

VOL. 89

MAY 1984

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

## AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or  
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA  
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS



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# Prabuddha Bharata

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 89

MAY 1984

No. 5

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

## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

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

यः प्राणतो निमिषतो महित्वैक  
इद्राजा जगतो बभूव ।  
य ईशे अस्य द्विपदश्चतुष्पदः  
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

1. Let us worship with oblation the divine Ka<sup>1</sup> who, by his greatness, has verily become the sole king of all living beings that breathe and wink, who rules over this (world) of bipeds and quadrupeds.

*Rg-Veda 10.121.3*

यस्येमे हिमवंतो महित्वा यस्य  
समुद्रं रसया सहाहुः ।  
यस्येमाः प्रदिशो यस्य बाहू  
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

2. Let us worship with oblation the divine Ka whose glory these snow-clad mountains and the oceans with their rivers<sup>2</sup> proclaim ; whose two arms are the quarters of space.

*Rg-Veda 10.121.4*

येन द्यौरग्रा पृथिवी च दृळ्हा  
येन स्वः स्तभितं येन नाकः ।  
यो अन्तरिक्षे रजसो विमानः  
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

3. Let us worship with oblation the divine Ka by whom the sky was made great and the earth firm, by whom the *svah*<sup>3</sup> and the heaven were fixed, and who is the creator<sup>4</sup> of the vapours<sup>5</sup> of the mid-air.

*Rg-Veda 10.121.5*

\* *Hiranyagarbha-Suktam* is continued here.

1. For the meaning of Ka see *Prabuddha Bharata* March and April 1984.

2. Here Sāyana takes *rasā* (water) in the plural to mean 'rivers'. But in the *Sūkta* 10.108.1, he interprets it to mean 'the mythical

river of the sky'.

3. *Svah* is the highest of the three worlds and may have referred to the world of *Hiranyagarbha*, also known as *brahma-loka*.

4. *Vimāna* may also mean 'one who measures'.

5. *Rajas* may mean air, water, dust or expanse.

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL brings to a conclusion the discussion begun last month on the three spiritual streams which carry the soul Godward after the awakening of the self has taken place.

THE ACTION OF NON-ATTACHMENT by Prof. David Appelbaum is a stimulating discussion, from a strikingly original standpoint, on one of the central problems of the Gita. Drawing material from phenomenological and existentialist thought, the learned author provides five clues to solving the problem of non-attached action. Prof. Appelbaum is Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy, State University of New York, New Paltz, New York.

In SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE ETERNAL OUTSIDER Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Ph. D., Reader in English, Osmania University, places the life of Sri Ramakrishna in an existentialist perspective. There is a great need to study the life and message of the Master in the light of modern thought, and we welcome Dr. Sivaramakrishna's pioneering attempt in this field.

In RELATIVITY AND MAYA by Swami Jitatmananda the reader will find a simple non-technical account of Einstein's basic views and an attempt to correlate them to the doctrine of Maya as expounded by Swami Vivekananda.

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## SEEKING GOD THROUGH MEDITATION: THE THREE STREAMS

(EDITORIAL)

Last month's editorial stressed, apart from the need to seek God, three points: spiritual seeking proceeds through three stages; true quest for God begins only after the awakening of the individual self which takes place at the second stage; at the third stage the way to the Infinite takes the form of three streams. The three streams of consciousness which connect the individual with the Infinite are: the stream of *nāda* or *śabda*, the stream of Light and the stream of Love.

Once the awakening of the *jīvātman* (the individual self) has taken place, and once we get into any of these streams, our further spiritual progression will be determined almost entirely by the nature and strength of the current that carries us forward. With the awakening of the *jīvātman*, self-effort more or less comes to an end, and we are

in the hands of the Divine. Individual yoga then gets integrated with Divine Yoga. How fast we now progress depends upon three factors: the intensity of the soul's aspiration, our spiritual potential and the grace of the Divine. The greater the aspiration, the quicker the progress. Each aspirant is born with a certain fund of spiritual potential, the sum total of the residual *samskāras* acquired through spiritual struggles in his previous births. In this birth he can actualize only this potential. Beyond this, whatever he gains must be attributed to divine Grace. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, God's grace is always blowing but we have to unfurl our sails. 'Unfurling the sails' means self-effort, and self-effort goes only as far as the awakening of the self.

We have spoken of three streams of

consciousness beyond the point of self-awakening. Can we choose any of these as we please? No; we spontaneously move into any one of them depending on the elemental constitution of our souls. Consciousness does not manifest itself in the same way in all people. Some minds are more sensitive to sound and sound-symbols like the letters of the alphabet and mathematical signs. The minds of some others are more sensitive to form, colour and light. For quite a large number of people consciousness is primarily an experience of the movement of the will or feelings. There is a small group of people whose consciousness is oriented primarily to the self, and find it easier to maintain self-awareness than to maintain objective awareness.

The consciousness of a beginner is usually a confused mixture of all the above four modes of its manifestation. But in the advanced stages of spiritual life these differences assume importance and they determine, after the awakening of the self, after crossing the 'golden threshold' within, which stream of consciousness the soul should move along. Of the four modes of consciousness mentioned above, the last one, that of self-awareness, belongs to the path of Jñāna, whereas the other three belong to the path of Bhakti. These paths are also known as the paths of *neti, neti* and *iti, iti* respectively. The path of Bhakti alone concerns us here.

#### *The stream of śabda or nāda*

Śabda literally means sound but in Vedānta it refers to the particular manifestation of consciousness of which the grossest form is the spoken word. It is the meaning-conveying power of words. We cannot think or communicate without words. Behind every word there is meaning. What is meaning? It is a form of *cit-śakti* or power of consciousness which reveals

knowledge and connects the subject with the object. Ancient Hindu Grammarians called it *sphoṭa*. So then, behind every word there is meaning, behind the meaning there is *sphoṭa* and behind this power there is consciousness. This was one of the great discoveries made in India, centuries before Pāṇini formulated his principles of grammar around 500 B.C.

It led to another discovery. If every man gave his own meaning to the words he uses, it would be impossible for us to communicate with one another. This shows that all words, in fact all languages, are based on one common universe of meaning. This means that there is one universal *sphoṭa* power associated with Brahman or cosmic consciousness. This universal meaning-conveying power is known as *śabda-brahman* or *nāda-brahman*, the 'Hindu Logos' as Swami Vivekananda has called it. It is because there exists this common universal substratum that it is possible for people all over the world to communicate with and understand one another—sometimes even without the use of words.

How do we know an object? According to the Advaita and Sāṃkhya theories of perception, the mind goes out through the senses like a tube and takes the form of the object, while the light of Ātman (called *cidābhāsa*) inside the 'tube' illumines and reveals that form of the object. But according to ancient Hindu grammarians, it is the *śabda-brahman* that reveals the images in the mind and the objects in the external world and, furthermore, conveys this knowledge to others through speech. It is this revealing, opening, manifesting power of words that is indicated by the term *sphoṭa*.

The outward opening or revealing movement of *śabda-brahman* takes place in four stages. In the first stage, called *parā*, knowledge remains as undifferentiated awareness. In the next stage, called

*paśyantī*, knowledge is split into the word *vāk* and its meaning (*artha*) but these remain unseparated as one unit, like the two halves of a seed. This is the level of intuition, the plane of *buddhi*, the Heart. In the third stage, called *madhyamā*, knowledge gets separated into the sound symbol and its meaning—like a bubble enclosing a bit of air. This is the level of ordinary thinking, the plane of *manas*. Finally, when we speak, the bubble bursts and the meaning contained in the sound symbol is conveyed to the listener. This stage is called *vaikharī*.

*Upāsana* or meditation is the reversal of this outward movement. External worship and loud chanting of Mantras represent the *vaikharī* stage. From this we proceed to the *madhyamā* stage when we repeat a Mantra mentally and think of its meaning, that is, visualize the image of the deity. When meditation deepens, the Mantra and the image come closer and closer together till at last they get united, and we reach the *paśyantī* stage. It is at this stage that spiritual awakening takes place. From then on we are carried forward by the current of śabda.

Though *śabda-brahman* is infinite and all-pervading it has two points or centres in every individual: a higher one called *para-bindu* (situated at the *ājñā cakra* in the head) and a lower one called *bindu* (situated at the *anāhatacakra* in the heart). In Mantra Śāstra (the science of Mantras) *bindu* represents the individual self or *jīvātman*. The flow of *cit-śakti* between the two points is called *nāda*. At the lower *bindu* this *nāda* splits into the word (*vāk*) and its meaning (*artha*). As mentioned above, this represents the *paśyantī* stage. This splitting of the *nāda*, going on unceasingly at the lower *bindu*, produces the eternal uncreated or 'unstruck' sound called *anāhata-dhvani* 'heard' by yogis in their hearts. It is not heard by all yogis but only by those whose minds are sensitive

to sound vibrations. In their case spiritual awakening means the awakening of the *bindu* in the heart, marked by the awareness of the *anāhata-dhvani*.

How does this awakening take place? In those Sādhakas whose minds are more sensitive to sound and are word-oriented, the awakening is brought about by the power of the word. Ordinary words have limited power and refer to physical objects or mental ideas. But there are special words or word-formulas called Mantras which refer to supersensuous objects and have the power to reveal spiritual truths. Ordinary words have only one power—the power to denote, the power to convey meaning. In Indian linguistics this power is known as *abhidhā śakti*<sup>1</sup> and, in the Tantras, as *vācya śakti*. If you saw an elephant and said 'I see an elephant', the sentence would convey your knowledge. Repetition of the sentence 'I see an elephant, I see an elephant...' would add nothing more to your knowledge or to that of others; and it would make no difference if you expressed your knowledge in a different language, say, Hindi or Spanish. Mantras too have this *vācya śakti*. For instance, the meaning of the Mantra *Namah Śivāya* is 'salutation to Śiva', and this meaning can be conveyed through any language. If this meaning is known, and if this is all that is to be known, why do people go on repeating the Mantra? This shows that the repetition of the Mantra has a higher purpose (known as *vinīyoga* in Mantra Śāstra).

This higher purpose is the awakening of the self and the direct supersensuous perception of the actual spiritual form of the Devata or deity.<sup>2</sup> Every true Mantra

1. Alamkāra Śāstra (Rhetoric) recognizes three powers of the word: *abhidhā* (denotation), *lakṣaṇā* (connotation) and *vyañjanā* (suggestion). But all these are only different forms of meaning.

2. cf. Patañjali, *Yoga-Sutra* 1.29 and 2.44

has an intrinsic power to produce these higher experiences. This inherent mystic power of the Mantra is called its *vācaka śakti*; it is the real power of the Mantra—the *mantra-śakti*. The original roots and syntactical structure of Sanskrit alone can serve as the vehicle of this power which will be lost if the Mantra is translatable into any other language. This power remains dormant when the Mantra is repeated without concentration, purity and devotion. To awaken the *vācaka śakti* of a mantra another power is necessary: *sādhanā śakti*, the power of spiritual practice. Through purification, concentration and devotion, the two side channels of psychic energy known as *idā* and *piṅgalā* can be made to work harmoniously and rhythmically. When the repetition of the Mantra is attuned to this inner rhythm (which every aspirant has to find out for himself) the Mantra slowly becomes awakened (*cetana*). Once the Mantra is awakened, its repetition very soon leads to the awakening of the self.

