith, he worships that form and from it attains his desires, which are in reality granted by Me alone.[1]

In this promise of grace there is no minimizing of self-effort. The terms 'worship' and 'faith' hold out that effort is essential. The assurance that the desires are granted 'by Me alone' is indicative of grace. What is aimed at is a harmony of effort and grace. The possibilities of hearing God's answers or, better still, of having in us His answering Presence depend on our capacity of establishing a harmony between effort and grace and on developing it.

A 'middling' type devotee (*madhyama*) who is not fully convinced of the Presence may argue: 'I prayed and worked for a house for the last five years and I got it now. Did I get it by grace or by effort? Or are these two in the proportion of fifty-fifty?'

The "middling' type evidently desires to improve himself, to make progress horizontally and vertically; horizontally by adding to his material and spiritual acquisitions, vertically by increasing his spiritual 'height', his relation to God-on-high. Of course, he can improve on his self. But he did not 'make' the self, it is self-produced, it is a gift from the supreme Being. The sentiment of being what he is, his autonomy, he owes to the Divine. Effort issues from this sentiment of 'belonging' to the Divine. When this conviction is felt in the heart all conflict regarding effort and grace would cease. The 'middling' type will no more hold responsible the Presence for his failures and successes in the world. Rather, he will link them with his fluctuating capacity to realize the Presence in his heart.

The fully-believing type (*uttama*) is yoked (*yukta*) to the Presence. God is first and foremost the Presence in his heart (*hṛddeśe Arjuna tiṣṭhati*). If it is said that God does not answer, the *uttama* type will reply that it is because that person's heart is not fully vibrating to His Presence that the answer is not heard. As to the successes and reverses

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 7.21-22.

in life he will pray as Kulaśekhara, 'Let them take their course of maturation according to my karma. But, O Lord, may my Bhakti remain a living flame.'

Divine Incarnations preferred silence

Divine Incarnations and men of God, though answering by words and deeds, preferred 'silence'. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was an answering Presence to all those who went to him, and supremely so to Arjuna. But he identified himself with silence, *'maunaṁ cāsmi guhyānām'* ('among secret things I am silence').

Buddha's silence to the three questions of Vaccaggotta is famous:

'Do you, Sir, believe in Being?' Silence.

'Do you believe in non-Being?' Silence.

'So you believe neither in Being nor in non-Being?' Silence.

To Pontius Pilate's question 'What is Truth?', Christ answered by silence. The interpretation given in the Christian world is that for Christ Truth was God and silence alone could express His ineffable glory.

Śaṁkarācārya's acts and 'words' to the disciples and to the world are well known. But then for him the ideal spiritual teacher taught by silence and the doubts of the disciples were dissipated: *'Gurostu maunaṁ vyākhyānaṁ śiṣyastu chinnasaṁśayaḥ.'*

The Guru in certain cases initiates by silence self-enquiry. In the life of Srimat Brahmanandaji Maharaj we read that when he was displeased with somebody he stopped talking to him. The person who is the target directs the torch of self-enquiry within and corrects himself. Silence is the Self.[2] In the inner silence alone can Ātman be realized. Words tire us out.

God's total Presence

Now let us try to answer the very difficult question, 'In case God answers in the negative what message can we have from it?'

To feel free and creative in happiness and opulence is an easy reaction. But are we really free if we feel free only in happiness? Happiness is not the whole of the real. There is its contrary. A consciousness which feels eclipsed in negation does not know how to measure its full dimension. To be really free we must be free and creative in suffering too. A true lover of God sees His face in suffering also. The presence englobes the opposites of pain and pleasure, negation and affirmation and transcends both. A true Bhakta accepts God in His totality, and his inner strength to bear up with adversity stems forth from this acceptance.

Where from do we get the strength to be creative in sorrow and suffering?

In the language of Bhakti, we offer sorrow and joy at the Lord's feet and say 'Thy will be done'. What does this mean in the language of psychology?

God's Presence in us represents the totality of experience, of opposites; for instance, sorrow *and* happiness. It is not sorrow *or* happiness. Man's option and choice operate by the process of either-or. The consciousness is cut into two. I am not what I am in a state of divided consciousness. The *ātmasamarpaṇa,* offering of myself to God, has no meaning in that state. My transparence to God's total Presence is marred by my option for a half-presence, option for happiness. Instead, if I conserve to myself the total presence as my nucleus which is the totality of my self, unaffected by option of the either-or process which divides my Kingdom, then I can face the adversity with better force. For I know that I have in me God as the dynamic equilibrium between opposites.

In the language of the Jñānī, what will be the reaction to God's No?

The nature of the Self is eternal Presence.[3]

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2. *Śāntoyam ātmā.*

3. Śamkara in *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya,* 2.3.7.

Sorrow and happiness are end-effects whereas the self, the knowing subject is the cause which never becomes an effect. Sorrow and happiness are mental states; not Brahmic states. They are peripheral, not central. When I say I am anguished, the peripheral 'I' is anguished and not the central 'I'. The Ātman's periphery registers the anguish, but is not affected. The deep layer in us says, 'The consciousness of anguish is not the anguish of consciousness.'

No doubt in everyday life we choose the agreeable and avoid the disagreeable. This option splits into two the equilibrium maintained by God's Presence in our unconscious. But if we remember that the choice of one of the alternatives is made possible by the presence of the totality, then a re-establishment of a new equilibrium becomes possible.

Conclusion

God is an answering Presence in the world and more so in our hearts. He is the Self in the heart of every living being and the nature of the Self is eternal Presence. When we are seated close to someone whom we love most and who loves us most, we do not feel the need of his words. *We desire only his Presence and no answers.*

'What is unattainable when the Lord, the home of all prosperity is pleased and is present? But when He is present we have no more desires.[4]

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4. किमलभ्यं भगवति प्रसन्ने श्रीनिकेतने ।
तथापि तत्परा राजन्न हि वाञ्छन्ति किंचन ॥
Śrīmad Bhāgavata, 10.39.2.

(*Continued from page* 321)

2. According to Sāyaṇa, the chariot stands for the Sun, the single horse stands for Vāyu (Wind) and the wheel stands for Time—the three navels meaning past, present and future. Atmānanda takes the chariot to mean the physical body, horse to mean egoism (*ahamkāra*) and the wheel to mean Time.

3. The real meaning of this stanza is obscure. The explanations of commentators are not convincing.

(*Continued from page* 360)

multiply in number, their academic standards—relative to those elsewhere—do not improve. And something even more serious than this happens: the universities remain alien implantations, not integrated into the New India.... This is due in part to the lack of a hierarchy of cultural institutions in the country; and this in turn is related to the fact that the universities have responded too weakly to the challenge of Asiatic culture....'

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOURS OF MEDITATION

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

6

One more thing, which is not easy to describe, is also needed. We may call this needed thing an orchestration of all our emotions, actions and aspirations—like a symphony guided and interpenetrated by the main note of an abiding sense of the essential —for a soul-surge absorption into the infinite.

God has vibrated forth into becoming everything. Now this God-become-everything will have to be transmuted into everything-become-God.

In this lump of clay which is our body and mind, He also will flash forth as the abiding light.

The technique of this orchestration has to be learnt from a master musician of the spirit. In Śrī Śaṁkarācārya we have such a master musician. In his work *Aparokṣa-anubhuti* he has elaborated with wonderful clarity and also some humour this difficult knowledge. What Śaṁkara has achieved in these passages—we are going to discuss this only very briefly—is a marvelious integration of the knowledge of Advaita Vedanta and practical Yoga, and he has also elaborated the methods of bringing this knowledge into the stream of life. As students of Vedanta we know of that great identity: *ayam ātmā brahma*.[21] 'This Ātman is Brahman.' The individual soul is identical with the Supreme Spirit.

As students of Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtras* we know that only after properly accomplishing six steps of *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra* and *dhāraṇā*, can we truly meditate. Meditation is nearly the highest thing a human being can do. The highest attainment is *samādhi*; meditation is only one step lower than that.

What happens to the musician who has one hour's time for performance but tunes his instrument for forty-five minutes? He cannot accomplish much on the stage. An intelligent musician will keep his instrument well tuned before coming to the stage. On stage, after just once testing it he starts off, and soon he will be all music and sway everyone. In like manner, if we want to accomplish anything at the hour of meditation, if we want to be absorbed in the thought of God or Ātman, then we must do all the turning or tuning of our mind to God before we reach the hour of meditation. Otherwise when we will get our mind on hand for meditation, the available time for the purpose will have been over. Therefore, we have to devise some methods of living by which we can almost involuntarily go on practising the disciplines which spontaneously carry us over to a meditative mood at the hour of meditation. Then, as on stage, we can at once start off, as it were. What can these methods of living be? They are certain habits of deep thinking, as suggested by Śaṁkara in the *Aparokṣa-anubhuti*.

Śaṁkara says :

> The Atman that is absolute Existence and Knowledge cannot be realized without constant practice. So one seeking after knowledge should long meditate upon Brahman for the attainment of the desired goal.[22]

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21. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.5.

22. नित्याभ्यासादृते प्राप्तिर्न भवेत् सच्चिदात्मन: ।
तस्माद् ब्रह्म निदिध्यासेज्जिज्ञासु: श्रेयसे चिरम् ॥
Aparokṣānubhuti 101

Integrating the knowledge of Yoga and Vedanta, Śaṁkara brings in new insights in understanding the demands of the ancient disciplines of Patañjali.

We know how Patañjali defines his steps to Yoga. He says *yama* means non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of gifts. But what does Śaṁkara say? He says :

The control of the senses by means of the knowledge 'all is Brahmin' is called *yama,* and should be practised again and again.[23]

Patañjali says *niyama* consists of cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-surrender to God. Adding a new meaning to the whole concept of *niyama,* Śaṁkara says :

The incessant flow of only one kind of thought [relating to the unity of the individual self with Brahman such as 'This Atman is Brahman' and 'I am Brahman'] to the exclusion of all other thoughts is called *niyama,* which verily is the supreme bliss and is regularly practised by the wise.[24]

Patañjali defines *āsana* as easy posture. Śaṁkara says :

That serene state of the constitution in which Brahman is incessantly contemplated with unmixed bliss is known as *āsana,* and not others which destroy bliss.[25]

He further says :

The *siddha-āsana* [accomplished posture] is the Immutable which is the beginning of all beings and the reality behind the universe, that in which the perfected ever repose.[26]

Proceeding, Śaṁkara teaches :

Absorption in the all-pervading Brahman is known as the equipoise of the limbs. Mere straightening of the body like that of a dried up tree is no equipoise.[27]

What is the right vision? What is concentration? Is it looking at the tip of the nose? Śaṁkara says :

Converting one's ordinary vision into one of knowledge, one should realize the whole world to be Brahman itself. This is the profoundest vision and not that which is directed to the nose.[28]

We may also take it in a different way, says Śaṁkara :

Or, the vision should be solely directed to that wherein ceases the distinction of seer, sight, and the object of seeing. It need not be directed to the tip of the nose.[29]

We have heard a lot of *Prāṇāyāma,* 'breath control'. Some appear to think that

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23. सर्वं ब्रह्मेति विज्ञानादिन्द्रियग्रामसंयमः ।
यमोऽयमिति संप्रोक्तोऽभ्यसनीयो मुहुर्मुहुः ॥
Ibid. 104

24. सजातीयप्रवाहश्च विजातीयतिरस्कृतिः ।
नियमो हि परानन्दो नियमात् क्रियते बुधैः ।
Ibid. 105

25. सुखेनैव भवेद्यस्मिन्नजस्रं ब्रह्मचिन्तनम् ।
आसनं तद्विजानीयान्नेतरत् सुखनाशनम् ॥
Ibid. 112

26. सिद्धं यत् सर्वभूतादि विश्वाधिष्ठानमव्ययम् ।
यस्मिन् सिद्धाः समाविष्टास्तद्वै सिद्धासनं विदुः ॥
Ibid. 113

27. अङ्गानां समतां विद्यात् समे ब्रह्मणि लीनताम् ।
नो चेन्नैव समानत्वमृजुत्वं शुष्कवृक्षवत् ॥
Ibid. 115

28. दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।
सा दृष्टिः परमोदारा न नासाग्रावलोकिनी ॥
Ibid. 116

29. द्रष्टृदर्शनदृश्यानां विरामो यत्र वा भवेत् ।
दृष्टिस्तत्रैव कर्तव्या न नासाग्रावलोकिनी ॥
Ibid. 117

by pressing the nose one becomes a yogi. Śaṁkara gives a wholly new interpretation of *prāṇāyāma.* He says :

The restraint of all modifications of the mind by regarding all mental states like the *citta* as Brahman alone, is called *pranayama.*

The negation of the universe is the outgoing breath (*recaka*). The thought 'I am Brahman' is called the incoming breath (*puraka*).