As mentioned earlier, after the awakening of the self, the seeker gets into the stream of *nāda*. How does he proceed further? Some aspirants follow the trail of the *anāhata dhvani* and move towards the formless aspect of Reality. Most of the others seek to get a direct vision of their Chosen Deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*). Awakening of the self is only the first function of a Mantra. Its second and more important function is to lead the soul to the Deity.

This power of the Mantra to reveal the Deity is concentrated in the mystic syllable known as the *bīja* of a mantra. Every living body—animal, human or divine—is built according to a fundamental pattern which itself is the evolution of a primordial code or formula. The whole human body is only an expanded version of the 'genetic code' which scientists have discovered in the chromosomes. Similarly the human mind too has its own primordial code hidden in the *bindu*. The spiritual body

of a *Devatā* consisting of highly refined *sāttvic* elements has also its own primordial code; this is what is known as the *bīja*. The *bīja* represents the unique characteristics and powers (known as *kalā*) of the *Devatā*. It is not a mere symbol but a living 'seed' which, when awakened, materializes the spiritual form of the *Devatā*.

The *bīja* will manifest its power (*kalā*) only after the *bindu* (that is, the self) has awakened. After the *bindu* has awakened, the soul gets into the stream of *nāda* but it does not proceed towards the formless Reality; the *bīja* diverts its course towards the *Devatā*. It is like boarding a train bound for Calcutta at Delhi but getting down at Lucknow or Banaras. The *bīja* is the connecting link between the impersonal Brahman and the personal Deity.

A Mantra usually consists of four syllables: 1. The OM standing for the Impersonal; 2. the *bīja* which is the connecting link between the impersonal and the Deity; 3. the name of the Deity; and 4. a word indicating salutation or surrender. The study of Mantras is a science in itself—the Mantra Śāstra. A detailed discussion of it is beyond the scope of the present article, and has to be postponed to a future occasion. *Bindu*, *nāda*, *bīja* (and also *kalā*) are key terms in *nāmopāsanā*, meditation on the Name. He who understands the terms understands the whole secret of Mantra Śāstra.

### *The stream of light*

Spiritual seekers whose minds are more sensitive to images and colour than to sound move along the path of light. By 'light' is meant the light of consciousness, *prajñāloka*. The experience of light is the fundamental experience in this path. The awakening of the self is experienced as the perception of light in the heart. From here, as in the stream of *nāda*, one may go to the Formless or to one of the divine

Forms of the Lord. In the first case progress is simply a progressive intensification and enlargement of light, culminating in the vision of God as an infinite ocean of Light or as the effulgent Sun. In the second case the image of the deity one meditates on becomes more and more real and luminous. Swami Saradananda's description of this process was given in last month's Editorial. The culminating vision of the Deity may be either one of extreme sweetness and beauty or terrifying. The gentle and soul-enthraling type of vision is vividly described in the Purāṇas and in the records of the experiences of many saints. For the terrible aspect of the Divine one may refer to the stupendous apocalypse in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā, and to Swami Vivekananda's vision of Kali in Kashmir, a glimpse of which is given in his famous poem 'Kālī the Mother'.

Most of the Bhakti schools hold the Form of God to be uncreated, ultimate and everlasting. However, in the *Bhāgavatam* and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* the four-armed form of the Lord gained in *dhyāna* (a higher form of meditation) is said to dissolve into the formless Brahman during *samādhi*.<sup>3</sup> What is common to all these views is the experience of light. In the Vedas and the Upaniṣads the sun is frequently cited as a symbol of divine effulgence. For instance a ṛṣi of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* points to the immediacy of a vision unfolding before his inner eye: 'Now in the solar orb is seen this golden Person who has golden beard and golden hair and who is exceedingly effulgent even to the very tips of his nails.'<sup>4</sup>

This higher light is not a symbol, nor

3. cf. Siddhesvar Bhattacharya, *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* (Santiniketan: Visva-bharati, 1962) Vol. 2, Pp. 102-103.

4. अथ य एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्यमयः पुरुषो दृश्यते हिरण्यश्मश्रुहिरण्यकेश आप्रणखात् सर्व एव सुवर्णः ।

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 1.6.6

is it something imagined. It is something directly experienced when the *buddhi* gets purified. One may imagine seeing different forms and may mistake them to be real. But it is difficult to imagine seeing light, especially an effulgence as brilliant as the sun's.

### *The stream of bhāva*

There are a number of spiritual aspirants whose consciousness is more oriented to the movements of the will and sentiments than to cognitive experiences of sound and light. Such aspirants enter the stream of *bhāva* after the awakening of the inner self. *Bhāva* is an intense Godward focusing of consciousness which draws into its powerful current the senses and the mind, emotions and moods, instincts and impulses. What the aspirant experiences is power, not sounds or images, for all names and forms and concepts and memories get submerged in that *vega* or impetuosity of the spiritual draught.

In the case of such aspirants the awakening of the inner self may not be marked by the hearing of the 'uncreated sound' or the vision of the inner light. Rather, it takes the form of an intense longing or yearning for God. Ordinary spiritual aspiration is only a kind of 'interest' in higher things, or at best a negative desire to be free from troubles and sorrows. It becomes a positive yearning (*abhilāṣa* or *samutkaṅṭhā*) in the form of intense love for God only after the aspirant has tasted a little of the higher bliss. This relish, or *ruci* as it is known in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, comes only with the awakening of the inner Self. Only after experiencing the joy of the Self (*ātmasukha*) does the aspirant feel what Sri Ramakrishna calls *vyākulatā*, intense restlessness, for the supreme bliss of Brahman (*brahmānanda*). About this hunger of the soul Sri Ramakrishna says: 'At the approach of dawn



the eastern horizon becomes red. Then one knows it will soon be sunrise. Likewise, if you see a person restless for God, you can be pretty certain that he hasn't long to wait for His vision.<sup>5</sup>

The awakening of the inner Self launches the soul into the stream of *bhāva*. *Bhāva* is a higher aspect of *Bhakti*, and to understand it we must outgrow the crude popular notion that *Bhakti* is a kind of emotion. In every scripture and treatise on *Bhakti* emotions are regarded as an obstacle to devotion. One has only to read the descriptions of a true devotee given in the *Gītā* to understand this. Narada puts the seal on this truth through his dictum, 'Bhakti is not a form of desire because it is of the nature of restraint.'<sup>6</sup> Higher spiritual planes can be attained only through a higher faculty. In the path of *Jnana* the higher faculty employed is *prajñā*, higher intelligence or intuition. In the path of *Bhakti* the higher faculty employed is will, known as *īkṣa*, *kratu* and *kāma* in the Vedas, *dhṛti* in the *Gita*, and *icchā* in common usage. What is Will? It is the focusing of consciousness. It is the dynamic aspect of *buddhi*, just as awareness (*prajñā*) is the static aspect of *buddhi*.

Just as individual awareness is only a part of the supreme awareness of God, so also individual will is only a part of His supreme Will. Will is the primordial creative impulse. The famous Hymn of Creation in the *Rg-Veda* states that before the creation of the world, when there was neither being nor world, when there was neither being nor non-being, Will (*kāma*) arose as the seed of mind.<sup>7</sup>

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 644.

6. सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात् ।

Nārada, *Bhakti-Sūtra*, 7

7. कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधिमनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् ।

*Rg-Veda* 10.129.4

The Upaniṣads declare that in the beginning there was only non-dual Being; then He willed 'Let me be many'.<sup>8</sup> It is this primordial creative Will of the Divine that operates in all human beings as the individual will.

When the individual will is directed downward, it gets enslaved by instincts and emotions; when directed outward, it gets attached to sense objects. This is how worldly love and attachment arise. When, however, the will is freed from emotions and external objects and is directed towards God, it becomes *Bhakti*. So *Bhakti* is pure will directed Godward. Several Christian mystics have distinguished charity (man's love for God) and agape (God's love for man) from eros (worldly love) by identifying the former with Will and the latter with emotions. 'The second distinguishing mark of charity', says the great Spanish mystic St. Teresa, 'is that unlike the lower forms of love, it is not an emotion. It begins as an act of the will and is consummated as a purely spiritual awareness, a unitive love-knowledge, of the essence of its object.'

What is the connection between worldly love and *Bhakti*? Both have pure will as their central core. But in human love the manifestation of will is limited and distorted by emotions, whereas in divine love it is pure and unimpeded. This was what Swami Vivekananda meant when he said, in reply to the question as to how to develop *Bhakti*: 'There is *Bhakti* within you, only a veil of lust-and-wealth covers it, and as soon as that is removed, *Bhakti* will manifest itself.'<sup>9</sup>

Will is the power of consciousness; so love is a power, a *śakti*. This is one of the foundational principles of Bengal

8. सोऽकामयत, स ईक्षते, तदैक्षत

respectively in *Taittirīya* (2.6.1), *Aitareya* (1.1) and *Chāndogya* (6.2.3) Upaniṣads.

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 5, p. 314.

Vaiṣṇavism. According to this school, the Supreme Deity known as Bhagavat is endowed with three powers: *svarūpa-śakti*, the intrinsic power of His own essence consisting of Sat-Chit-Ananda; *māyā-śakti* the extraneous power manifesting itself as the material universe; and *Jīva-śakti* manifesting itself as individual souls. The first one, *svarūpa-śakti*, has three aspects; *sādhini*, *sainvit* and *hlādinī* which are the powers of Sat, Chit and Ananda respectively. Bhakti is the pure essence of *hlādinī*, the power of bliss.

But then, what is the connection between Bhakti and emotions? If Bhakti were nothing but the detachment and Godward projection of the will, then Bhakti would be only a calm, placid contemplation of God and there would be little to distinguish it from Jnana. Indeed, this is what Rāmānuja and Madhva and the great Advaita teacher Madhusūdana Sarasvati regard as true Bhakti. But Rūpa Gosvamin, Jīva Gosvamin and other teachers of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism look upon this calm attitude (known as *śānta bhāva*) as only the starting point of true Bhakti. According to them, there are higher moods or attitudes like the attitude of a servant (*dāsya bhāva*), of a friend (*sakhya bhāva*), of a mother (*vātsalya bhāva*) and of a lover (*madhura bhāva*) which are acquired by integrating appropriate emotions into Bhakti. Emotions are an obstacle only to the unawakened. Just as empirical knowledge is only a manifestation of the Chit aspect of Brahman, so also emotions are only a manifestation of the Ananda aspect of Brahman.<sup>10</sup> Once the will is freed from the hold of primitive instincts and directed towards God, it gets strengthened by the grace of God, and as

such can carry emotions also Godward. Any emotion that is connected to such a spiritualized will gets inflamed, purified and transformed. It is the capacity to integrate with it and transform into it ordinary emotions and sentiments that distinguishes Bhakti from all other spiritual disciplines and brings it within the reach of the common man. Though Bhakti is not an emotion, all its variety, colour and richness arise out of its association with emotions.