And the steadiness of that thought thereafter is the restrained breath (*kumbhaka*). This is the *pranayama* for the wise. [Then Śamkara humorously says :] While pressing of the nose is only for the ignorant.[30]

Pratyāhāra is usually interpreted as the withdrawal of the senses from the sense-objects. But Śaṁkara says :

The merging of the consciousness in Brahman by realizing the Self in all objects is known as *pratyāhāra* and should be practised by all seekers of liberation.[31]

By 'concentration' (*dhāraṇā*) in the ordinary parlance we mean fixing our mind on one chosen object to the exclusion of other objects. But the question is where is the other object when we understand the nature of Reality? So, giving a new interpretation of concentration Śaṁkara says :

Concentration in its highest sense is holding of consciousness by realizing Brahman wheresoever the mind goes.[32]

Then he says :

The condition, wherein there is only the uncontradictable thought 'I am Brahman itself', and there is no external hold, is denoted by the term *dhyāna* or meditation, which is productive of highest bliss.[33]

Absorption in the hours of meditation is our aspiration. Śaṁkara's exposition will have shown what it takes to be absorbed in the Supreme Spirit. We have to get and keep ourselves steeped in these thoughts in and through what we may or may not think and do.

7

Then alone there is a chance of our meditation being fruitful. We need therefore to saturate our minds with the great thoughts during the whole day. Through thinking, these thoughts must become our convictions and habit-patterns. If we want to meditate well in the evening, preparation for it should start in the morning and continue through the whole day. If we want to meditate well in the morning, preparation for it should start on the previous evening. Only he who meditates well in the morning has a chance for meditating well in the evening too. One whose morning passes without meditation, in all probability in the evening too he will not find himself meditating.

The paradoxical law that holds good in meditation as in other spiritual contexts has

30. चित्तादिसर्वभावेषु ब्रह्मत्वेनैव भावनात् ।
निरोधः सर्ववृत्तीनां प्राणायामः स उच्यते ॥
निषेधनं प्रपञ्चस्य रेचकाख्यः समीरणः ।
ब्रह्मैवास्मीति या वृत्तिः पूरको वायुरीरितः ॥
ततस्तद्वृत्तिनैश्चल्यं कुम्भकः प्राणसंयमः ।
अयं चापि प्रबुद्धानामज्ञानां घ्राणपीडनम् ॥
Ibid. 118-120

31. विषयेष्वात्मतां दृष्ट्वा मनसश्चिति मज्जनम् ।
प्रत्याहारः स विज्ञेयोऽभ्यसनीयो मुमुक्षुभिः ॥
Ibid. 121

32. यत्र यत्र मनो याति ब्रह्मणस्तत्र दर्शनात् ।
मनसो धारणं चैव धारणा सा परा मता ॥
Ibid. 122

33. ब्रह्मैवास्मीति सद्वृत्त्या निरालम्बतया स्थितिः ।
ध्यानशब्देन विख्याता परमानन्ददायिनी ॥
Ibid. 123

been defined for all times by Jesus Christ in these words :

> For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath.[34]

Therefore, early in the morning we should fill ourselves with holy thoughts to the maximum, saturate ourselves, so to say, through prayer and meditation. This will give us a frame of mind with which we shall be able to easily go through our daily round of duties without losing our balance, poise and tranquility.

It is important that a portion of the spiritual mood created in the morning be carried like an imperceptible thread through all our actions to the next hour of meditation in the evening. Thus from morning to evening, and evening to morning, we shall carry the refrains of meditation, so that in the hour of meditation we may find ourselves in readiness to spontaneously plunge in. Daily pilgrimage to the hour of meditation is the only way open to man for spiritualizing his life, for reaching the destination of his life which is realization of God.

To that supreme end which is all illumination, all joy and all bliss, all of us stand cordially invited by the Lord Himself. Let us all enthusiastically and whole-heartedly accept that ever-open invitation of the Lord, and move onward and forward, inward and Godward.

(concluded)

34. Matthew, 25.29.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : PADMALOCHAN TARKALANKAR

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

A poor unlettered brahmin, Sri Ramakrishna attained by his extraordinary longing and austerities a spiritual state the like of which cannot be found in the history of religion. Faith, love, self-sacrifice, purity of character and entire resignation to the will of God : these are the chief signs of a religious man, and they found their highest perfection in Sri Ramakrishna. He avoided contention and subtle disputations, placing much less reliance upon book-knowledge than most of his contemporaries. Instead, he plunged headlong into spiritual practices and achieved experientially the highest and noblest reaches of philosophy and religion. Then returning to humanity, he demonstrated by his every word and deed that man can find real joy, the divine bliss, in this very life.

Devoid of external religious marks and symbols, including miracles, his face retained 'a fullness, a childlike tenderness, a profound visible humbleness, an unspeakable sweetness of expression and a smile ... seen in no other face'[1]—this was the only insignia which marked him as a holy man. The words of the older mystics and holy texts sounded on his lips with new life and and truth. His attitude towards all religions and sincere aspirants was one of deep reverence. In those visionary eyes of his one could see, as it were, the spiritual experiences of past mystics of all religions. This universality produced in him a broad

1. P. C. Majumdar, quoted in *Samasāmayik Dṛṣtite Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa* (Bengali) (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers), p. 198.

understanding, wide sympathy and deep concern for all men and women which endeared him to all.

Ornamented with chastity, humility, devotion and radiant renunciation, the beauty of his personality used to draw people of all walks of life. And his words, like a winged shaft, used to go straight to their hearts. Indeed, such a power developed in him that he became one of those rare souls who give a new impulse and direction to history.

Sri Ramakrishna always appreciated the good qualities in other persons and paid due honour to them. He used to say, 'The Divine Lord is displeased if due respect is not paid to men of honour. It is by His power that they have risen to rank and position ; it is He who has made them such. When they are dishonoured, He is slighted.' On this subject Swami Saradananda observed, 'Therefore, when he heard of a man of special good qualities residing anywhere, we found the Master eager to see him somehow or other. If he came to the Master, well and good ; otherwise, the Master would himself go to him uninvited, meet, salute and converse with him ; then thus satisfied, he would return.'[2]

One day Sri Ramakrishna heard of Padmalochan Tarkalankar Bhattacharya, a brahmin born somewhere near Kalna, Burdwan, who had spent long many strenuous years in Benaras to master the Vedanta philosophy. Earlier he had mastered Nyāya philosophy and secured for himself the much-sought-after position of principal court pandit of the Maharaja of Burdwan. There were in vogue many tales about his greatness.

We learn from Swami Saradananda that, 'acquainted in their daily life with the repeated manifestation of his noble qualities of liberality, nonattachment, good conduct, practice of austerities, steadfast devotion to his Chosen Ideal, etc., people came to the conclusion that he was an unusually great *sādhaka* and lover of God. The co-existence of true scholarship and profound devotion to God is rare indeed in the world. So, people are attracted towards a person in whom both these are found. It was, therefore, no wonder that when the Master heard of him, he had a desire to see that good soul who had been adorning the court of Burdwan for a long time and was approaching his old age.'[3] According to Swami Saradananda, the Pandit met Sri Ramakrishna sometime before the *annameru* held in 1864.[4] This was after the latter had attained perfection in Tantric practices.

The childlike Sri Ramakrishna, desirous of meeting the scholar, approached Mathuranath, who readily agreed to make arrangements for his journey to Burdwan. Sri Ramakrishna, however, was told by the Divine Mother that the great scholar would be visiting Calcutta in ten days' time. Strange enough, it came to pass. One day Mathuranath brought the news that Padmalochan had come to Calcutta and that he was staying in the garden house of Vimalacharan Biswas at Ariadaha ; that he was lying ill and was receiving medical treatment from the reputed physician Gangacharan Sen (1231-1320 Bengali era). Thereafter, Hriday confirmed the news from local sources.

First, Hriday went to Pandit Padmalochan, returned and reported that the scholar was not egoistic ; rather he was a noble soul. He also mentioned the great eagerness he had noticed in the scholar for meeting the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar.

Next day Sri Ramakrishna accompanied by Hriday journeyed by boat to Ariadaha, a

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2. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, second revised edition), p. 617.

3. *Great Master,* p. 549.

4. *Great Master,* p. 302.

few miles up the Ganges. Without waiting for formalities Sri Ramakrishna went straight into the room where Pandit Padmalochan lived. The scholar, who was resting in bed, was startled; he rose and stood before Sri Ramakrishna, and with a beaming face joyously exclaimed: 'What a wonderful sight—outwardly the form of a human being, covering the beautiful Mother Kālī inside.' With folded palms the Pandit greeted him and requested him to take his seat.

Sri Ramakrishna could see to the heart of a man with unerring accuracy: his extraordinary wealth of spiritual experiences as well as psychic powers helped him to assess the spiritual potentiality of a previously unknown person. A glance at Padmalochan revealed to Sri Ramakrishna that he was equipped with occult powers through the blessings of Mother Ambikā.[5]

While taking his seat Sri Ramakrishna entered an ecstatic mood and in his usual childlike manner asked, 'Are you Padmalochan?'

'Yes, I am known as Padmalochan.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Are you really a great scholar?'

Humble as he was, Padmalochan replied, 'Since you call me a scholar surely I am so.'

In a moment Sri Ramakrishna, still in an ecstatic mood, sang a song of Ramprasad's in his melodious voice :

Who is there that can understand
  What Mother Kālī is?
Even the six darsanas are
  powerless to reveal Her.
It is She, the scriptures say,
  that is the inner Self
Of the yogi, who in Self
  discovers all his joy;
She that, of Her own sweet will,
  inhabits every living thing.
The macrocosm and microcosm rest
  in the Mother's womb :
Now do you see how vast it is?
  In the Mūlādhāra
The yogi meditates on Her, and
  in the Sahasrāra:
Who but Śiva has beheld Her
  as She really is?
Within the lotus wilderness She sports
  beside Her Mate, the Swan.

When man aspires to understand Her,
  Ramprasad must smile;
To think of knowing Her, he says,
  is quite as laughable
As to imagine one can swim across
  the boundless sea.
But while my mind has understood,
  alas! my heart has not;
Though but a dwarf, it still would strive
  to make a captive of the moon.[6]

Following this, he sang wrapped in fervour :

Brother, tell me what happens to a man after
  his death, for everyone disputes on this :
Some say he becomes a ghost, some assure
  of ascent to heaven,
Some suggest attainment of the Lord's abode,
  while others union with the Lord Himself....[7]

Still in an ecstatic mood, Sri Ramakrishna sang a few more devotional songs expressing soul-stirring spiritual ideas. He merged in *samādhi,* with his faculty of perception directed to the inner Self only. Pandit Padmalochan stood dumb-founded, with his eyes fixed on Sri Ramakrishna's strangely radiant countenance. Streams of tears rolled down the Pandit's cheeks. He could readily understand that this change in Sri Ramakrishna was not the outcome of emotionalism but the sign of some rare

5. Akshay Kumar Sen, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, fifth edition), p. 125.

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 32.

7. Gurudas Burman, *Sri Ramakrishna Carit* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office), vol. I, p. 101.

spiritual gift. The atmosphere was intense, and Pandit Padmalochan was deeply affected, for he felt that the essence of the scriptures he had read were being demonstrated before him and his pupils. After the singing, an overwhelmed Padmalochan composed himself as best he could, wiped his tears and told Hriday, 'How strange; never before have I shed tears. His devotional music brought tears to my eyes.'[8] It was indeed a rare experience for him, for never before did he witness religious truth so palpably demonstrated.

After a while he said, his voice choked with emotion: "Blessed has my life become at this sight. My long and continuous study of holy texts has now proved to be fruitful.' The Pandit was delighted to present Sri Ramakrishna as the living illustration of what he had tried to explain to his pupils through texts and commentaries all these years. Addressing the pupils who were standing around him. the Pandit said, 'Do you see? He has acquired a million times more, without study of scriptures, than what I have achieved in mastering a roomful of scriptures.'[9]

A few moments passed. Sri Ramakrishna in his childlike simplicity asked the Pandit, 'Well, can you tell me what this is that possesses me?'

Padmalochan: 'This is *samādhi,* not easily achieved even by gods.'

Hriday asked the Pandit, 'Some great pandits understood him to be an incarnation of God. What do you say?'

Shorn of scriptural hyperbole, the scholar spoke his true conviction. Getting somewhat excited he said, 'What do you mean by incarnation! If he so pleases, he can create many an incarnation.'

Sri Ramakrishna laughingly remarked, 'You are the court pandit of Burdwan Maharaja. Why do you treat me so respectfully?'

Padmalochan: 'The holy dust of your feet can turn scores of fools into pandits like me.' The Pandit continued: 'The concept of incarnation is a trifling one. You are the one who creates incarnations of God. Well, if anyone challenges my statement I am prepared to defend it on the strength of holy texts.'[10] He went on to say, 'Your experiences have gone far beyond those recorded in the Vedas and Purāṇas.'[11]

Sometime after, the Pandit expressed a desire to call on Sri Ramakrishna. He wanted to read out his argumentations with great scholars like Utsabananda Goswami on religious topics. A patient hearing by Sri Ramakrishna would be considered a blessing for him.[12] Thereafter the scholar read out his letter addressed to Utsabananda Goswami. Recalling the incident Sri Ramakrishna later remarked, 'Once he [Padmalochan] entered into a controversy by correspondence with Utsabananda, Vaishnavacharan's Guru. He told me, "Please listen to it." '[13]

Padmalochan once said, 'Rani Rasmoni and Mathur Babu are extremely fortunate for they are having the rare privilege of serving you, the direct manifestation of the Mother Goddess. After my recovery from this illness, I shall convene an assembly of pandits and proclaim your spiritual experiences before all. I shall see who can

8. Devotees heard Sri Ramakrishna say on July 22, 1883, 'Though a man of great knowledge and scholarship, he began to weep on hearing me sing Ramprasad's devotional songs.' (*Gospel,* p. 206).

9. *Ramakrishna Carit,* p. 101.

10. *Ramakrishna Carit.*

11. *Great Master,* p. 238.

12. *Ramakrishna Carit,* p. 102.

13. *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmṛta* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Kathamrita Bhavan, seventeenth edition), vol. 1, p. 109. It seems he read it out at his residence at Ariadaha itself.

dislodge me from my claim.'[14] Surprised, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Well, would you visit the garden of Rasmoni who belonged to a low caste?' Padmalochan was a rigorously orthodox brahmin. Nevertheless he replied, 'What does it matter if I accompany you to a meeting at the house of a fisherman? With you I can dine at the house of a pariah.'[15]

The talk continued for quite some time. Sri Ramakrishna was delighted, eager as he was to assess the spiritual attainments of the renowned Pandit. Later Sri Ramakrishna reminisced, 'We talked together a long while; conversation with nobody else gave me such satisfaction.'[16]

During this conversation Padmalochan advised Sri Ramakrishna, 'Give up the desire for the company of devotees; otherwise people of all sorts will come to you and make you deviate from your spiritual ideal.' A typically orthodox Pandit could not fathom the infinite untaintable purity of Sri Ramakrishna or the spiritual power he was endowed with. Sri Ramakrishna's reaction is not recorded, but we can safely presume that he was in disagreement with the Pandit.

Sri Ramakrishna left for Dakshineswar but his enchanting memory lingered with the Pandit. About the scholar's experience during and after the first meeting, Swami Saradananda observed: '... not finding some of the ultimate experiences of the Master recorded in the Śāstras, he could not clearly ascertain whether what was written in the Śāstras or the experiences of the Master, were true. Therefore, the discriminating mind of the Pandit, always accustomed to arriving at sure conclusions in all spiritual matters with the help of scriptural knowledge and a keen intellect, experienced a sort of restlessness in the midst of joy, like a spot of darkness in light.'[17]

While living at Ariadaha the ailing Padmalochan used to send his son to invite Sri Ramakrishna to his place. Sri Ramakrishna gladly accepted. As his illness was getting worse, Padmalochan could not visit Dakshineswar. Both of them used to spend hours in speaking on religious topics. On one occasion Padmalochan narrated an interesting incident. Once a meeting of scholars tried to decide which of the two, Śiva or Viṣṇu, was greater. Unable to arrive at a decision the pandits approached Padmalochan for his expert opinion. Without hesitation the guileless Padmalochan said, 'How do I know? Neither I nor any of my ancestors, back to fourteen generations, has seen Śiva or Viṣṇu. However, I can expound the viewpoints as expressed in the holy texts. Texts popular with the devotees of Śiva have exalted his greatness. The same with the devotees of Viṣṇu. Nonetheless, I humbly submit, one is neither greater than nor inferior to the other.'[18]

These words delighted Sri Ramakrishna so much as to transport him into *samādhi*. Regaining his normal consciousness he told Padmalochan, 'You have got the right understanding.'[19]

It seems that the great Vedantin Padmalochan, however, could not appreciate Sri Ramakrishna's idea of renunciation. Years later Sri Ramakrishna said, 'About the renunciation of woman and gold he [Padmalochan] said to me one day, "Why have you given up those things? Such distinctions as 'This is money and this is clay' are the outcome of ignorance." And

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14. *Ramakrishna Carit*, p. 103. As he died shortly thereafter. he could not do it. (*Gospel*, p. 856).
15. *Gospel*, p. 324.
16. *Gospel*, p. 206.
17. *Great Master*, p. 549.
18. *Gospel*, p. 158.
19. *Ramakrishna Carit*, pp. 103-04.

what could I say to that? I replied: "I don't know all these things, my dear sir. But for my part, I cannot relish such things as money and the like." '[20]

The close acquaintance which developed between the Pandit and Sri Ramakrishna helped the former to have a firm conviction about the spiritual achievement of the Master. And Padmalochan came to perceive an almost inexplicable spiritual power manifested in Sri Ramakrishna, as can be seen from the following incident.

Fascinated by the lure of power, Padmalochan had practised Tantric disciplines for a long time. He was endowed with some divine power which made him practically invincible in debates and discourses. Advised by his Chosen Deity he used to carry a country-made towel and a *kamaṇḍalu* (spouted pot) filled with water. Before he participated in any religious debate he used to walk a few steps hither and thither and wash his mouth and sprinkle his head with that water. This secret was not disclosed to anyone, even to his wife. One day before participating in a debate the Pandit discovered that Sri Ramakrishna had removed the towel and the pot. The Divine Mother had revealed to Sri Ramakrishna the secret of the Pandit's power attained through spiritual disciplines.[21] He realized that Sri Ramakrishna had come to know everything, and 'the Pandit could not help reciting hymns to and singing praises of the Master as his Chosen Ideal.' Thus Sri Ramakrishna removed from him not only that occult power, but the very thirst for powers, so that the Pandit could attain pure devotion.

Padmalochan came to regard him as an incarnation of God from that time,[22] and was devoted to him accordingly. The Master said, 'Though Padmalochan was so great a scholar, he had so much faith and devotion to "here" [me].'[23] According to Akshay Kumar Sen, Padmalochan was blessed with a vision of his Chosen Deity, Mother Kālī, in the person of Sri Ramakrishna.[24] Sri Ramakrishna too admitted later, '. . . many persons like Padmalochan, who spent their whole lives in the study of these things . . . came here and called me an incarnation.'[25]

As his health continued to deteriorate, one day the Pandit bade goodbye to the Master with tears in his eyes and went to Benaras. It is said he passed away there shortly after.[26]

Padmalochan's encounter with Sri Ramakrishna illustrates Sri Ramakrishna's ability to understand advanced spiritual aspirants, their strong identification with certain traditional approaches, and the prejudices and narrow ideas which impeded their progress. And it shows how he could lead them into greater dimensions of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, finally opening to them the highest realization of the Infinite Consciousness.

20. *Gospel,* p. 207. However, in support of Sri Ramakrishna's viewpoint we need not quote from scriptures more instances than the following two: 'Immortality can be obtained through renunciation alone, and not through work, progeny or wealth' (*Mahānārayaṇopaniṣad,* 12.14). And, 'Giving up his wife, man in fact gives up worldly attachment, and by giving up the latter man attains happiness' (*Yogavāsiṣtha Rāmāyaṇa,* Vairāgya Prakaraṇa, 21.35).

21. *Great Master,* p. 550.

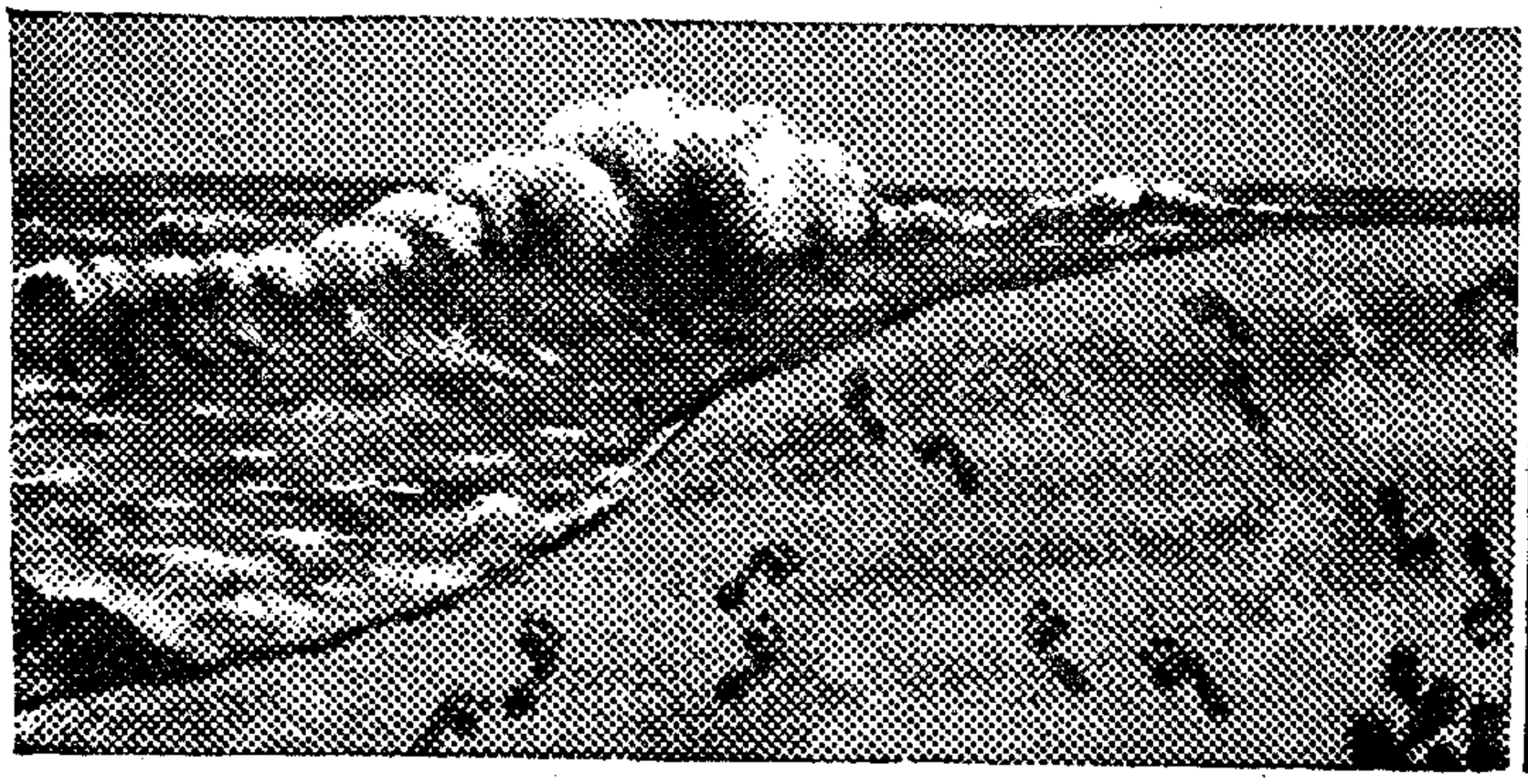
22. Sashibhusan Ghosh, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Deva* (Bengali) (Calcutta : Udbodhan Office), p. 244.