The Godward focussing of the purified will, inflamed and strengthened by sublimated emotions—this is what *bhāva* really means. Once the awakening of the inner self has taken place, the aspirant is drawn into the current of *bhāva* and moves with it. How does he progress further? What are his experiences? What are the stages through which he passes? There is such an immense wealth and variety of information on this subject in the devotional literature of Hinduism (especially in the school of Bengal Vaisnavism) Christianity and Islam (Sufism) that it is impossible to give even a brief summary of it here. We only mention three points to be kept in mind by the aspirant who has been drawn into the stream of *bhāva*.

Progress here is indicated not by visions and other supernatural experiences, but by the intensity of Bhakti. Intensity of Bhakti means not emotional exuberance, but the intensity with which the purified will and emotions are focussed upon God. Since his internal focussing is spontaneously experienced at all times, the aspirant may not feel the need for spending long hours in meditation.

The second point is that as the aspirant advances, his relationship with God undergoes great changes. At first, even after the awakening of the inner Self, he may continue to feel that his Chosen Deity is outside his soul, though he may feel the divine Will as a 'pull' (*tān* in Bengali) in

10. This idea had been developed by rhetoricians like Bhattanāyaka, Abhinavagupta and Jaganatha into the theory of *rasa*. The integration of this theory into the philosophical edifice of Bhakti is one of the great achievements of Bengal Vaisnavism.

the centre of his soul. In the next stage he experiences that the Deity is present in his soul as the Supreme Self or Inner Controller. In the third stage the divine Presence is experienced both inside and outside, in all beings everywhere. In devotional literature these stages are described in diverse ways,<sup>11</sup> but they all mean one thing: a progressive movement towards greater unity between the individual Self and the Supreme Self.

The third point to be noted is that the very nature of Bhakti changes for the aspirant as he advances. To begin with, Bhakti is only an emotion, partly negative (the desire to be free from suffering) and partly positive (desire for an unknown Being), striving to gain supremacy over other emotions. This is called *sādhana bhakti* or *gaunī bhakti*. In the next stage Bhakti becomes the Godward focussing of the pure will, and is called *bhāva bhakti* or *mukhya bhakti*. In these two forms Bhakti is only a means, a modification of the mind, an effort; and, though grouped under *aparā bhakti* or 'lower devotion', it is not true Bhakti. True Bhakti is an end (*sādhyā*) in itself, the highest experience or realization. Experience of what? *Ananda* or bliss of ultimate Reality—not impersonal bliss but the bliss which has taken the form of Bhagavat, the supreme Deity.<sup>12</sup> It is called *parā bhakti* (or *para-bhakti*)

11. In Bengal Vaisnavism itself several versions are in vogue. Sri Ramakrishna refers to one of these, according to which there are three stages: *sādhāraṇī* in which the lover seeks only his happiness; *samañjasā* in which the lover seeks his happiness and the beloved's equally; *samarthā* in which the lover seeks only the beloved's happiness. See *The Gospel* p. 744-45.

For Swami Vivekananda's account of the stages (based on Śaṅḍilya's Bhakti Sutras) see 'Bhakti Yoga' in *Complete Works* (1973) Vol. 3 pp. 79-85.

12. भगवान् परमानन्दस्वरूपः स्वयमेव हि  
मनोगतस्तदाकाररसतामेति पुष्कलम् ।

*Bhagavad-Bhakti-Rasāyanam* 1.10

only to distinguish it from its lower manifestation, but it alone is true Bhakti. According to the Advaitic teacher Madhusūdana, this true Bhakti is the reflection of the *ānanda* of Brahman on the pure *vṛtti* of the mind; according to the Bengal-Vaisnava teachers Rūpa Gosvamin and Jīva Gosvamin, true Bhakti is a special 'power of bliss' (*hlādinī śakti*) of the Deity.

To put it in another way, *aparā bhakti* is man's love for God, whereas *parā bhakti* is God's love for man. Since love is not different from the lover, *parā bhakti* is not different from God: it is God's self-giving, the sharing of his own bliss with the human soul. It is the milk of Divine Love that nourishes all beings and manifests itself as human love.

### Conclusion

Our discussion has been restricted to the tradition of Vedānta. Though a similar survey of other religious traditions cannot be attempted here, it is necessary to point out that the methods of seeking God through meditation in these traditions may also be grouped, in a general way, into the three streams described above.

In Christian spirituality several great saints and mystics developed a unique path of contemplation known as 'via negativa' or 'apophatism'. It is based on two doctrines. One (held by St. Thomas Aquinas) is that human knowledge is produced when the light of God, passing through the intellect, illumines mental images, words and ideas (collectively called 'phantasmata'). If these phantasmata are removed, it will be possible to see the divine Light with the help of pure intellectual species called *lumen sapientiae*. This is mystic experience. This, however, does not reveal the essence of God as He really is, which can be directly perceived only in heaven (after one's death) through the Beatific Vision (*lumen gloriae*). The other

doctrine (held by St. John of the Cross and others) is that the human will when freed from sensory and mental images and desires can feel the direct contact of God as a divine touch, embrace or union. In the apophatic pathway the aspirant is asked to suppress not only wordly images and emotions, but even every image or concept of God. As a result, he has to pass through an 'obscure night' or 'cloud of unknowing' before he gets the true experience of God. In terms of Indian thought, apophatism is an attempt to apply *asamprajñāta yoga* in the path of Bhakti by making the mind *vṛtti-sūnya*. It falls within the stream of *bhāva* described above, the only difference being that in the path of Bhakti the mind is never made empty

but made to hold on to a beautiful divine image or a Mantra always.

In conclusion it should be reiterated that the ultimate purpose of meditation is to help us to seek God. If we forget this and preoccupy ourselves with only its technique—the different steps, the words to be uttered, the prayers to be said, the visualizations, the counting of Mantra, and so on—meditation will gradually degenerate into a mental automatism, a mechanical habit, one more problem or worry added to the hundreds we already have. The golden rule to be followed always by all seekers of God is this: let nothing stand between the soul and God.

(Concluded)

## THE ACTION OF NON-ATTACHMENT

PROF. DAVID APPELBAUM

The most important philosophical problem raised by the *Bhagavad Gītā* is that of non-attached action.<sup>1</sup> Acting with attachment means relating to the action so that it *belongs* to me, or that it is *mine*. Although the *Gītā* recites the adverse consequences arising from attached action, it never furnishes a coherent analysis. It is essential to be explicit at the beginning. An action is mine, or belongs to me,

initially in the same way a thing can be said to be mine. What does it mean to say, for instance, that I *have* a horse? *Having*, in this case, involves the entitlements of owning a piece of real property, the control over what the horse does, and the responsibility to administer to its well-being. But, *having* an external possession does not yet show the inner dynamics of having things like inclinations, capabilities, feelings, wants, ideas, memories, motives, ends, or actions. If we turn to the lucid work of Marcel on the phenomenology of *having*, three relevant aspects of having deeds that are mine emerge.<sup>2</sup>

1. Minor notes this fact: 'The key to right action, however, as has been noted again and again is that the actions are performed must be performed without concern for the results.' ('The *Gita's* way as the only way', *Philosophy East & West*, 30, no. 3 (July 1980): 339-354). Compare: R. K. Garg., 'The Gita-Principle of Detached Activism', *Prabuddha Bharata* 74 (July 1969): 310-314; J.T.F. Jordens, 'Bhagavadgita: Karma Exorcised', *Millawa-Milla*, the Australian Bulletin of Comparative Religion (1964): 22-30; B. Kuppaswamy, 'The Concept of work According to Gita', *Prabuddha Bharata* 69 (November 1964): 465-469.

2. See especially, 'Outlines of a Phenomenology of Having,' in *Being and Having*, tr. K. Farrer, (New York, Harper & Row, 1956); and *Metaphysical Journal*, tr. B. Wall. (Chicago, Henry Ragnery, 1952) Richard Zaner provides a perspicuous summary of Marcel's ideas on having, in *The Problem of Embodiment* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) pp. 21-35.

(1) My action is *at the disposal of me*, in the way that I have the power to do with what I will over the things over which I have authority. Having acted implies having been able to act, having the power or force to undertake to act. This empowerment lies at the nexus of my claims to the disposability of whatever I do ;

(2) My action is something I have essentially *to myself* ; it is no one else's. Keeping the act to myself is connected to my authorship of the deed, and an aspect I need to guard by concealment. By concealment, I keep *myself*, the haver, apart from *it*, the act ; I stay hidden inside while the action remains outside. This tension of remaining hidden constitutes another part of my having my deeds ; and

(3) I need to be acknowledged as the haver of my action. Because I keep what I do in concealment, I live in need to disclose myself to the other person as the one who has something. But in the realm of acknowledgement lies the threat of loss ; my action can be stolen, misattributed, reversed. So my needful acknowledgement imperils my continuing to have as my own that which I have undertaken.

This is a short analysis, but let *disposability*, *concealment*, and *needful acknowledgement* be the important attributes which make an action belong to me. It is clear that the *Gītā* furnishes a point of view for acting without the actions belonging to me, but *acting* nonetheless.<sup>3</sup> It is important to put aside temptations to read a quietism into non-attached action. How then are we to approach the *Gītā's* understanding ? I plan to use sequentially

3. It is important to emphasize that the way to non-attachment through *inaction* is blocked. Cf.

But do not let yourself be attached to inaction either (2:47), and

For no one can remain absolutely inactive even for a moment. Everyone is made to engage in action, however unwillingly, by way of the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*. (3:5)

five clues which the text offers. Building on the analyses contained in these passages, I want to suggest a way of coming to action without yet appropriating it as my own. A main support I rely on, parenthetically, is Husserl's study of kinaesthesia.

*Clue 1. 'Sense-control'*. He who draws away the senses from the objects of sense on every side as a tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell—his intelligence is firmly set. (2:58).<sup>4</sup>

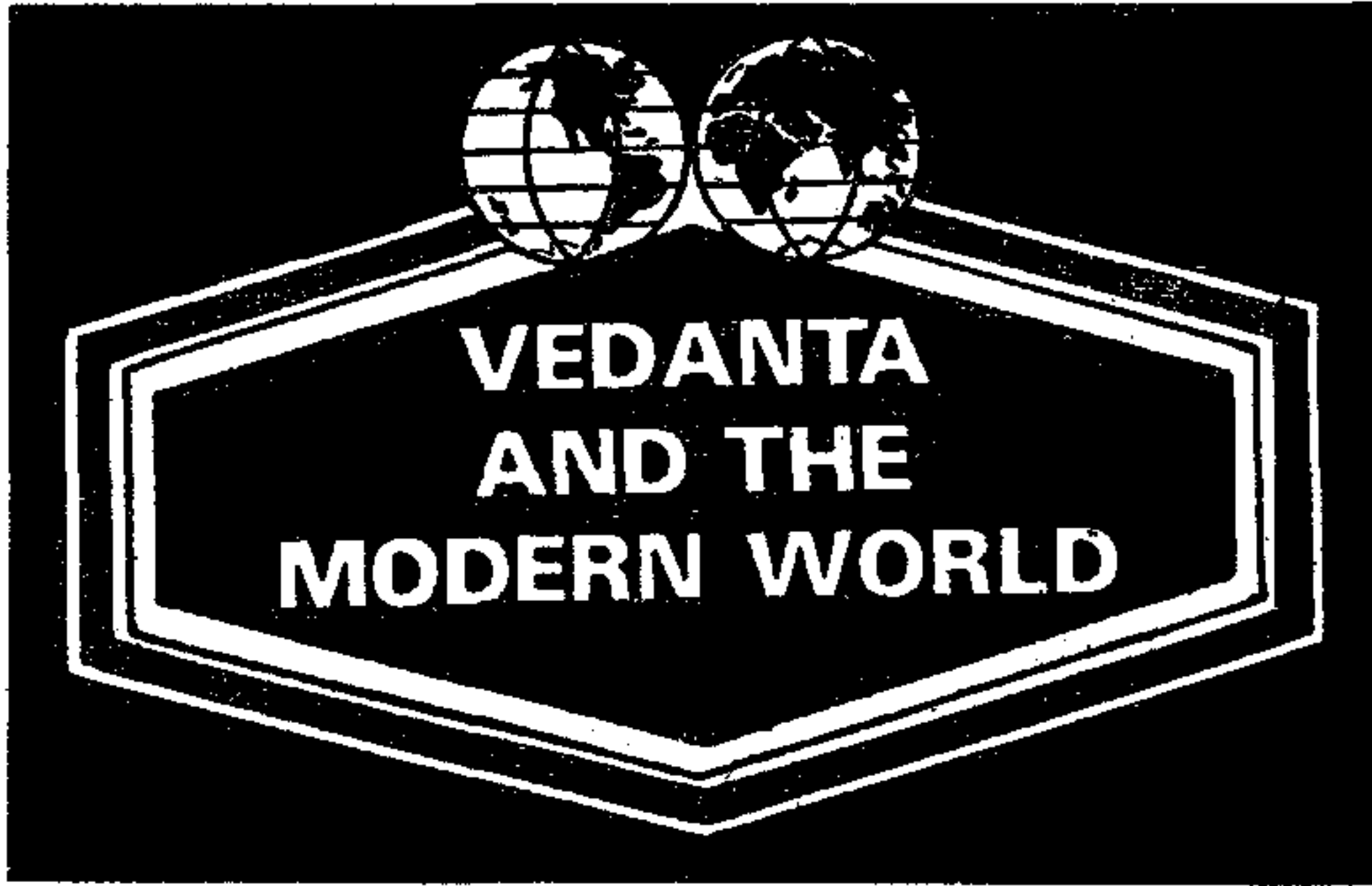
Interpreters of the *Gītā* generally agree that an ontological dualism takes precedent, wherein each and every phenomenon is the manifesting conjunction of the two real constituents of the world, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* can be understood as the activity which confers recognition, while *prakṛti* is the set of conditions governing recognition, or, as de Nicholas suggests, the 'field of knowledge.'<sup>4a</sup> The governing conditions, further, should be thought of as internal to the activity of recognition, and not simply as material conditions. This is made clear at 13:5-6:

... the (five) gross elements, the sense of I (*ahamkara*), understanding (*buddhi*), the unmanifested (*avyakta*), the ten senses and the one (*manas*) and the five sensory realism ; desire, aversion, pleasure, pain ; the bodily aggregates (*samghāta*), knowledge (*cetanā*), will (*dhṛti*) : this, in brief, is the field with its modifications.

*Puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, moreover, are not related as mover to moved. In fact, *prakṛti* is ceaselessly active already, set in continuous motion by the *guṇas*. In it is contained the realm of cause and effect ; it is the cause of effects and the effect of causes. By contrast, *puruṣa* enters in a moment of ontological simultaneity as an element irreducible to any governing condition.

4. I have taken translations of this and other *Gita* passages from de Nicholas, *Avatara* (New York, Nicolas Hays Ltd., 1976), pp. 79-163.

<sup>4a</sup>. *op. cit* pp. 189-223.



## INTUITION—THE COMMON BASIS OF SCIENCE AND VEDANTA

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

### 1. *Vivekananda speaks in the language of physics*

The inevitable confluence of modern physics and Vedantic metaphysics was one of the truths which Swami Vivekananda repeatedly pointed out during the period of his preaching Vedanta in the West and the East right from 1893 to the end of 1900. Nikola Tesla, the famous U.S. electrical engineer and inventor was deeply impressed by Vivekananda's exposition of the oneness of matter or *ākāśa* and energy or *prāṇa* in his lectures on Raja Yoga delivered in New York in 1896.

Today after more than eighty years writers on modern physics are finding in Vivekananda's explanation of ancient Vedanta a close resemblance to the language of today's physics. Amaury de Reincoirt in his recent book on modern physics entitled, *The Eye of Shiva*, finds that in Vivekananda's interpretation 'Indian mysticism has evolved...as the science of physics itself.' And this, he states, 'points towards an inevitable convergence of the two.'<sup>1</sup>

Michael Talbot in his book entitled, *Mysticism and New Physics*, compares the space-time concepts of Vivekananda with

those of the father of space-time continuum idea, Herman Minkowski. After quoting Vivekananda's idea of space-time Talbot writes,

The remark was originally made by mystic S. Vivekananda in *Jñāna Yoga*, but the fact that the names of the mathematician who first theorized that space and time are a continuum, Herman Minkowski, and the greatest of the historical Brahmin sages, Advaita, are interchangeable, demonstrates once again the confluence of mysticism and the new physics.<sup>2</sup>

It seems obvious that the author mistakes the term 'Advaita' for the name of a person. But the similarity between the ideas of Vivekananda and those of Minkowski strikes him deeply, and Talbot continues,

Vivekananda further expresses a view that has become the backbone of quantum theory. There is no such thing as strict causality.<sup>3</sup>

Vivekananda's ideas are proving prophetically true. Modern physics which began on the foundations of positivism or experimental verification of external objects is moving towards an intuitive understanding of the real nature of things. Material reality today appears not only beyond the capacity of senses but even beyond the capacity of ordinary human imagination.

1. Amaury de Reincoirt, *The Eye of Shiva* (New York: William Morrow & Co. 1981) p. 190

2. Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and New Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980) p. 114

3. op cit p. 115

operation, the attention, missing contact with the situation, necessarily depends on representations and reconstructions. An active mode, however, is experienced at the level of sensation. As an experience, sensation bears the signature of existence before the internal 'organ' monitoring the process, *indriya* or coenesthesia, as Marcel calls it.<sup>8</sup> Non-objectified sensation, sensation no longer a message deciphered from a distant source, is the language of tangible contact. It is to this language that the clue of 'sense-control' urges that we direct our attention.

*Clue 2. 'Fruits (phala) of action'.* To action alone has thou a right and never at all to its fruit; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction. (2:27)

Clue 1 has concretely located the place of non-objectified sensation, and has indicated the method of passing from ordinary, habituated avenues of sense-experience to more tangible ones. Control in this context refers to the attention one confers on the incoming impression, and has no reference to its content, the given. In actuality, de-control is a more descriptive term, since the sedimented habits of perception, which 'control' one's contact with the impression, are released to a more open, unbounded receptivity. Now, if time were spent entirely in inaction, clue 1 would suffice for disclosing a way toward increasing ontological bearing. For, active attention to sensation calls the tangible into existence, and begins to be in touch with the one who in reality exists, the I, myself. In deeper levels of sensation I sense that I am. Clue 2, however, reminds us of the paramount need to go over to action. Transforming stillness into movement does not annihilate sensation nor the trace it leaves of myself; but it does introduce a new factor, kinaesthesia. Kinaesthesia in

a general way is the body's perception of its own movement, internal and external. If we wish to encompass action in a search for being, developing the *Gītā's* suggestions about kinaesthesia is essential.

Husserl, in the 1920's and 1930's, also is concerned with kinaesthesia. In it, he recognizes an intimate relation to power and disposability. He says:

The 'I can' works directly on or with kinaesthesia, and brings about sensational and hence objective changes only indirectly.<sup>9</sup>

Kinaesthesia is to be distinguished from sensation (*Empfindung*), which, for Husserl, already bears the shadow of the object.<sup>10</sup> How kinaesthesia further relates to sensation of a non-objectified form remains unclear. Dorion Cairns reports that

what Husserl means by kinaesthesia is not the bodily sensations accompanying movement or muscular tension, or the inner sensations, but rather something volitional or quasi-volitional that remains when one abstracts from such sensations.<sup>11</sup>

Husserl suggests that kinaesthetic experiences or 'flows' (*Ablaufe*) are the functional correlates of sensation, in the way, for example, that the sensation arising from my touching the pen is correlated with a complex kinaesthetic pattern potentiating my moving the pen to write. This still is vague. We also are told that while sensation is capable of objectification, kinaesthesia is not. The flows are organized among themselves into fields

9. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

10. Cf. Erwin Straus' extended discussion of sensing as a mode of perceiving; in *The Primary World of Senses*, tr. Needleman (N. Y. MacMillan, 1963), Part IV, pp. 189-396. *Empfindung* consists of 'reflections and shadows' (*Abschattungen*) of objects.

11. In Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl & Fink* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) p. 4.

8. *Metaphysical Journal*, p. 220.

which empower movement which are coordinated with each sense-organ; there is a visual field, an aural field, a tactile field, etc.

Most important is the form of the kinaesthetic flow. Zaner, in amplifying Husserl's thought, suggests it to follow an 'if-then' pattern.<sup>12</sup> For instance, with regard to my action of writing, the elemental kinaesthesia has the form, *if* the pen is grasped and moved in this manner, *then* a mark is made on the paper. Or, alternatively, *if* the hand is tightened, *then* the pen is held. The essence of Husserl's 'I can' thus resides in an effortful striving to *cause* changes in the object-world or my own organism by means of marshalling the potentiating force of a kinaesthetic field. The flow itself is a potential effector, a possible karmic unit; it is a means of carrying out rudimentary or well-formed desires, urges, impulses, or inclinations, which arise successively from the impressions given by the situation. In this guise, kinaesthesia, whether felt or not, is the empowerment underlying all movement. Its form is that of mechanism: *if* a muscular event occurs, *then* something changes. Bodily experience, at this level, is highly intricate clockwork, but work nonetheless utilizing nothing more than the law of cause and effect.