23. *Great Master,* p. 550.

24. *Punthi,* p. 126.

25. *Great Master,* p. 551.

26 *Great Master,* p. 551.



HUMAN TRENDS

HOW SHALL WE ADDRESS THEM ?

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

Those in the West to whom the message of Ramakrishna Vedanta is now to be given, and those who are entrusted with the giving of that message—these seem to be worlds apart. The 'media' in America and elsewhere have taken up in earnest a fiction of thought and expression which I may best call 'decade reckoning' : the 50's, the 60's, the 70's—we have seen all these children ; who will the 80's be? A simplistic and often smug appraisal is made of the generation bred in each even ten years, and put out for consumption so that all may be conned into believing that things really do follow such a pattern.

Like all popular devices this literary one cradles just enough truth to be enticing and disturbing as well. If one asks, for example, why the Vedanta centres which in the two decades 1950-1970 attracted numbers of young people, saw them drift away in the 70's, the plausible answer often given is that we are dealing here, with two widely differing sets of persons ; the implication being that social and cultural changes have come so fast as to produce persons of quite different backgrounds, formative tendencies and tastes.

I think this is true. I think we can definitely speak of the 'children of the 70's' (by which is meant the generation now reaching its early 20s) as a fairly distinct and recognizably coherent set of persons. Yes, young people still do appear at services of the Vedanta societies, though (with one or two outstanding exceptions) they are not numerous any more. When they do come, how shall we, whose training has been so different, address them? To use the 'in' word, how can dialogue be enjoined?

Casualness of dress, speech, behaviour : We were brought up to associate the holding of a religious service with the putting on of a suit and tie (or in India, a clean white *dhoti*) and the neatness of hair on head and face. We were going, in a special sense, into the presence of God : it mattered how we presented ourselves. Apart from self-respect, what others might say of us was always to be considered (just there being the vulnerable point!) How does a person so conditioned conduct a service for men and women coming in jeans and shaggy shirts? Or where the tie used to be, some bushy whiskers? Our elders, and particularly our teachers or senior monks, were to be heard with unroving eye and ear ; spoken to with respect and deference

due to their age or status; their mere presence was an automatic damper on hasty, extravagant, loose or frivolous conversation. When the children of the 70's display in our presence their innocence of any such restraintive strictures, are we then to cringe? To reprimand? Have we understood at all how deeply these people have imbibed a detestation of establishmentism? Whatever smacks of the institution, the organization, the good old tradition-for-its-own-sake—all is suspect and warily to be approached. We grew up listening to lecturers behind a lectern on a platform about us and we sat in chairs. Today the lectern and even the platform may be resented. 'Why should you not be on our level, be one of us, chat with us informally? Must you seem to be on a pedestal?' The chairs are often ignored, the listeners squat upon the carpets. And if yoga exercises have not quite yet given an untiring spine, the lengthy discourse takes its toll and before long, most parts of the body may be in contact with the floor. Now again, we were taught the importance of an upright posture in spiritual life: how do we address them? Casualness is the watchword of their day—in posture and attire, in speech, in decorum. Can we see in this, too, any beneficial forcing out into the open of real values? It is patent that no 'stuffed shirt' will be able to hold this dialogue.

Rejection of authority: There is no denying that past decades saw us paying, all too often, homage to undeserved authority. The breaking of our own enchantment to those illusions is evident all around us in our newer attitude toward politician and president, teacher, judge and cleric. Churches are no longer able to cover their barrenness with angelic music, flower arrangements, etc. Many even find it difficult to summon up such contributions. The modern generation may rightly pride itself on having penetrated the veils of secrecy and hypocrisy its elders threw around their own misdeeds and sordid adventures. To paraphase Emerson, what the parents regard in their offspring as sins, in themselves they term 'experiments'. There is now an honesty and sincerity we did not so conspicuously show. For not all authority is denounced; when perceived as vested in genuine personal experience, it commands respect and even more. There is the razor-sharp discrimination to expose the inflated and the bogus; no sham, no pretense, no padded shoulders, no putting on of airs. Away with the concern for self-image (as noted above)! To our mind this is one of the signs of a true health in this new society, and one which provides a springboard for their spiritual aspiration.

Yet in this general suspicion of authority and authoritarianism, important time-honoured values lie strewn aside. How does one go about explaining to such persons what we understood of the practicality for spiritual life, of obedience and subservience to a guru? Why does he seem to be an authoritarian person? Why does he need to shout, or scold, or berate; to criticize us openly before others, reduce our egos to ashes—and all the other crimes that gurus are heir to? Why is his opinion so final? Oh yes, a few have understood it very well; they have stretched themselves out before one or another of the many teachers now to be found in any American city. Although these are largely pitied and looked down upon by the majority of their peers, they appear to demonstrate that there is a desire on the part of the young to respect and follow; where authenticity commands respect, very probably authority will not have to demand it.

Coupled with the above is the strain of 'democratic' thinking which permeates the American personality, at least, of *any* decade: 'all men are created equal', 'I am as good as you are, and you as good as

I'. Where does one begin, to talk to them about the saint, the holy man, the status of the elderly, the veneration due to the enlightened, which, as we were given to understand it, is not only proper manners, but as a matter of fact, confers much spiritual benefit upon oneself? The possessor of spiritual knowledge was like the cow in the barn: only if the 'calfness' of the applicant were established would the milk in her udder be given down.

Resentment of hierarchy : This goes hand in glove with the above. The code of conduct observed traditionally in any serial order, such as a monastic one, or that of the knights of old, has, we were taught, not only a practicality for efficient operations but also a special beauty in itself. How does one explain all this to those encouraged from childhood to scorn most of the hierarchies presented to them, and even the idea of hierarchy itself?

Unfamiliarity with the classics : Nurtured on a pragmatic and commercially-oriented education, young people today have little or no background for references and illustrations drawn from the venerable epics, great poets and master story-tellers of the ages, or even from the Bible ! Many have hardly read at all what is usually known as literature, having filled their vacant hours with television. The children of the 70's are verily TV-children. Consequently those who cherished the classics and made their characters and concepts life companions often draw only blank looks and puzzlement in their attempts to share from that rich storehouse.

Habits and preferences in food : Even in this mundane corner the old and the young are poles apart, so far as it touches on Vedantic custom. Adherents of macrobiotics, or organic growing or this or that natural or raw food school, many now arriving at our centres have strong preferences in styles of food. Some are already devoted to a diet nothing could make them change. Many shun sugar and spice, most advocate food taken raw or lightly cooked, free of 'empty calories' and so on. And what do they find? Cooked and offered to Sri Ramakrishna at the shrine and taken as *prasād*, are starchy and overcooked foods, often full of spices ; sweets saturated with refined sugar. So they feel 'turned off'.

Intimacy in human relations : Our spiritual preceptors always warned us in the sternest terms regarding the dangers, for the spiritual aspirant, of allowing ourselves the freedom to mix intimately with all kinds of people, especially in a physical way. There is that passage in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* where the Master describes how sitting together, talking at length, and everything which in our society would be called flirting, are really only lesser forms of intercourse. For the chaste-minded householder as well as for the monastic candidate, Vedanta has insisted on a high degree of self-restraint in social intercourse and the avoiding of any of the avenues which might lead away from personal pnrity.

This generation, on the contrary, has been heavily indoctrinated to value 'love' above purity ; communication and contact as against privacy and isolation ; all sorts of 'encounter' groups are advertising their psychotherapeutic benefits ; the free expression of one's tender feelings towards others (wherever that may lead) as against repression or suppression (considered unhealthy). We have even heard 'physical tendencies', by which is meant uninhibited touching, stroking and embracing of others, commended as a safeguard *against* sexual involvement ! All this they owe to yesterday's psychologists (those of today fortunately are changing), whose all-pervasive influence has flooded over the lives of Western people. Where do you start? How

is this stream ever to be backed up, the current to be reversed?

Confusion about things spiritual: In recent times in the West this dates from before the turn of the century, when the movement concerning itself with the survival of, and communications with, persons who have 'passed over', got the name spiritualism. Then there came a period when things rather sorted themselves out; the real mystics were rediscovered and their careful delineations between the spiritual and the merely psychic, noted. Now again the pendulum has swung and these have been pushed into the background. For the children of the past decade, almost anything which is anti-science or scientifically heretical is reckoned on the 'spiritual' side. A fascination with extra-sensory perception, psychokinesis, psychometry, herbology, numerology, astrology, etc. has gripped them tight. Not that there is great harm in that, but the task of sorting out what is and what is not Vedanta in all this (and in all the questions we are raising) lies heavy on the teacher.

Science has disillusioned us, but we are also disillusioned with science. It has not been able to live up to all its bright promises. Young people, with frames of thinking now quite altered by the world of Zen, Tolkien and other myth-makers, Castaneda and the occult, are not looking much to Science. But Swami Vivekananda's presentation of our faith, a presentation fairly faithfully followed by his successors in the West today, relies heavily on the rational and scientific. Will any change be necessary?

The drug-trip: Lastly, most serious and difficult to handle, of all the gaps between the generations is perhaps this one. Figures show that as many as 70 or 80 percent of all pupils now being graduated from American high schools have 'tried' one or more of the mind-altering drugs. The introduction to them comes earlier than that, and habitual usage is also rampant. We, from the pulpit give our stock-in-trade pronouncement and warning. 'Have you ever had the experience?' comes the retort; 'If not, how can you speak to us?'

How, indeed? Except to say how sad we feel to see the not infrequent instances of serious or permanent brain-damage; except to say how little, therefore, we can feel inclined to experiment with such substances, however, attractive to us the results might be painted. Persons already mentally unbalanced, having open access to the hallucinations, have had to pass in and out of mental wards like persons caught in a revolving door. Vedanta has something to offer to these victims, some of them. Experience is experience, and what one knows of the older forms of addiction one can also apply here, but not completely, for these drugs are in a different class. Then is the philosophy to be regarded now as a kind of therapy, requiring a skilled operator, before these cases can be exposed to the doctrine itself? Has the Vedanta centre to run a clinic?

Nevertheless one cannot help feeling that we have been for far too long content to run in the ruts made familiar and comfortable to us by our up-bringing and sacred traditions, and given rather too little time and consideration to matters of this kind—to the rapid changes in the face of the society we have to deal with. In saying this I am sometimes told, 'This is not a field for monks,' or 'you want to dilute Vedanta, by bringing into it all kinds of other concerns.' Well, did not Swami Vivekananda apply his spiritual understanding and sympathy to all the problems of man evident in his day? The danger now is not the dilution or corruption of Vedanta (which none of us wishes) but its isolation, its fossilization. The maintaining of the purity of the Vedantic message has somehow to be

squared with the injunction of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji to speak to each man in his own language : that is the great art. How to clarify for these newcomers what is and is not Vedanta and what spirituality is and is not, is a task those who have attempted it well understand. Of course we have first to be sure we know it for ourselves.