Returning to the clue about the 'fruits of action', we see that to act in the world is to engage the efficacy of effortful striving, beginning at the level of primitive causes. Through kinaesthesia, one's body is an instrument of changeable intervention in the world. To act is to activate some potentiating 'if-then' structure, correlated somehow with a sensation. The second observation of this clue then tells us that our customary focus in action is not on this potency, but on what it seeks to accomplish. We repeatedly enact the logical error of

affirming the consequent, the truth of the 'then'-clause. Accordingly, we fail to recognize the conditional nature of everything we do, how it derives from a bodily potentiation which is as integral to the action as the attainment. We fail to acknowledge the correlation of the action to our objectified sensations, and the sedimented interpretations governing them. Not having a view of the matrix from which action arises, we ignore the influence of our deep-set habits (*saṃskāras*) determining our deeds. Ignoring the genesis of action and its determined basis, we are led, in a way that will be made clear, to presume ourselves the author of our undertakings. We find ourselves in the position of believing what we do belongs to us and us alone. Clue 2 thus points out a fundamental misapprehension with respect to action: that we systematically attribute to the mechanical nature of our strivings the signature of our own identity.<sup>13</sup>

Clue 3. 'Sacrifice.' Save work done as and for a sacrifice, this world is in bondage to work. (3:10)

Knowledge as a sacrifice is greater than any material sacrifice ... (4:33)

Clue 2 has described the Husserlian notion of kinaesthesia, and has shown it to supply the underpinning for all action. It also has diagnosed our mortal error with regard to action: not recognizing the antecedent conditions of our undertaking, we identify the result with the action. Furthermore, by not seeing the form of primitive strivings, we mistake mechanism for intention. We come to regard ourselves as causative agent, rather than as the place from which mechanical thrusts issue. Because of this confusion, action becomes

<sup>13</sup>. The faculty to which is customarily ascribed the mistaken affirmation of the consequent (& the erroneous basis of personal identity it entails) is the *ahamkāra*.

<sup>12</sup>. *op. cit.*, p. 64.



a problem in that my identity has entangled itself in the engine of the act. What clue 3 gives us is the means of extrication.

In the *Gītā's* context, sacrifice is seen concretely as the work by which to approach action. Its meaning derives from the *Agnihotra*, the burnt-offering of the Vedas, in which the object of sacrifice, being combusted, is consumed by the heat and light of the sacrificial fire. When, as clue 3 suggests, the conditions governing one's knowing are brought to sacrifice, that meaning is transformed. 'Heat' becomes the friction of the resisting inertia (*tapasyā*), the momentum of sedimented ways of constructing the object of knowledge. 'Light' becomes the attentive presencing to the ongoing, objectifying experience. (*Manas-kāra*). Rather than by renunciation, one works towards sacrifice by countering habits of perception and interpretation with an activated attention directed toward the level of bodily occurrence. The work of sacrifice is, therefore, the work of combusting the abstractedness of ordinary experience, for the sake of embodying the concretely tangible. It is the work of returning the attention to the habitat, the living body, and of participating in its processes, in stillness and in movement.<sup>14</sup>

Sacrifice is thus kindling the flame of the inner *Agnihotra*.<sup>15</sup> Mustering touch, one offers up the settled habits governing sense- and actional-experience. Burnt away, these abstractive sheaths cease to intercept the full impression of reality, falling on the body's skin, which can serve to contact the one who is receptivity, I myself. This moment-by-moment sacrifice, which invites the return to an unadorned sense of existence, speaks in the voice of *puruṣa*.

<sup>14</sup>. It is not identical with renunciation, e.g., 3:4.

<sup>15</sup>. Cf. Coomaraswamy, 'Atmayajña: Self-Sacrifice', in *Selected Papers* 2 ed. R. Lipsey. (Princeton, Bollinger Sevier LXXXIX, 1977) pp. 107-147.

In the sacrificial moment, the way is cleared for the knower to end his entanglement in the field, and to recognize the actional world of which it is co-creator.

Clue 4. 'Not-doing'. The man is united with the Divine and knows the truth thinks, 'I do nothing at all.' ... (5:8)

Mustering the body around its tangible presence, as clue 3 dictates, is the pivotal step toward discovering the *Gītā's* method of non-attached action. Hitherto, one has been able, at the level of primitive willing—kinaesthesia—to ascribe a partial karmic interpretation to action while ignoring its dharmic context. This has produced a two-fold result: (a) affirmation of the result of action as primary, and (b) attribution of first-person authorship on the basis of the causal structure of kinaesthesia. Put another way, action is doubly misconceived along the following lines:

(1) In failing to recognize the form of kinaesthesia, I ignore the karmic antecedent to my act. I fail to acknowledge what necessarily *proceeds* and *generate* that part of the action-complex I mistakenly identify as the whole; and

(2) In failing to discern the impersonal nature of the form, I lapse into the customary assumption of deriving the result from *my* identity. I fail to notice that in which the causal structure is embedded, and from which it actually arises, its dharmic matrix.

Clue 4, however, suggests that the unitary experience provided by returning the attention to the tangible works a basic change in one's understanding of action. Recurring to kinaesthesia, one meets the *Ablaufe*, whose causal form is:

If these muscles A are moved, *then* change B occurs. The flow, moreover, is evident not only at the moment of the action, but, apparently, is there ready-to-hand. Already present, the flow persists independently of one's decision or impulse to act on it. Husserl infers from the

observation that kinaesthesia is involved in locating a *remembered* actional object, as, for example, when I remember how it is to swing a baseball bat.<sup>16</sup> Kinaesthesia then enjoys a wide field. Memory, deliberation, anticipation, anterior evaluation: the entire actional complex relies on the *Ablaufe*. More importantly, kinaesthesia antedates and postdates my doing something in the sense that it is at any time available for potentiation. How does potentiation occur? Primarily in the matter of selecting some effortful striving for activation, the applying force to form. Thus, it begins to seem that *my* participation in the actional complex is quite like the pouring of an energy into a ready-made outlet. To the extent that I am able to register the experience of a container being filled by a substance distinct from it, to that extent am I able to separate the inpouring movement of *puruṣa* from the receptivity of *prakṛti*.

A closer scrutiny, moreover, discloses not a single kinaesthesia, but a constellation of them:

If these muscles A are moved, then change B occurs.

If these muscles C are moved, then change D occurs.

If these muscles E are moved, then change F occurs.

.....

That is, the embedding matrix of action appears as a set of ready-to-hand *Ablaufen*. This discovery clarifies the nature of selection. If a range of causal leanings are already available, choice is in reality neither of ends nor of means, but of the complex, of a certain karmic tendency. Where one thinks solely in terms of ends and means, a karmic debt is incurred; that is, one remains oblivious of the mechanical connection binding result to antecedent and antecedent to result, thereby running the risk of entanglement in the

unsensed clockwork of the act. This matrix can, furthermore, furnish an understanding of the dharma of the act, its context of meaning; for the meaning of any particular kinaesthesia is given only against the background of its competing and alternative flows (the 'field.')

If this view opens up the perception that my role is selectively to energize causal propensities ready-to-hand for me, I am less prone to presume myself author of the attainment. While this in itself does not resolve the question of how action is generated, it does seem that neither the consequent nor the antecedent *belongs to* me, nor does the causal connection binding them. The result is not something I 'do'. My part seems rather to consist, in a fashion not fully obvious, in marking that a given kinaesthesia has been *touched off*. In a way that need not imply haphazardness or random selection, I observe that a specific means-end complex is hit upon whose action changes the face of the world. Nor does it seem that *I* actually touch of a primitive striving. By the fact that effort is applied (in the passive voice), it is more accurate to say that the potentiating force goes to the kinaesthesia in a kind of pre-established harmony. The *Gītā's* action operates in a Leibnizian universe. This conjunction, when I am able to behold it, is as close as I am able to come to witnessing the marriage of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, the one that motivates and the one that is ready to be moved. Witness to this, I am able fully to view action in a new way nothing of myself is engaged in what I call 'doing'. Rather my place concerns itself with beholding that which occurs: the wedding of the primal forces under the canopy of my flesh.

*Clue 5. 'Concentration (dhyāna)'* Let the yogin try constantly to concentrate his mind remaining in solitude and alone, self-controlled, free from desires and longing for possessions. (6:10)

<sup>16</sup> in Cairns, op. cit., p. 5.

Clues 1 through 4, having laid bare the phenomena on which the *Gītā* moves, it remains for clue 5 to consolidate a way towards non-attached action. More than offering homilies, it formulates an ontological approach which, when embodied, allows one to near the mode of non-possessing action. Concentration (*dhyāna*) is the means of returning the attention to the tangible, away from interpretative abstractedness, toward the kinaesthetic matrix. In the language of clue 1, *dhyāna* is the shift in *manas* from a passive to an active mode, from a substantive to a verbal understanding of 'mind'. *Manas*, activated, operates in harmony with *buddhi*, the intellect.<sup>17</sup> Activated, it is able to touch the lived body as it is actionally.

Having the structure of kinaesthesia in view, one can confront the tripartite idea of having. Having, it will be recalled, involves (1) disposability, (2) concealment, and (3) needful acknowledgement. How, according to the *Gītā*, can I act in such a way that the action does not *belong* to me? With regard to disposability, we have seen the focus of potency shifts from an identity I call myself to the meeting of a potentiating force with a potentiabile structure. No longer is it that I stand as the agent empowering the act, but rather as the witness to that joining which is empowerment, of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. I am the one who, in keeping touch with the actional conjugates, allows the birth of the act. Second, with regard to concealment, the action is not an event I can keep to myself, since, while having a genesis in the habitat of my body, the components are

not personal nor private. Their existence is both 'within' me and 'without', or neither. As over against some other place of genesis, say, in another person's body, I have no special claim. The fact that the conjunction of actional components takes place nearer me confers on me no special privileges, duties, nor responsibilities with respect to it. This troublesome conclusion raises difficulties about the *Gītā's* proposals which I will not consider. Finally, regarding my needs to have the action acknowledged as my own, I no longer require any insurance against the action's being lost to or stolen from me. When the act no longer belongs to me, I have gained a freedom relative to its occasion; this freedom allows participation without involvement. I am not remote from the action. Far from it. I am as near to its source as is possible. Being near, I witness with tangible evidence that the source is not *in* me; rather, the place given me by the location of my body provides a vehicle for the source of all action. Action in this final stage of recognition becomes an expression of the blending of a bipolar reality, and I, the first attendant on it.

I do not now want to address the objections that, through the *Gītā's* method, the meaning both of action and of myself as agent has been bent out of shape, and that, in this sense, the problem of non-attached action skirted altogether. It may be that its objective, *mokṣa*, pushes the analysis necessarily beyond the ordinary sense of agency. If this is so, what is more important to ask is whether the method encompasses a means of verification, or whether the tangible evidence of sensation and kinaesthesia attests with sufficient strength to an approaching reality.

17. Cf. *Katha Upaniṣad* 3.3-3.6.

# RAMAKRISHNA: THE ETERNAL 'OUTSIDER'

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

Sri Ramakrishna is regarded today by thoughtful men and women, both in the East and the West, as a unique phenomenon in humanity's religious history. Religious people, psychologists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, artists, writers and scientists—eminent representatives of virtually every discipline—have paid and continue to pay spontaneous, unqualified homage to his abiding significance. His life represents, in essence, the most significant leap in the mystical consciousness of man.

The impressive spectrum of admirers ranging from, among others, Max Muller, Romain Rolland, Toynbee and Sorokin to Harlow Shapley and J. Robert Oppenheimer, makes one thing clear: the apparently simple, basically spiritual, life and message of the Master sustain the intellectual idiom of different disciplines. He spoke a language and reflected an experience the symbolic meaning and implications of which are capable of endless mutation. In this sense, the Master's life reflects a peculiarly *modern* temper and contains within itself the clue to resolve the contradictions and anomalies which the very temper generates.

The message of the Master embodied in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has already reached the dimensions of a universal scripture for all mankind. The Master's *Gospel* is religion come alive; it is practical ethics, experimental psychology, a guide for the perplexed, an incredibly accurate map of inner space and, above all, an absorbing drama instinct with a gaiety and irrepressible fun strangely poignant and tragic.

The recurring note in *The Gospel* and in Ramakrishna's life is, in every sense of the word, 'existential'. In fact his teaching rests on the two basic rhythms of the existential way of life. The choice of

meaningful solitude by a deliberate act of withdrawal from *samsāra*, the syndrome of flux, makes the spiritual seeker a self-chosen 'outsider'. Similarly, the 'despair' and 'anxiety' that the seeker experiences in the course of his spiritual quest—in the course of the transcending of and giving content to the status of the 'outsider'—is again an existential predicament. In short, for Ramakrishna, the *sādhaka* is an eternal 'outsider' but *an outsider without any corresponding pathological consequences* commonly associated with the existential perspective. As such, Ramakrishna's life and message offer necessary correctives to the most prestigious and powerful school of modern Western philosophy—existentialism. It rescues it from becoming what for many it is today: a trap without exit.

## II

To begin with: existentialists emphasize the basic dualism (Descartian and other brands) of man and his inner being—a dualism, which, incapable of resolution, leads to inevitable 'angst'. The residual conflict is between the incessant struggle of consciousness to express itself—to gain its identity—and the pressures imposed upon it by an affluent/technological society. At the deeper level, it is a conflict between the expanding consciousness seeking its identity and 'the brittle forms' in which it is encased. Accepting, with almost all philosophical systems, that man—a 'person'—is distinct from 'a mere thing', existentialists go further and say that this 'person' is reduced to a 'thing' by conventions, by false consciousness, by the very nature of his existence.

Faced with this dilemma—of aspiration impelling one towards the wholeness of

being and the disenchantment which ends all the aspiration—man, according to the existentialists, is forced to accept several manifestations of the false self. Placed, in the words of Colin Wilson, 'among the complexities of our modern civilization,' we are 'forced to develop hard shells' and eventually 'it is our civilization that is responsible for the prevailing humanistic and materialistic modes of thought.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'atheistic' existentialists would go further and dismiss even the 'hard-shells'—the several philosophical, theological concepts that man has constructed to console himself—and accept the resultant all-pervasive absurdity and nothingness as the inescapable fact of our existence. In this sense, as Sartre says, 'existentialism is nothing but an attempt to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position.'<sup>2</sup>

One inevitable component of 'the full conclusions' which stems from the existential syndrome is the willingness to remain a permanent 'outsider'. Unable to accommodate or relate himself to an ethos which devalues every 'thing', including the 'consciousness' of being a 'person', the existentialist chooses alienation not as an article of faith but as an innate condition of man's very consciousness.

It is true that both Sartre and Camus do attempt to contain the crippling sense of 'nothingness' by urging concerted social action to create an existentialist situation in which both 'the freedom to say' and 'the freedom to act' coalesce.<sup>3</sup> But then, this attempt is flawed at the very root because of the total, irrational negation of the *mythic* holistic consciousness of man.

1. Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1956) p. 284.

2. Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1948), p. 56.

3. See, Sartre, *What is Literature?* Specially pp. 118-19 (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1950).

Paradoxically, the attempt can only be expressed in mythic terms: it is the attempt of Sisyphus foredoomed to failure.

### III

The foregoing is a rigidly brief outline of the existentialist position; and, though it scarcely does justice to the complexity of its dialectics, it is helpful in placing Ramakrishna's life and message in this interesting perspective.

First, Ramakrishna experienced, at the threshold of youth, the agony and suffering of alienation and a sense of consequent despair the intensity of which even the most atheistic existentialist cannot but regard with awe: it was an all-consuming despair welling up from the depths of consciousness in unending gusts of grief. He himself told in retrospect:

Oh, what days of suffering I passed through! You can't imagine my agony at separation from Mother. That was only natural. Suppose there is a bag of gold in a room and a thief in the next, with only a thin partition between. Can he sleep peacefully? Will he not run about and try to force the wall to get at the gold? Such was my state. I knew that the Mother, full of infinite bliss, compared with which all earthly possessions were as nothing, was there, quite close to me. How could I be satisfied with anything else? I had to seek Her. I became mad for her.<sup>4</sup>

There are several insights in this apparently simple description which should, in one sense, seem amazing to an existentialist. There is the Master's assertion that 'agony' and 'suffering' are 'natural'. In fact, he would go a step further and say that each in his own way experiences suffering in the quest for a secular correlative for one's incessant longing—longing which is tragically misdirected energy towards a finite thing.

4. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971) p. 58.

Some suffer, Ramakrishna used to say, because they don't have money, others because they don't have children, lack the capacity to evoke love etc. In this sense he would agree with Sartre when he says that 'human reality is its own surpassing towards what it lacks,' and that 'the existence of desire as a human fact is sufficient to prove that human reality is a lack.'<sup>5</sup> Therefore, to experience one's lack is inevitably to experience the reality of suffering.

Similarly, it is amazing that the Master uses the one word which crystalizes existentialism: 'nothing'. 'Earthly possessions were as *nothing*,' he says. Alienation from the Divine Ground, for the Master, is the sine qua non of 'nothingness'. His 'nihilism' consists in being cut off from the Divine Ground and getting lost in a trap of self-imposed alienation. In short, the experience of suffering as the reality of one's being is for Ramakrishna not an offshoot or an inevitable result of the frustration of some human desire. Nor is suffering regarded as a *permanent* condition: it is a phase which is inevitably transcended through a state of being beyond this suffering. Therefore, this suffering does not have the potential to activate what Sartre called 'the worm' of 'nothingness'.

Above all, while apparently validating agony and suffering as a natural human condition, Ramakrishna does not allow it—unlike the atheistic existentialists—to lead us to the brink of an Eternal No. It is here that he would take the final step—the tremendous leap into the lap of transcendental reality embodied, for him, as the Mother.

One should, however, be careful not to consider this leap as some kind of narcissistic projection of pious hope. For instance, 'religious' existentialists such as

Gabriel Marcel, and specially Kierkegaard, do regard 'hope' as an antidote to 'despair'. Though hope, for them, is a 'transcendent act' in defiance of 'will and knowledge', one still gets the impression that this hope is an essentially cerebral, conceptual postulate, akin to 'belief'.

In any case, Ramakrishna's 'hope' is clear. In the description quoted above, one can hardly call his intense *awareness* of the Mother's presence in the very depths of despair as 'hope'. It is a conviction born of the certainty that the experience of 'nothingness' or 'despair' is only a cloud—Ramakrishna's image is 'thin partition'—which has overshadowed the Mother's presence. Ramakrishna says unequivocally *even before* experience was to validate his intuition: 'I *knew* that the Mother, full of infinite *bliss*, compared with which all earthly possessions were as *nothing*, was there quite close to me.' (emphasis added)

In the context of existentialism in general, and Christian solutions to its predicament in particular, great significance inheres in the assertion evident in the word 'I knew'. For, as Colin Wilson has argued for some existentialists, 'a specifically Christian solution' would be 'untenable'. For the existentialist would like to say of his solution, not 'I believe', but 'I know', and Wilson endorses this preference for 'I know' rather than 'I believe' (emphasis added) stating that this is 'not unreasonable' 'because all men have a right to withhold belief in something they cannot *know*.'<sup>6</sup>

Ramakrishna declared unequivocally 'I knew'. This knowledge that he claims is, in effect, an enlarging of the connotative boundaries of 'knowing' and it invests it with the empirical criterion that the existentialist demands. 'Whatever can be experienced can, within this definition, be "known".' Once this primacy of experience-as-knowledge is understood, we 'have an

<sup>5</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> *The Outsider*, p. 224.

idea of where his [the Outsider's] experience is lacking' and 'we can tell him: "Go out and look for these experiences, and your doubts will be answers."'<sup>7</sup> In short, 'Go out and *do* something'.<sup>8</sup>

This is exactly Ramakrishna's exhortation: 'be up and *doing!*' 'The wind of God's grace is blowing always. But unfurl your sails!' To use the image he is fond of: the thin partition which separates the 'thief' from 'the gold' must be broken. This breaking of the alienating circuit is obviously not possible without giving up what according to existentialists are 'the qualities of practical-mindedness and eye-to-business that seem to be the requisites for survival in our complex civilization'.<sup>9</sup> 'Practical-mindedness' and 'eye-to-business' correspond to what Ramakrishna in his inimitably imagistic language termed 'Kānchana'. If we add the other counter 'Kāminī', the erotic, we get the full circuit from which one has to break oneself free.

Here also Ramakrishna scores a point: the way to contain nausea induced by a pervasively sensate culture does not lie in another equally powerful source of nausea: alienation. In his 'spiritual dialectic', the 'outsider' is not an alienated being but one who while relating himself to every object or experience, however apparently trivial or even criminal, retains a sense of total perspective. In short, one who seeks to transcend alienation and despair through the spiritual life eventually discovers the paradox that to accept the totality of life is to remain a perpetual 'outsider', for it is only the detachment of the 'outsider' that prevents seduction to a unilateral vision of reality—to the adopting of the hard-shells of one's philosophical or socio-political theories. The degree and depth of spiritual consciousness that Ramakrishna's

'outsider' represents precludes the committing of any 'negative' act as a desperate way out of alienation.

#### IV

This is where Ramakrishna sharply controverts the basic paradox of western existentialism. In western society—by implication, any society which is trying to model itself on science/technology—the reaching out after his being, by the outsider, is conditioned by the awareness of a 'sick' society in which there is nothing to relate oneself to. In effect, fleeing from 'a society' which is 'a hall of distorting mirrors', the outsider by a deliberate act of the will seeks solitude. The Outsider, as Colin Wilson says, 'usually begins by saying, "I must have solitude to look inside myself"; hence the room on his own.'<sup>10</sup>

The seeking of solitude is also exactly what Ramakrishna recommends and surprisingly he uses the same image, 'the corner of a room' (*kone*) for contemplation, though he adds two more: the depths of consciousness itself (*mane*) and the interior of a wood (*vane*). But, then, for Ramakrishna solitude is in itself sterile unless, through the linking of the consciousness with a higher level of being, one neutralizes the lower appetites that get sharpened, paradoxically, because of the very solitude. The bird of detached contemplation will not, as it were, take off unless its wings are propelled by a transcendent goal. Otherwise it is *angst* and *nausea* all over again:

You sit down intending to make the mind soar up to the sky, but after a few hours, the trees and the ground seem realer than ever...*Things are too real.* It is Roquentin's Nausea again. This dead weight of uninterpretable reality is always one of the major difficulties of the solitary.<sup>11</sup>

7. *The Outsider*, p. 225.