But unless these questions are faced in all honesty and with a heart that feels for the situation of the seeker and identifies with him, our mission in the West will experience a neglect which it could only deserve.

INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO—III

SRI M. P. PANDIT

Process : Rejection

Side by side with aspiration for the Divine and for all that leads to the Divine —for example, purity, devotion, sincerity, intensity—there has to be a rejection of all that is contrary to the aspiration. Things that stand in the way of the fulfilment of the aspiration, movements that slow down or retard the progress towards the Higher Consciousness have got to be relentlessly rejected.

Rejection is different from suppression. By suppression a person pushes down the offending element by force and it sinks into his own nether regions of which he is not conscious or less conscious. Such suppressed elements recede into the subconscious or the unconscious parts and lie there waiting for a suitable occasion or opportunity to rise up and find expression. Besides, they build up a tension which is particularly felt each time the exciting cause happens to be present. Things get complicated if there is physical suppression but a subtle indulgence is continued, as in matters of sex. This leads to a serious imbalance, a development that has led to certain hasty conclusions among Western psychologists, namely, that denial of sex leads to mental disequilibrium and so on. Actually this possibility occurs only if there is an outer desistance accompanied by an inner indulgence.

It is a matter of common experience, however, that the first step in rejection is suppression, denial of expression and containing in oneself, say, a movement of anger, violence or greed. But once things are refused indulgence, care must be taken to pull the element by its roots from one's being. Thought about it, feeling for it, desire for it, impulse for it must be sifted from oneself. The mental sanction is withdrawn. Each time it attempts a comeback, the ban must be enforced afresh without a second thought. These elements try to recur as long as there is the slightest possibility of their getting an entry. Once the door is firmly shut they no longer bother. The decisive factor is one's sincerity. Even if one is weak, one always gets the needed strength from the Divine if only one is sincere in one's call.

Thus, rejection is separation of the unwanted from oneself. One dissociates oneself from it, so that there is no subterfuge for its hiding anywhere in the being. A rejected thing falls away from oneself and becomes foreign. In this yoga, this stern rejection of what is opposed to one's deepest aspiration is the second step. Actually it is not a step that is successive to the first, but a simultaneous operation.

This rejection is to be worked out on all the levels of the being. In the mind it proceeds by a steady elimination of ideas, thinkings, beliefs and notions that hold one

down to earthy bases, pen one within narrow limits and in any way arrest or interfere with the free flight of upward aspirations. The mind has to unlearn its habit of referring every movement to its ego; egoism, selfishness and tamasic obstinacy are some of the diseases of the mind and they must be got rid of. Mental disposition to depressions is another habit that must be rooted out. The Mother observes that depression is acute egoism. A mind under depression shuts itself securely from all light and happiness. It builds a subjective wall of negative thoughts around itself and the consciousness loses its vibrancy and one gets stuck in a mire of obscurity and inertia.

All likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, which invariably interfere with the legitimate activities of the mind—for example, reasoning, assessing, judging things—must be examined and set aside so that the mind is open more and more only to the reception and formulation of truth. Tendencies towards cynicism, suspicion, criticism, need to be discouraged and replaced by movements of understanding, goodwill and charitable outlook. In short, all negative movements of the mind must be checked and positive ones encouraged.

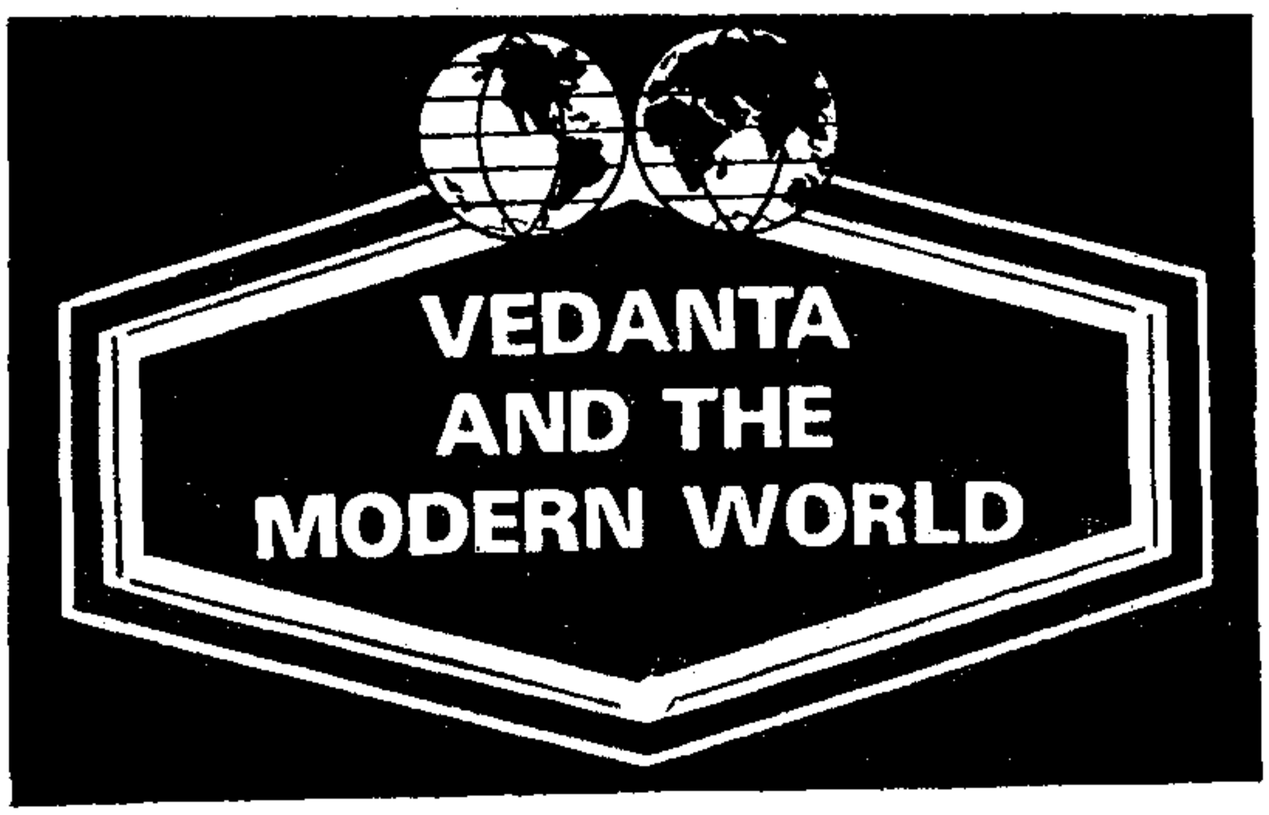
More is to be done in the field of emotions and feelings. Our emotional being is always a veritable sea of feelings, desires, passions, intensities of conflicting kinds. Anger, jealousy, hostility, ill-will, greed grasping and other movements rub shoulders against the more refined ones of goodwill, compassion, friendliness, self-giving, love, kindness, etc. Each of us has what the *Gītā* would call *daivī saṁpat* and *āsurī saṁpat*, godly possessions and the titanic possessions. The Sādhaka has to cast his weight on the side of the former and firmly reject the latter. It is not enough to reject them in principle; the decision has to be worked out at every moment, refusing the lower and accepting the higher choice. Most need catharsis in this region of their being, a merciless weeding out of the animal heritage and clearing the ground for the birth and blossoming of the godly plenitude.

Then there is the jungle of passions and gross desires which has to be cleared from its 'bleeding roots'. An intensive discipline of self-control, self-observation and self-purification on the lines of Patañjali's *yama* and *niyama* is a must. This task is rendered easier if the effort on the mental levels and the emotional is already on. Bereft of the support of the mind and the heart, the lower vital being cannot agitate too much or too long. In this domain is also the play of petty desires, small claims and revolts of our unregenerate parts. Ceaseless vigilance and automatic check must be cultivated.

And lastly, there are elements in the physical being that need attention. There is a srong inertia and obscurity in the physical layers of our being opposing movement, progress, light and consciousness. Lethargy and lassitude seem to be innate in the body which has layers after layers of *tamas*, inconscience. A ceaseless effort is needed to release oneself from the stronghold of these nether forces of darkness and stagnation and assure oneself of a freer and lighter movement of the physical.

The wise seeker knows or learns how to use the force of *rajas* to offset and conquer the pull of *tamas*; he also knows how to invoke the aid of the *sattva* quality in him to correct and control the excesses and rapidities of the *rajas*. He becomes conscious in the process of an unseen guidance from within, from the depths of the soul, the psychic, of which the three qualities are instrumental modes.

(to be continued)



IS VEDANTA A PHILOSOPHY OF ESCAPE ?—VI

DR. VINITA WANCHOO

(Continued from the previous issue)

CAUSES OF ESCAPISM (continued)*

Socio-historical and geo-political factors

Attention has so far been directed to those doctrines of Vedanta which, according to the critics, are the fundamental causes of its 'escapist' outlook. The critics do not stop at these, however, but go on to adduce what might be called socio-historical and geo-political factors, which they say have been contributory to Vedantic indifference towards and turning away from the 'adventure of life'. So much, in fact, has the Vedantic worldview been averted from the 'adventure of life' that one word, namely 'transcendence', sums up its distinctive character. They argue that India's flight into the realm of the transcendent must be due to the hopeless and hard conditions of her life, the poverty of her natural resources, affording no outlet to the energy and aspirations of her people through normal secular activity. The curious 'despair of life' is aggravated by the adverse influence of the tropical climate. Temporate climates are not apt to produce such an attitude of pessimism as does the heat and enervation of India's climes.[1] Geographical monotony and terribleness of nature's forces produce quietism and disinterest in the natural order of things.[2]

The misery of India's political conditions and history is also adduced as a cause. Political circumstances contributed towards producing this curious reluctance to meet life realistically. It is judged that political life was less interesting in ancient India than in the West, and the political organizations developed were crude.[3] Absolute monarchy or tribal oligarchy, together with the system of narrow and unexpanding trade-guilds, did not provide scope for the exercise of human freedom or the development of new or higher institutions. Civic life being without lasting or great forms, a constant succession of petty tyrants split up society into castes and prevented the development of a common national feeling.[4] Thus, one of the most important external realms for ex-

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* The supposed causes of escapism adduced by critics of Vedanta which have already been discussed are intellectualism, pantheism, mysticism, and the doctrines of Mokṣa, Māyā, Karma and Punarjanma (rebirth).

1. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 21 ; Bloomfield, *Religion of the Vedas*, p. 264.

2. Cf. R. K. Mukerjee, *A History of Indian Civilization*, I, p. 82.

3. Dorothea Jane Stephen, *Studies in Early Indian Thought*, pp. 82-83.

4. L. de La Vallée Poussin, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 16.

pression of interest and activity—namely, public affairs—provided no scope, material or comfort for the Indian people. They had to fall back on their inner resources of mind and spirit.

The racial principle is pressed into service by the critic to explain how the buoyant, exultant world-affirmation of the early Aryans was toned down and overcome by a gradual admixture of the invaders with the aboriginal Dravidian stock, with the result that the beliefs, superstitions and practices of the latter weakened the mental power of the Aryan race.[5]

Among the sociological causes, the caste system comes in for the largest share of blame. Some critics have argued that caste with its intolerable yoke of the brahmanic system, minimizing the value of the individual, added to the depression of the people, but other authorities reject this argument. Even the prevalence of vegetarianism is brought forward as an explanation of religious despondency and quietism, since its cumulative effect over generations is thought to induce a patient, unaggressive and probably despondent habit of mind, and indolence and apathy as the physical result.[6]

The reason why this conglomeration of causes has been stated is not due to the desire to rationalize by confusing the issue of 'escapism', but firstly, to point out that the critics are not even agreed as to the explanation of escapism, and secondly, to draw attention to the genuine difficulty, admitted by the critics, of disentangling cause from effect in this matter. Neither has the science of psychology devised any theory or satisfactory method of measuring the effect of climate, geography, economy, politics, sociology, ethnology and habits of life of a people on their outlook on life, nor can any historical evidence be found to connect this outlook to the accumulated distresses oppressing the Indian mind.[7] The reasons advanced are then, singly and in combination, no more than mere unverified hypotheses.[8] Keeping in mind this difficulty, the purpose here is to examine the doctrines of Vedanta which are held responsible for the many symptoms constituting 'escapism'.

EVALUATION OF SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF ESCAPISM

Introductory Remarks

At the outset, it is necessary to clear one point in order to avoid confusion. The question of the theoretical doctrine behind the outlook of a time or people is to be distinguished from those psychological sanctions which, originating in their beliefs and practices, influence them in a certain direction. The truth of a religious or philosophical doctrine is not equivalent to its psychological significance, but is determined by its logical structure. The psychological motivation derives from the needs of the people and operates as a sanction. An understanding of these psychological factors cannot substitute for the rational judgement of validity and value of a doctrine, though it does help to clarify our understanding of it. Much is made of the necessity of objectivity—that is, freedom from 'ulterior motives' or needs or interests, implying openness of mind on the part of the thinker. But subjective or psychological

5. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 9, p. 812; Heinrich Zimmer, *The Philosophies of India*, p. 459.

6. John Campbell Oman, *Mystics and Ascetics of India*, p. 14.

7. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 9, p. 805.

8. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 812: The provisional result is that Indian pessimism is at once environmental, temperamental and speculative. Of course, all this is all very tentative and hypothetical.

motivation cannot be avoided, since it determines the philosophical awareness of the problem and the direction of search for the solution. It is only when ideas are connected with the urgent needs of life and personality or the actual functions of human life that they have any general appeal and actual influence on the action and life of the people.

This points to another aspect of the psychological significance of a philosophy. Since theory and practice act and react upon each other, the question of the effect of the actual operation of philosophy on the minds and lives of a people arises. Modern pragmatism insists that this last factor—successful operation—is the determinant of the truth-value of a doctrine; 'workability' is the test of truth. This viewpoint cannot be accepted, since both true and false ideas and doctrines are manifestly seen to 'work' in people's lives, for a longer or shorter time. But, at the same time, this criterion may also not be rejected wholly, since the absolute inoperability of an idea in life is a *prima facie* proof of its non-validity. A middle point is clearly indicated. A true doctrine must also justify itself on practical grounds, though not necessarily by being universally and continuously in 'successful' operation.

These preliminary remarks will serve to clarify the standpoint from which it is intended to evaluate the symptoms and causes of Vedantic 'escapism'. The standpoint has been dictated by the ground adopted by the critic himself. Since his objection to Vedanta is largely on the ground of the undesirable practical, moral and psychological results of that philosophy, the evaluation must also be based on the same ground. Therefore, though the following interpretation of the possibilities and actualities of Vedanta philosophy may appear to be pragmatic in form, the question of logical validity being brought in only incidentally, it is not intended to be a final judgement of its value and truth. It is the continuing task of past, present and future Vedantins to meet philosophical doubts on all the grounds of knowledge and truth admitted by philosophy; that is, to establish Vedanta firmly on the logical plane. But according to the element of truth allowed in the pragmatic criterion if the critical assessment of Vedanta as largely productive of pessimism, discontent, dissatisfaction with and uncertainty about the world can be met by showing its practical effects to be largely elevating and conducive to the satisfaction of the human need for truth, the demand of the present situation will have been fulfilled.

Two reservations must be made: firstly, whether or not the critic is a pragmatic in his general philosophical outlook, in the above analysis of Vedanta he adopts the pragmatic stand that conduct and practical considerations must wholly justify the Vedantic belief, which, in his opinion, they do not do. But it is being argued in this paper that the truth-value of Vedanta must be established on grounds other than 'workability', though an added justification of its theoretical position can be given by bringing to light its practice and practical effects. Nor will it be pretended that the professors of that philosophy have always lived up to it. Secondly, the same advantage may be claimed for the following interpretation as claimed by the critic, who admits the hypothetical nature of his judgement of 'escapism', based as it is on many and varied causes which are difficult to disentangle from their effects.[9]

It is necessary to note that some of the causes of 'escapism' are mutually contradictory. On the one hand, the intellectualism of Vedanta is objected to and, on the other,

9. See the discussion at the end of the section 'Causes of Escapism', above.

Vedanta is discovered to be a world-denying mysticism. Many students have pointed out the anti-intellectualism of mysticism, its 'tendency to discontinue intellectual information in religious experience'.[10] What Otto calls the 'numinous feeling' is a mystic illumination of the non-rational type. An additional evidence of Vedantic anti-intellectualism is provided by its search for truth, not for its own sake but as subserving a religious aim.[11] The faults of both pure intellectualism and pure anti-intellectual mysticism cannot be discovered in Vedanta. Rather, the fact is that there is a useful combination of both in Vedanta.[12] As for the religious aim of Vedanta, to be what one knows to be real is the goal of effort. Nothing is thought which is not mystically one with man's thought; that is, truth is by participation, and not second hand. This partly negates the charge of 'intellectual bankruptcy' supposed to be inherent in pantheistic mysticism, which reduces unity into mere abstraction, diversity into determinism, materialism and fatalism. Vedanta does not suffer from any vagueness of faith of this type, but has been the source of emotional and intellectual satisfaction in its adherence.

The critic freely uses the terms theism, pantheism, nature-worship and polytheism, giving each a certain connotation in the context of Western philosophy. But he will also admit that none of these terms apply exactly to Vedanta. Reality is in all things rather than Reality being All; for example, the Upanisadic Brahman is nowhere said to be transformed into the world and thereby exhausted, but remains infinitely great.[13] In the *Gītā* there is a combination of the ideas of God's immanence in the world and men's hearts and His transcendence in which He controls and protects and listens to prayers.[14] Similarly, all schools of Vedanta reject pure immanence, in which God is wholly transformed into the world; all insist on transcendence, in the interest of the moral and spiritual necessity of salvation. Even Advaita in its *vyāvahārika* phase insists on the distinction of Brahman, *cit* (sentience) and *acit* (insentience). Śaṁkara interprets Bādarāyaṇa to remove the inconsistency between the ideas of God developing into the world while being transcendent, and the idea of His being a simple spirit without parts; while Vaiṣṇava schools admit the world of matter and spirit to be associated with God as His characteristics or body or power, undergoing change, while He yet remains pure.[15]

The second sense of 'God is All' is no more applicable, since even Advaita does not hold ordinary things to be 'mere illusions'. Vedantic pantheism allows for distinction, which is explicable by the mysticism at its base. 'Its unique synthesis of science, philosophy and theology in its correlation of *pramāṇas* in intuition, insistence on the eternity of self, and clear exposition of Brahma and Mukti takes it far outside the scope of pantheism.'[16] The pantheistic mysticism of Vedanta is the emphasis on underlying unity of which the seers are directly aware. The sense of supreme unity and wholeness is the special

10. G. Dawes Hicks, *The Philosophical Bases of Theism*, p. 101.

11. M. H. Harrison, *Hindu Monism and Pluralism*, p. 173.

12. Cf. S. N. Dasgupta, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 231.

13. See *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* 3.14-17; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.9.1-2: also, पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ।

14. Franklin Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, p. 47; S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 527.

15. *Tattvārtha Dīpa Nibandha*, 1.1 and 101; Rāmānuja's Bhāṣya on *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 10.21.39 and 42.

16. Edgerton, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, p. 47.

capacity of Vedanta, and its worship of that unity leads to spirituality, as by its inspiration the mind is led from manifold observation of the senses to intuitive affirmation of spirit's unity.[17]

Yet another inconsistency lies in charging Vedanta with the holding of both the doctrines of Māyā and pantheism. One declares that the world is unreal, and the other that the world is nothing but divine, hence real.[18] These criticisms cancel each other because the Māyā doctrine brings out the supra-personal, non-active nature of Reality by the negativistic approach, while pantheism brings out its ceaseless self-expression and creativity. One way of getting out of this difficulty is by emphasizing the logical inconsistency inherent within Vedanta itself or by falling back on the distinction of esoteric and exoteric doctrines; that is, Māyā may be regarded as the 'fundamental' and pantheism as the 'prevailing' doctrine, a concession necessitated by the clamour of empirical consciousness.[19]

17. Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 379, 389.

18. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, p. 30.

19. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 159 ff.

(*to be continued*)

How They Walked on the Razor's Edge

ST. TERESA, BRIDE OF THE SUN

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

The original Carmelites were a loose-knit group of lay hermits who lived in caves and huts on Mt. Carmel, Israel, during the twelfth century. Theirs was a life of contemplative solitude with an occasional, but informal, apostolate. Around the year 1200 the Patriarch of Jerusalem gave them a simple rule of life, which was approved by the Church in 1226; and with the help of this recognition and nominal organization, they began to found monasteries in Europe. However, the new European environment—both physical and, more important, social—demanded some adaptations in the Rules; so in 1247 it was modified, making the Carmelites an order of mendicant friars. In 1291 the last of the Carmelites in the east were exterminated by the Muslim Saracens.

The spirit of the times in Europe had further effects on the Carmelites, who now became more and more active in the apostolate and neglected their original vocation of contemplative solitude. This trend naturally dampened their austere simplicity as well. In 1432 the Pope gave official sanction to this state of affairs through his Bull of Mitigation, which relaxed in certain fundamental ways the primitive Rule. The Mitigated Rule was itself reasonably strict; but by the time Teresa joined the Order in 1536, it had become further relaxed in practice. The nuns at the Convent of the Incarnation wore jewelry, chattered incessantly during silence time, visited each other in their cells, and at recreation time feasted their ears with worldly music. They weren't enclosed, but

could receive visitors in the parlour and even leave the convent for long periods to stay with family, friends or pious lady admirers. The nuns were referred to as 'ladies' and addressed as Doña, 'Madam'.

To complicate matters, this was the age of the Spanish conquests. Rather than settle into the humdrum of married life, the bright young men of Spain sought adventure in the Americas or East Indies. As a result, the convents of Spain were filled to bursting with women who despaired of finding husbands : the Incarnation had as many as a hundred and eighty nuns during Teresa's time. And this was just one of the convents in the small town of Avila. What spirituality could be expected under these circumstances?

Teresa had suffered terribly under this state of affairs: early in her convent life because of the bad influence the environment had on an unformed nun ; later in her career because of the lack of understanding of contemplatives. But what could she do to remedy the situation? Women in sixteenth-century Spain existed to be seen and not heard ; they were to look beautiful but not display too much intelligence—that would be bad form ; nuns were to be obedient, not innovative.

Around 1559, however, when Teresa first met the Franciscan St. Pedro de Alcantara, she was encouraged and began to consider the possibilities of starting a convent where the whole life would be dedicated to God, where there would be no distractions, no concessions to worldliness. Then one day, probably in 1560, she was in her cell at the Incarnation discussing with a few other nuns the hermits of old. During a lull in the conversation Teresa's niece Maria, a lay-boarder who lived in Teresa's cell much as the latter had lived at the Augustinian convent Our Lady of Grace some thirty years before, turned to Teresa and said, 'Why don't we found a convent where nuns could lead a stricter religious life? I'll give my dowry for the purpose.'