8. *The Outsider*, p. 225.

9. *The Outsider*, p. 225.

10. *The Outsider*, p. 280.

11. *The Outsider*, p. 277.

'The dead wight of uninterpretable reality' for Ramakrishna corresponds to what he calls the 'impenetrable wall' that separates the 'thief' from 'the gold'. While the alienated outsider thinks that there is nothing on the other side of the wall, Ramakrishna affirms that there is the gold of unitive consciousness. In effect, Ramakrishna would say 'seek solitude by all means; but fill the heightened consciousness induced by solitary contemplation with the awareness of one's real self'. Alienation for heightened awareness, not pathological fantasizing; that is why Ramakrishna also recommends the company of holy men as a counterpoise to prevent solitude from becoming sterile and self-defeating. Solitude alienates the spiritual seeker only from his lower self, not from his higher Self nor from essential humanity. Obviously solitude is not a terminus but a starting point all over again. Preliminary alienation is only a means to dealienation consummating in the mystic union of the individual soul with the divine Totality of all souls.

## V

By affirming the validity of spiritual consciousness through personal verification, Ramakrishna gave the Outsider the reassurance and certitude that he needs to transcend his experience of alienation. Alienation can be overcome only by the attainment of a transcendent harmony through contemplation. Through contemplation of the basic harmony at the centre of the universe Ramakrishna could 'plunge to a depth of imaginative ecstasy' unique in mystical history.

Yet one question is bound to be raised by the existentialist, as Colin Wilson does in his excellent analysis of Ramakrishna's significance vis-a-vis the existentialist

position. He asks: would Ramakrishna 'still have felt the world so harmonious if he had been born into Raskolnikov's Petersburg, or the environment Graham Green pictures in *Brighton Rock*?'<sup>12</sup>

The implication is that Ramakrishna belonged to and lived in an ethos different from the modern one in which it is becoming difficult to sustain belief. In effect, it is argued, that Ramakrishna's philosophy of life—if one can use this cold abstraction for a man who lived every moment of his life without any abstraction—is very much dependent on the extant idyllic atmosphere of Kamarpukur and that oasis in the desert of Calcutta: Dakshineswar. Therefore, in the modern society with its increasing violence in interpersonal relations and the breakdown of belief in values, Ramakrishna's answer to alienation, it is implied, can hardly sustain itself.

This argument is, once again, the trap of dualism of which the existentialist is aware and from which he would like to free himself. But, paradoxically, he is afraid to concede, as a way out, a state of consciousness which is not only beyond the dualism but is also able to accommodate the contradictions and anomalies of the dualistic state of existence. Sri Ramakrishna's answer—not spoken out but lived out—was his worship of the Terrible. Ramakrishna did not shun death and destruction, cruelty and violence. He faced them. Nay more: he integrated them into his life. This he did by worshipping Kali, the supreme embodiment of the terrifying aspects of Reality, and by realizing in Her the beatitudes that men vainly seek elsewhere. This final step in the acceptance of even the Terrible, the Grotesque and the Ghastly as aspects of the Divine Reality is very difficult for existentialists to take.

Ramakrishna's very life-breath was acceptance of Kali, the Benign and the Terrible, the supreme symbol of creation

<sup>12</sup>. *The Outsider*, p. 276.



and destruction, the alpha and omega of life. The Upaniṣadic affirmation of the 'whole', the *purṇa*, containing the origin of everything and into which everything eventually merges, came to Ramakrishna not as a conceptual doctrine but as a live truth revealed in the vividness of an extraordinary vision: a vision which recurred at several points of his life. About one of these he declared:

The Real and the Appearance are becoming one to me. Do you know what I saw just now? A divine form—a vision of the Divine Mother. She had a child in her womb. She gave birth to it and the next instant began to swallow it; and as much of it as went into Her Mouth became void. It was revealed to me that everything is void. The Divine Mother said to me 'Come confusion! Come delusion! Come!'<sup>13</sup>

As Joseph Campbell, commenting on this all-encompassing nature of Ramakrishna's vision of the universe, has pointed out:

These are terrible days for our civilization. Everyone is behaving in the craziest possible way; it is duty, now, to be mad. This is the wildest moment in the dance of the terrible Goddess; the moment when everything splits into fire. We require an eye such as that of Sri Ramakrishna to know that even in Her frenzy She is our sweet ferry through the storm... We may try to fill ourselves with the courage that it takes to love Kali, the All-terrible...<sup>14</sup>

Though Campbell spoke these words during the 'fulness' of the Second World War, they have a continuing relevance. For they suggest that Ramakrishna's tranquillity is not contingent upon any negation of the negative. Even the entropy of his body through the dreaded disease cancer did not affect his holistic view. His unitive

consciousness is totally exempt from all kinds of schizophrenic 'fusion with confusion'.<sup>15</sup> This fusion made it possible for him to function on all the 'nodes' of the spectrum of consciousness effortlessly.

This is the reason behind Ramakrishna's final triumphant existential act; to go beyond the state of an Outsider, to return, as an act of the authentic self, from the solitude of contemplation—from the 'mountain', as it were—to the bustle of Calcutta, 'the market place', as it were. In this regard he reflects the eternal logic of the Enlightened One who, as in Zen Buddhism,

carries a wine gourd, symbol of the Tantric ecstasy, which transforms the wine of the delusive human world from poison into nectar. Carrying a gourd, he strolls into the market. He leads innkeepers and fishmongers in the Way of the Buddha. Bare-chested, barefooted, he comes into the market place. Muddied and dust-covered, how broadly he grins!<sup>16</sup>

In these terms, there is amazingly significant logic even in the changing physical landscapes behind Ramakrishna's life: From the idyllic isolation of Kamar-pukur and the relative seclusion of Dakshineswar and from these, as if they were too small to contain him, to the extended landscapes of metropolitan Calcutta: Kankurgachhi, Cossipore etc. And from Dakshineswar to how many landmarks! the Museum, the Maidan, Star theatre, boating on the Ganges, visits to nearly all important intellectuals, saints, thinkers etc. Everywhere retaining his sense of the 'outsider' without any pathological strain.

This ability to retain full awareness of

13. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1981), p. 870.

14. Joseph Campbell, 'Sri Ramakrishna', *Prabuddha Bharata*, October 1944, pp. 390-91.

15. See Ken Wilber, 'Psychologia Perennis: The Spectrum of Consciousness,' *The Meeting of the ways: Explorations in East/West Psychology*, ed. John Welwood (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), p. 21.

16. Lex Hixon, *Coming Home* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 87.

the unitive consciousness and yet continue to enjoy, so to say, the Mother's *Lila* is a unique phenomenon. This not only reflects a new dimension of the status of the 'Outsider' but also a breakthrough in the evolution of the mystical consciousness of man. Ramakrishna described it as '*Bhāvamukha*': the threshold of super-consciousness. In fact, '*Bhāvamukha*', and not neurosis, is Ramakrishna's answer to the existential impasse of our dualistic existence. *Bhāvamukha* is the consciousness, as it were, of the 'Outsider Inside' and the 'Insider Outside' making virtually every little bit of experience an occasion for an evolutionary leap. In the language of religious philosophy, it means living in harmony with both divine immanence and divine transcendence, living in tune with the holistic rhythms of universal life.

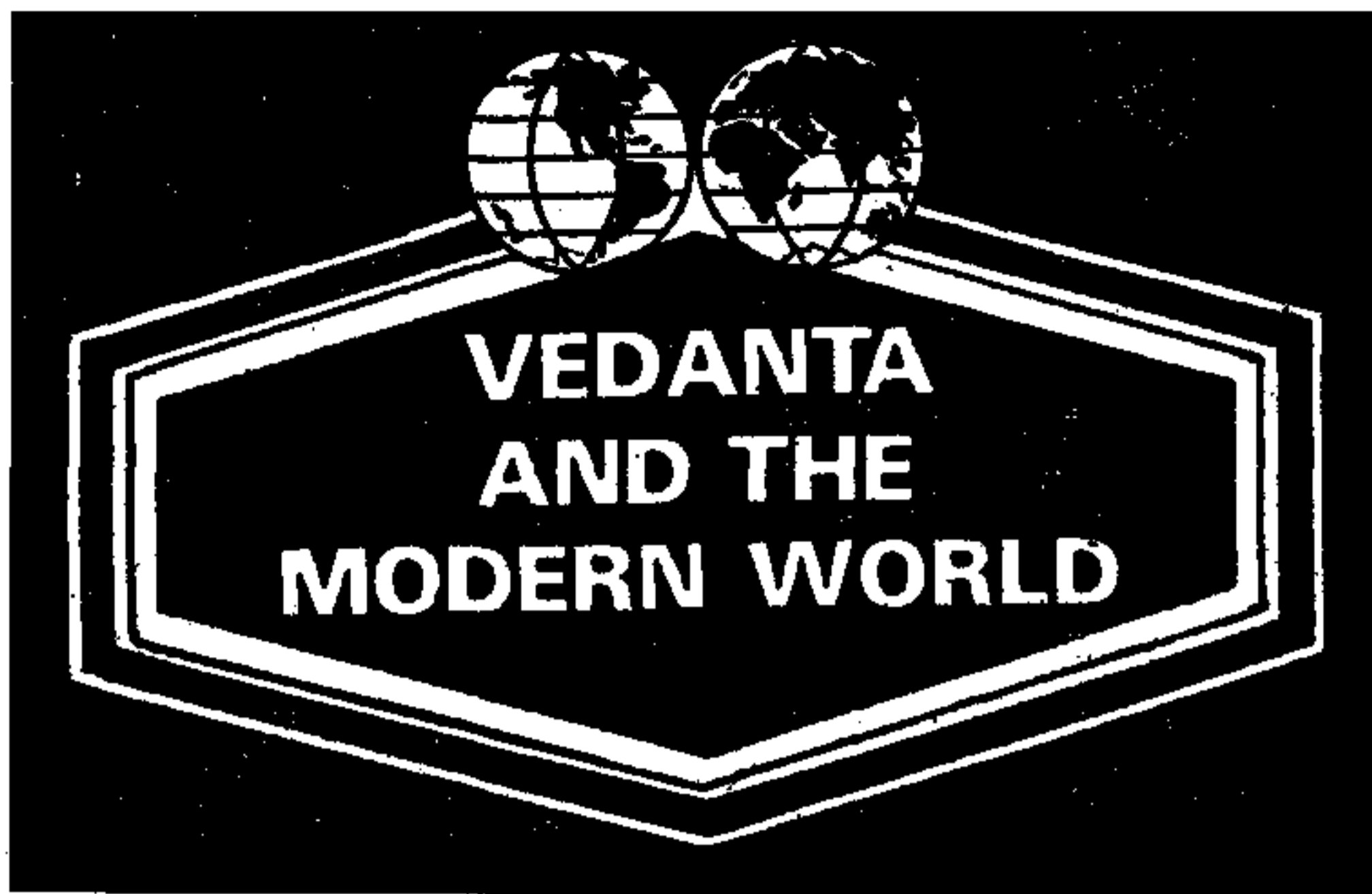
That this is not an equivocal intellectual clap-trap but an experienced existential state is borne out by Ramakrishna's declaration:

Do you know what I see right now? I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. It seems to me that men, and other living beings are made of leather, and that it is God Himself who, dwelling inside these leather cases, moves the hands, the feet, the heads. I had a similar vision once before, when I saw houses, gardens, men, cattle—all made of One Substance; it was as if they were all made of wax. I see that it is God Himself who has become the block, the executioner and the victim for the sacrifice.<sup>17</sup>

It hardly matters, in such a state of transcendental equilibrium, whether one is an Outsider or an Insider!