Teresa was a practical-minded daughter of Castile ; she knew the insurmountable obstacles in the way. So, though pleased, she didn't allow herself to get excited by Maria's offer. God, however, who has no Castilian common sense, ordered her one day after Communion with 'the most explicit commands to work for this aim with all my might and made me wonderful promises—that the convent would not fail to be established ; that great service would be done to Him in it ; that it should be called St. Joseph's ; that St. Joseph would watch over us at one door and Our Lady at the other ; that Christ would go with us ; that the convent would be a star giving out the most brilliant light ...'

God Himself took charge of the operation. Still, the obstacles were truly awesome, and to human eyes the project looked impossible.

* * *

Sunday morning, 24 August 1562—St. Bartholomew's Day. The District of San Roque in Avila woke to the tinkling of a small bell. Rubbing the sleep from their eyes, people left their houses in curiosity and followed the sound, tracing it to a house belonging to a certain Don Juan and his wife Doña Juana. What was the neighbours' surprise when they went inside and found a chapel which seemed to have sprung up overnight! Mass was being said by a priest, and among those attending the service was Doña Teresa de Ahumada, the Carmelite nun who had been so much talked about during recent years for her ecstasies and holiness, and who happened to be the sister of Doña Juana. Three other Carmelite nuns were also present, as were, of course, both Doña Juana and her husband. A few other close acquaintances of Teresa had come ; and finally there were four young ladies whose faces fairly beamed with

tranquil excitement. The neighbourhood received another surprise when Teresa gave these four young ladies the nun's habit.

'A convent!' one of the neighbours exclaimed.

'Yes, and in our very midst!' exclaimed another.

'Wonderful!' said a third under his breath.

After the ceremony, the neighbours dispersed in an eagerness to spread the good word. Teresa was so overcome with joy to have finally established a convent that she entered a deep state of prayer.

The joyous news spread rapidly throughout Avila. But within two hours the town notables changed the rejoicing to apprehension. They were indignant that a nun—a woman!—should have the audacity to found a new religious house without their knowledge. The masses are masses everywhere: the same ones who had been rejoicing a moment earlier, now rose on the reverse wave of enthusiasm and began to complain: 'How can we afford to support another religious house in this town! No, it must be closed down. Save our children's bread!'

Almost simultaneously, Teresa fell from ecstasy to an agony of despair. She had not sought permission to establish the convent through the proper channels in her Order. Even the prioress of the Convent of the Incarnation knew nothing about it. Would the authorities order the new convent to be dissolved? Even if they didn't, would the townspeople give these poor nuns food to eat? All sorts of doubts and misgivings assailed her.

After God had given her the command to found a convent two years earlier, she had sounded out the Provincial of her Order, the nuns of the Incarnation, and others; the result had been disastrous. All had ridiculed her, and the nuns of the Incarnation had been especially indignant. 'What! doesn't she think we're good enough for her? There are plenty of nuns here who lead a much holier life than she does, yet she wants to bring discredit on us by founding a convent based on the primitive Rule! First let her learn to live up to the Mitigated Rule!' So she had had to proceed in secrecy, in conspiracy with her confessor, a few loyal friends and the Bishop of Avila. Her sister Doña Juana had selected and purchased the house of the future convent in her own name, to insure secrecy. Teresa had also had the invaluable encouragement of St. Pedro de Alcantara, as well as frequent instructions and inspiration during ecstasies from God and Christ, the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, and St. Clare of Assisi. Most important, she had had her own indomitable courage: 'I saw clearly that I was about to fling myself into the midst of a fire, for Our Lord had told me so ... and yet, in spite of all this, I was even then so full of joy that I couldn't contain my impatience to begin the fight.' Was this the same woman who had once been taken for dead? Even now she vomited every day, suffered from almost constant headaches and frequently from fever.

Now, against unbelievable odds, Teresa had finally succeeded in founding a convent which would follow in all strictness the primitive Rule (actually the modified Rule for Europe of 1247). But for the first time she began to worry over the possible consequences of her actions: for the past two years she had been too anxious to fulfil the commands of God to give much thought to possible failure.

'But the Lord didn't allow His poor servant to suffer long: in all my tribulations He has never failed to succour me. So it was here.' Her soul was once again flooded with light. 'What was I afraid of? I asked myself. I had been wanting trials, and here were some good ones; and the greater the

opposition I endured, the greater would be my gain.' Her fears were conquered. She turned over in her mind the lines she had composed and written on a bookmark in her breviary:

> Let nothing disturb thee;
> Let nothing dismay thee;
> All things pass:
> God never changes.
> Patience attains
> All that it strives for.
> He who has God
> Finds he lacks nothing:
> God alone suffices.

Teresa had to leave the four novices at St. Joseph's and return to the Incarnation the same day. Later a town council was convened in an attempt to disband the nascent reform. But nothing came of it and all opposition died down in time. Early in 1563 she was authorized to go and live at St. Joseph's with her spiritual daughters. On her way there, she stopped at a shrine to the Virgin Mary and removed her shoes for the last time: Doña Teresa de Ahumada of the Mitigated Carmelite observance was dead; Teresa of Jesus, founder of the Discalced Reform, took birth from her ashes.

* * *

Morning, five o'clock. It was still dark when St. Joseph's awoke to the ring of a small bell.

In a moment the silence was again broken: 'Praised be Jesus Christ, praised be the Virgin Mary, his Mother! To prayer, Sisters! Let us praise the L-o-o-o-r-d!'

Then from another part of the cloister: 'Praised be Jesus ...' And yet another: '... To prayer, Sisters! ...'

After rousing each other and gathering in the chapel, the nuns practised mental prayer, then prayer in common, followed by Mass. After breakfast, which was at nine o'clock, they went to their respective duties.

'The cell was quickly swept and put in order,' writes Marcelle Auclair, one of Teresa's modern biographers who visited all the original foundations of the Reform. 'The straw pallet, which the planks scarcely raised above the level of the red-brick floor, was shaken and the thick frieze which did duty for bed-linen put back in place. The warm brown colour looked well against the white-washed wall whose only decoration was a large cross. The rough wood door formed a brown mass, the window a patch of blue. In a corner stood the blue and white earthenware pitcher and basin in use everywhere for one's ablutions at that time. On a narrow piece of board stood a few books. On the floor was a cork mat which did duty as a seat. That was all. Nothing more. But the "nothing" was so clean that it positively shone.'

There, any nun who had no special office worked at her spinning to support the convent. As poverty formed half of the cornerstone of St. Joseph's, they supported themselves by the work of their own hands and by unsolicited donations; as solitude formed the other half, there was no common workroom: that would give pretext for chatter and gossip. At work the only sound was the soft hum of the spinning wheel. Poverty, solitude, silence.

Before the bell was given for lunch, each Sister spent a short time in examination of conscience. For self-knowledge was a supporting pillar at St. Joseph's. Was she progressing in the love of God? What was she doing which hindered her progress? Such questions each asked herself in order to see whether she was growing; and if not, why not, so that she could remove the inner hindrances to growth. But Teresa was a master psychologist who knew that in over-

scrupulous nuns too much self-examination could create a morbid sense of shame which would drive the soul away from the all-merciful God rather than guide it to union with Him. So she used to warn them that 'this bread [of self-knowledge] must be eaten in moderation,' and 'the understanding must be ennobled in order that self-knowledge doesn't rob us altogether of our courage.'

Self-knowledge fostered humility, a second pillar supporting St. Joseph's. But what a virile humility it was that Teresa instilled in her nuns 'Humility is to keep within the bounds of truth. The truth is magnificent: we are nothing, but God dwells in us and God is everywhere.' 'Let us beware of the false humility which refuses to recognize the gifts which God has so generously bestowed upon us ...' 'If an insignificant peasant girl married the King, would not their children be of royal blood? When Our Lord gives a soul the great grace of uniting Himself to it ... what fruit, what heroic acts will not be the result!' To Teresa's mind, humility meant loving submission to God's will, reverent acceptance of God's presence in the soul, openness to His voice as spoken through one's superiors and religious sisters; it meant acceptance of God as Truth, renunciation of ego as distortion.

Nor did her humility have any room for sentimentality. 'From foolish devotions may God deliver us,' she said. Again, 'I should not like you to be [effeminate], or even to appear to be that, in any way, my daughters; I want you to be strong men. If you do all that is in you, the Lord will make you so manly that men themselves will be amazed at you.'

After examination of conscience, a bell called the Sisters to the refectory for lunch. 'Along the white walls', writes Marcelle Auclair, 'the Carmelites sat on wooden benches [before narrow tables] ... From a pulpit constructed in the recess in the wall formed by one of the windows, a sister read aloud, her black veil standing out against the blue of the Avila sky.... White: walls and coifs. Brown: the habits, the woodwork. Red: the tiles of floor and roof. Blue: a few pieces of earthenware, the sky. Such are the only colours found in these Carmels. And over all that, the sun of Spain.'

They depended for their daily food on public generosity. There was a turn in the outer wall of the convent in which people could put gifts of food, which then could be swung inside. Teresa, an excellent cook since her youth, would take her week in the kitchen just as the other nuns, making of every meal a treat. 'If your job is in the kitchen, don't forget that Our Lord is there in the midst of the pots and pans!' Teresa was true to the spirit of her advice. One day a nun found her before the stove in ecstasy. 'My Lord! Mother will spill on the fire the little oil we've got!' she thought. But, though her mind was rapt in God, this saint's feet were planted firmly on the earth, and nothing was lost.

The nuns of St. Joseph's were completely enclosed: no visits home, no going to see friends, and no receiving of visitors either. In a life of such intensity, recreation was a necessity. Hence there was a regular recreation time when the nuns gathered to talk and laugh amongst themselves. Teresa used to insist that merriment, service and love for one another were just as important as contemplation. And St. Joseph's was limited by Teresa to thirteen nuns, so that they could live togeher with the intimacy of a loving family.

Poverty and solitude: the twin cornerstone. Self-knowledge, humility, and love for one another: the pillars supporting the roof—contemplation—which sheltered them from the wind and rain of the world. Everything at St. Joseph's was aimed at making

possible and fruitful the loving contemplation of God.

After more common prayer, the Sisters retired to their rooms after 11-00 p.m., kneeling on the threshold to receive the Prioress's blessing as she passed through the cloister. Then 'the browns, blues, the russet red, the white even, all the colours of Carmel become indistinguishable in the darkness.'

But light continued to burn in Teresa's room. She was writing her now famous books: first her *Life,* and then *The Way of Perfection.* She had no wish to write, but her spiritual directors had commanded her to. Rather than take time from her duties, she took time from the little sleep she had in order to fulfil her obligations. And the result has made her famous as one of the greatest Spanish writers ever, alongside Cervantes.

These years at St. Joseph's were years of contemplative tranquillity and joy. Teresa's mind never went beyond the confines of St. Joseph's cloister, in supreme forgetfulness of the world. She finishes the account of her life as one who has packed her bag and baggage, and awaits the Great Deliverer to take her to her Beloved forever:

> As I am now out of the world, and my companions are few and saintly, I look down upon the world as from above ... [The Lord] has given me a life which is a kind of sleep: when I see things, I nearly always seem to be dreaming them. In myself I find no great propensity either to joy or to sorrow. If anything produces either of these conditions in me, it passes so quickly that I marvel, and the feeling it leaves is like the feeling left by a dream....

Not the dream of an uncritical sound sleeper, but the tenuous, shadowy dream of one who continues to see the dream though he is on the verge of waking, and knows it. The restlessness of mind which gives reality and depth to the world was stilled in her, and earthly objects appeared as empty shadows, playing in the field of her awareness, but making no impression on the mind.

Addressing herself to the priest who had ordered her to write the *Life,* she continues:

> It is thus, dear Sir and Father, that I live now. Your Reverence must beseech God either to take me to be with Him or to give me the means of serving Him.

Perhaps Teresa expected that God would release her from the bonds of flesh and take her to Himself. Little did she realize that He had chosen to give her the means of service, and that her active life was only about to begin.

(*to be continued*)

RELIGION AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

(*A Review Article*)

[RELIGION AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA. Publishers: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras-600 004. 1979. Pp. 26. Rs. 1.00.]

This handy brochure contains two talks given by the author, the present President of the Ramakrishna Order, in 1978, at its Bangalore and Bombay centres. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, deserves to be congratulated on bringing out these two talks in

the present form. Coming from the lips of the spiritual head of the world-wide Ramakrishna Order, the thoughts contained in it, though two years have elapsed since they were first pronounced, are directly relevant to the time that the book is being reviewed (May 1980), when there is a mass agitation going on in the northeastern region of India, showing signs of disintegration of our national unity, if an amicable solution is not found immediately.

Politics dominates the minds of men and nations today, all over the world. There is unrest all over. Fissiparous tendencies are raising their ugly heads everywhere for various reasons. This is true of India also. The cause of this unrest is traceable to the increasing thirst for material possessions and pleasures that men and women are after and to the purely secular socialistic doctrines preached by the many 'isms' that are prevalent today. These 'isms' do not recognize, nor care for, the spiritual truth underlying all existence. People the world over seem to have forgotten this fundamental truth about their very life on this planet. India, in the past, had held fast to this spiritual foundation of life. In recent decades, however, she too has been drawn to, and affected by, these new 'isms' and philosophies that have come into being in other parts of the world.

The author is emphatic in saying that man everywhere has to rediscover the spiritual basis of his very existence and recover faith in it. Otherwise, he will collapse, bringing misery to himself and to the world around him. We are witnessing this phenomenon today with the erosion of spiritual values all round. In the Indian context, this emphasis on spiritual values is all the more important for her national regeneration and integration. Swami Vivekananda, the patriot-monk of modern India, whom the author quotes profusely, was never tired of telling his compatriots that religion and spirituality formed the backbone of her (India's) national existence, her life-blood. He had warned that India would die as a nation the day that she would give up religion and spirituality. So, he had exhorted his countrymen to bend all their energies in the reconstruction of their motherland in tune with her national genius and tradition. He had visualized that that was the only way that the future of India could become more glorious than her past and shed light on the paths of others seeking to slake their spiritual thirst, comfort, and solace from this ancient land of the *ṛṣis*, saints, and godmen, with a hoary heritage coming down to us for thousands of years.

The author makes a grand, but cursory, survey of the background of Indian history and culture and draws our attention to the need of the hour. India needs to go back to the pristine religion and spirituality of her sacred scriptures, rediscover the eternal values found in them, have an implicit faith in them, and reassert them in her daily life. In the past, India was united on the basis of her religion and spirituality. That basis has to be revived and revitalized again. It alone removes all hatred and parochialism from the hearts of men and brings about mutual love and understanding among her diverse peoples in the different states of India. This is the essential pre-requisite for national integration. To quote the author himself : 'Today, our country needs all these great ideals—the socialistic ideal of ancient India, the great spiritual ideal of *mokṣa*, the spirit of renunciation and service, and also the synthetic outlook that all religions are true and that they are different paths to God-realization. All these are now necessary in order to integrate our country into one great nation' (p. 17).

The author rightly points out that too much emphasis on 'fundamental rights' has been laid by our leaders and the Constitu-

tion to the neglect of 'duties' that everyone has to perform in this task of national integration. Though political freedom was attained in 1947, the nation is yet to attain socio-economic freedom. He has also dealt with such questions as the good and evil aspects of the caste system, the exploitation of the masses by the higher castes and classes, the status of women, the four stages of life and their respective duties, the four-fold human values—based on *dharma* and aimed at *mokṣa* as the *summum bonum* of life—the crisis of character that is afflicting our national life, etc.—all in their proper perspective.

Swami Vivekananda had declared: 'National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces.' Politics, which divides men and nations, should yield its place to religion and spirituality which unite. There should be a complete shift in the emphasis and evaluation of the forces that keep men and nations alive and active. India is in disarray today. It needs to be composed, integrated, and united as one entity on a sound basis. That basis can be provided by religion and spirituality alone. This is the main theme of this booklet. Though small in size, it contains, precious thought dealing with the subject. It is our earnest wish that our countrymen should go through this book, derive benefit from it, learn the lessons of history, and realize in time the danger facing us today. It is a book that every Indian should own and read.

SWAMI ANANYANANDA
President, Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GAYATRI, THE HIGHEST MEDITATION: BY SADGURU KESHAVADAS. Published by Vantage Press, Inc., 516 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001. 1978. Pp. 172. $ 6.50.

Among the several modern Hindu spiritual leaders who are trying to spread the message of the Eternal Religion across lands and oceans, Sant Keshavadas is unique in several respects. Highly educated and endowed with varied talents, he has utilised all his capacities to serve humanity in different ways. Even before he entered the international arena he had become famous all over Karnataka, his native state, for his *Hari Katha* or musical discourses. His performances were not merely professional. Behind them lay intense devotion to God, loyalty to the religious tradition known as *dasa sampradaya,* and a missionary zeal to spread religion among the masses. It was these qualities which crowned him with success in India and abroad.

The present book on Gayatri is one more proof of Sant Keshavadas's versatile genius. Gayatri is the most sacred of Hindu prayers which has been recited by millions of people from the very beginning of the Vedic period. It forms a part of the *sandhya-vandana* or twilight devotion of a twice-born. The book under review is not just a discussion on the sacred prayer, as the title would lead one to suppose. It is designed as a practical manual on spiritual practice meant for the use of all spiritual aspirants.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part entitled 'Mantra Yoga', serves as a general introduction, and deals with such important subjects as yoga, various Mantras, ritualistic worship, Japa, use of the rosary, Om, Guru, meditation, etc. Within a few pages the author has neatly compressed a lot of useful information about spiritual life.

The second part is entitled 'Sandhya Vandana'. Here the whole procedure of the twilight ritual called Sandhya has been presented with such clarity that it is difficult to better it. This part also contains useful sections devoted to topics like the worldly benefits of repeating the Gayatri (getting a child, fulfilment of desires, warding off evil, etc.), the thread ceremony, Purusha Sukta, several other Gayatris, and, to cap it all, an interesting account of Visvamitra, the seer of the Gayatri, written in the author's typical genre. The only jarring note in the book is the incongruous inclusion of the photographs of several patrons which do not look edifying in a book of this kind.

This is indeed a most useful publication which fulfils a great need. We heartily recommend it

to all those who are interested in understanding and practising the ancient Vedic ritual of Sandhya. Hindu parents will find this sumptuous volume an ideal present for their sons who have undergone the Upanayana initiation.

The publishers are to be congratulated for the superb get-up and printing of the book which, even judged by Western standards, are of a distinctly superior quality.

P.B.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SRI LANKA BRANCH

REPORT FOR APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979

COLOMBO

The Colombo centre, headquarters of the Sri Lanka Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, is located on Ramakrishna Road, Wellawatte, Colombo-6. In addition to its administrative work, the following activities were carried on during the year under review.

Religious : There was regular Puja in the Ashrama shrine, with a Bhajan programme on Fridays. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated, as were several other holy days such as Wesak and Christmas Eve. Swamis of the centre conducted classes on the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*; they also gave interviews and special instructions to earnest spiritual seekers. Religious classes for children were held on Sundays, with 22 honorary teachers and 393 children on the roll. At Watupitiwela, 30 miles from Colombo, regular religious classes were given at the Training School for juvenile delinquents.

Educational and Cultural : The Library and Free Reading Room contained 3,386 books, 26 magazines and 23 newspapers; and the book-sales department made the literature of the Ramakrishna Mission available to the public. Accommodation for guests from all parts of the world was provided by the centre's International Cultural Centre. One of the largest halls in Colombo, the Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Hall was made use of by the public for holding lectures, seminars, music recitals, concerts, and dramas.

BATTICALOA

Humanitarian: The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Batticaloa, conducts 3 Homes: a Home for boys at Kalladi-Uppodai, Batticaloa, and 2 Girls' Homes—one at Anaipanthy, Batticaloa, and the other at Karaitivu. The object of the institutions is to provide free board, lodging, education and training to orphans and destitute children. The total number of inmates during the year was 155, of which 48 were girls. The centre's agricultural farm at Rugam trained the inmates of the Boys' Home in scientific methods of agriculture and animal husbandry. Nearly 30 acres were under paddy cultivation, apart from other crops like coconuts and citrus fruits.

Religious : Regular Puja was performed in the shrine attached to the Boys' Home. Prayer meetings were conducted every Friday while school was in session for the benefit of the inmates of the Shivananda Vidyalaya Hostel and of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home; on an average, 300 students attended these meetings until the cyclone of 23 November 1978 destroyed the hall in which they had been held. The inmates of the Boys' Home and the Swami-in-charge participated in a number of temple festivals in the locality and conducted congregational prayers. The inmates of the Girls' Home at Anaipanthy and the inmates of the Boys' Home participated in cleaning the temple compounds before their annual festivals. Religious classes were held at the centre every Monday evening for the spiritual benefit of the local women devotees. Weekly congregational prayers, temple worship and Bhajan were organized for the inmates of the Mantivu Leprosy Hospital; the wards were also visited and calls made to the patients on festive occasions, and the inmates were fed on all Hindu festival days. There were 20 voluntary teachers and 400 children on the roll of the centre's Sunday School.

On November 23, 1978, a cyclone ravaged the Eastern Seaboard of Sri Lanka, devastating many of the buildings and orchards of the centre. The loss was colossal estimated at 7½ lakhs of rupees. At least 9 lakhs of rupees will be needed to restrncture the centre and it may take 5 years for the centre to regain its former status.

Immediate Needs : (1) A permanent fund for the maintenance of the Ashrama and Temple at Colombo: Rs. 1,00,000/-; (2) a permanent fund for the orphanages at Batticaloa: Rs. 2,50,000/-. Donations may be sent to Ramakrishna Mission (Sri Lanka Branch), Ramakrishna Road, Wellawatte, Colombo-6, Sri Lanka.

LAST PAGE : COMMENTS

Education and Research in India

With more than a hundred universities, about five thousand colleges and nearly five million college students, India occupies an important place in the educational map of the world and, thanks to the 'brain drain', even contributes substantially to the educational wealth of some of the developed countries of the West. In financial investment in the field of fundamental research, India is said to rank not far below some of the advanced nations like the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Germany and France. Unlike Japan which concentrates on technological research, India has concentrated more on fundamental research. And she has to, for being a developing nation, she has to start from scratch in many fields and learn new and better ways of supporting her ever increasing population.

The emphasis on fundamental research was one of the important policy decisions that Pandit Nehru took evincing great foresight. What really has gone wrong is that the returns from education and research have not been proportional to the investment on them. The intellectuals have not fulfilled the hopes that the nation reposed on them. In spite of some advancement made in agriculture and engineering, progress of research in India has not justified the enormous financial outlay which this poor nation has with considerable difficulty found for it.

One of the main reasons for the poor performance in research is the lack of a research attitude, an attitude which values knowledge more than wealth and position, in most of the research workers. It is not enough to use the names of Aryabhata and Bhaskara. The burning desire to seek truth, the spirit of enquiry and love of knowledge that these ancient Ṛṣis stood for must be cultivated by the modern generation of scientists.

Another reason for failure in research is its alienation from the nation's culture and ethos. This was frankly admitted by Dr. A. Rahman, head of the planning division of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in the course of his address to the Council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities which met in New Delhi in the first week of February. He deplored the fact that much of what passed for research in Indian universities was divorced from the Indian heritage and was unrelated to the nation's urgent needs. He attributed this situation to the fact that the inspiration for a good deal of research came from the West and the bulk of the persons engaged in research had either been trained abroad or had succumbed to the values of the affluent societies of the West.

This had been pointed out two decades ago by the eminent educationist Sir Eric Ashby : 'Looking at Indian universities a century after their foundation, one cannot but help feel that they have failed to adapt themselves sufficiently to the vast and unique opportunities which surround them.... As universities

(*Continued on page* 331)