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<sup>17</sup>. *The Gospel*, pp. 941-42.



## RELATIVITY AND MAYA

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

### *Galilean Relativity*

The concept of 'relativity' was known long before Einstein. When we are travelling on a train, another train coming from the opposite direction appears to be travelling faster, whereas a train moving in the same direction appears to move slowly or to be even motionless. And within the compartment, it is often difficult to feel the motion of our own train. Newton formulated these common experiences in the form of a dictum: 'The motions of bodies included in a given space are the same among themselves, whether that space is at rest or moves uniformly forward in a straight line.'<sup>1</sup> This is known as Galilean or Newtonian Relativity Principle.

This principle can also be phrased in more general terms as follows: mechanical laws which are valid in one place are equally valid in any other place which moves uniformly relative to the first. If two frames of reference have a constant relative velocity (i.e. speed in a particular direction) then, if the rules of Newtonian mechanics hold good for events measured in one frame of reference (say, the firing of a gun), they will also hold good in the other. Such frames of reference are called Galilean frames of reference.

It is impossible to speak about the motion of an object without reference to some stationary point or place. To say that a car is moving at a speed (or velocity, if direction is also included) of 50 kph is meaningless unless the speed is related to some other body which provides the frame of reference, as for example the earth. Newton of course knew that the earth is in motion, but he believed that somewhere beyond the stars there must be a body absolutely at rest. He also seems to have held space itself to be a universal frame of reference. This belief in the absoluteness of space is one of the main pillars of Galilean Relativity.

The development of the wave theory of light, however, made scientists assume in the next two centuries that space was not empty but was filled with a hypothetical substance called ether. Just as sound was propagated as air waves, light was propagated as 'ether-waves'. It was then that James Clerk Maxwell propounded the theory that light was the propagation of electromagnetic fields through empty space. 'The electromagnetic fields', he wrote, 'are not states of a medium and are not bound down to any bearer, but they are independent realities which are not reducible to anything else.'<sup>2</sup>

1. Quoted in Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein* (London: Collins, 1956) pp. 37-38.

2. Quoted in Gary Zukov, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (New York: Morrow Hill Paperbacks, 1979) p. 156.

It was the attempt to accommodate Maxwell's theory within the rigid walls of Newtonian physics that led to the latter's overthrow and the development of Einsteinean Relativity.

In Newtonian mechanics, the calculation of relative velocities is very simple. For example, to an observer sitting in a train moving at 30 kph and being overtaken by another train moving at 70 kph, the second train appears to be moving past him at the *relative* speed of 40 kph. If it is travelling at 70 kph in the opposite direction, it will appear to pass him at the *relative* speed of 100 kph. Now, if the laws of Newtonian physics were universally true, they should apply outside the earth also. The speed of light through the earth is constant—300,000 kilometres (186,000 miles) per second. Is it the same beyond the earth also?

The German-born American Physicist Albert Michelson, in collaboration with his American friend Edward Morley, decided to find this out in 1881. Since the earth travels round the sun, a beam of light coming from a source ahead of the earth should appear to travel faster than a beam of light catching up on the earth from a source behind it. The difference should be detectable by careful measurement. Michelson and Morley designed a special instrument known as the interferometer which could (in the place of a clock) accurately compare the velocities of two beams of light travelling in two different directions. However, even after repeated trials (in which the greatest care was taken to eliminate errors), they found no difference whatsoever between the velocities of the beams of light, regardless of their direction. The velocity of light was found to be always fixed, as if the earth were not moving. But every one knows that the earth is in constant motion.

Several hypotheses were at first advanced to explain the fixity of the velocity of light.

The Irish physicist FitzGerald and the Dutch physicist Lorentz independently hypothesized that a body travelling through the ether was foreshortened in the direction of travel by the 'ether wind' by a ratio that increased with the increasing speed. Lorentz also stated that if a clock (instead of an interferometer) were used, the clock moving through ether would slow down compared to a clock at rest in ether because of the ether wind. This phenomenon is known as FitzGerald-Lorentz contraction.

### *The Special Theory of Relativity*

Einstein followed a totally different approach to the problem. He rejected the existence of ether itself, and held that: (1) it is motion itself, not the ether wind, that causes the contraction of the measuring rod; (2) that it is motion itself which is responsible for the constancy of the velocity of light. Einstein looked upon the fixity of the velocity of light as a universal law. If the velocity of light is constant regardless of the earth's motion, he reasoned, it must be constant regardless of the sun, the stars, the galaxies etc. From this he came to the conclusion that the laws of nature are the same for *all uniformly moving systems*. This is the essence of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. It includes the Galilean Relativity Principle which states that only mechanical laws are the same for all uniformly moving systems. Einstein's relativity theory includes not only mechanical laws but also the laws governing light and electromagnetic phenomena.

At first it might appear that there is nothing startlingly new in Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. As a matter of fact, the popular notion that every concept in Einstein's theory is new and original is wrong, for, as we have seen, his generalization is based on several earlier concepts. But Einstein did make original deductions which are of a revolutionary nature and of

immense consequences. He explained the results of Michelson's experiment without the help of the ether wind. He rejected the absolute character of space and time.

Newton showed the relativity of motion, but Einstein showed the relativity of time. In fact, this is the fundamental difference between the two concepts of relativity, Galilean and Einsteinian. Newton had assumed that the clocks in inertial frames of reference go at the same rate. So time is the same everywhere (of course making due adjustments appropriate to different zones on earth). If a certain physical process takes one hour in one inertial frame of reference, it will take one hour in every frame of reference. And if two events are observed to take place simultaneously by an observer attached to one frame, they will appear simultaneous to observers attached to all other frames. The universality of time and time determination is referred to as the 'absolute character of time'. Einstein realized that the notion of simultaneity, deeply rooted in man's consciousness, is a key concept. To know that two events have taken place at two different places at the same time we must see both simultaneously and, if these places are too far apart, the knowledge must be communicated to us instantaneously. This cannot be done through telephone, telegraph, wireless or light signalling, because the message conveyed through all these processes takes time to reach us. If we could transmit signals at infinite velocities, we could know the two events simultaneously. But, actually, there is no known method of signalling faster than light (or any other form of electromagnetic radiation)—more than 300,000 km per second. The velocity of light is the ultimate limiting velocity of the universe. Therefore it is impossible to know the simultaneity of occurrence of two events in two distant places. In other words, time is dependent on the inertial frame of reference and is therefore relative, not absolute.

This does not, however, mean that since everything in the universe is relative, it is not possible to know of any event other than those connected with our own frame of reference. Lorentz had earlier worked out mathematical equations by which space and time measurements made in one uniformly moving system could be correlated with measurements in another system. Einstein modified these equations (called 'Lorentz transformation') by introducing the principle of the limiting velocity of light into them. If we know the result of one physical experiment in one moving system (everything in the world is moving) it is not necessary to repeat the same experiment in another moving system. With the help of Lorentz transformation, as modified by Einstein, it is possible to calculate the values in any other moving system.

Einstein did not merely show that space and time are relative but united them into a single continuum. In our minds we tend to separate these two, for our awareness of space and awareness of time are different. Space is described in three dimensions—length, breadth and thickness. The unit of measurement for all these dimensions is the same—foot or metre. To unite space and time, time is to be regarded as the fourth dimension. But the unit for measuring time—second or hour—is quite different from that for space. Hence we find it difficult to think of space-time as one integral whole. But in practical life we actually do this when we speak of somebody living 'within twenty minutes of downtown by bus' or of some place 'five hours away by train'.

The German mathematical physicist Hermann Minkowsky had earlier attempted to unite space and time into a continuum with the help of Euclidean geometry. Einstein used the velocity of light in order to weld together space and time, and with the help of Riemann geometry, extended

the significance of the continuum far beyond what Minkowsky had imagined.

The universe consists of not only space and time but also matter. Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity revolutionized man's conception of matter. Physicists use the term mass when they refer to matter quantitatively. Mass is popularly identified with weight. But for physicists mass is the resistance (inertia) of matter to a change of motion (that is, to acceleration). It is easier to push a cycle than an automobile, for the latter resists motion more than the former. In classical physics the mass of a body is fixed and unchanging. But Relativity asserts that the mass of a body increases with the increase in its velocity. The change in mass of a body produced by its motion is called 'relativistic mass'.

By further deduction from his principle of the relativity of mass, Einstein came to the remarkable conclusion that mass can be changed into energy and energy can be changed into mass. This finding is embodied in the famous equation  $E = mc^2$ , where  $E$  is energy,  $m$  is mass and  $c$  is the velocity of light. The bizarre proof of this principle and its calamitous consequences produced by the atom bomb are too well known to need mention here.

### *General Theory of Relativity*

The Special Theory covered only objects and frames of reference which move at constant velocities. But most bodies undergo frequent change in velocity known as acceleration. The space-time concepts of the Special Theory had also to be extended from the field of electromagnetic phenomena to all physical phenomena, especially the universal and mysterious phenomenon of Gravitation. Therefore Einstein enlarged the Special Theory (propounded in 1905) into the General Theory of Relativity in 1916. The foundation of this theory is the Principle of

Equivalence of Gravitation and Inertia enunciated by Einstein. Simply stated, the principle means that there is no way to distinguish the motion produced by inertial forces (acceleration, recoil, centrifugal force, etc.) from motion produced by gravitational force. This means that even accelerated motion is relative; it can be judged only with reference to some system of reference. As an extension of the Special Theory, the General Theory of Relativity may be stated as follows: 'The laws of nature are the same for all systems *regardless of their state of motion*'.<sup>3</sup>

From the above discussion one important point emerges. The uniqueness and greatness of Einstein lie not merely in showing the relativity of all phenomena but in establishing the universal validity of the fundamental physical laws of physics. He did not merely say that everything in the universe is relative, but showed how, with the help of the velocity of light and the Principle of Equivalence, we could gain a precise knowledge of the physical phenomena, in spite of their relativity. The universe that he has pictured is not a chaos but a cosmos. He found unity in diversity, and meaning in the apparently meaningless phenomena of the universe.

There is only one field, one inscrutable world, where this harmony and certitude do not seem to prevail. It is the micro-world of subatomic particles. Harmony and certainty can occur only when phenomena are causally interrelated. But as we have seen, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle has given a blow to the notion of rigid causal relations in quantum mechanics.<sup>4</sup> Einstein, who firmly believed that 'God does not play dice', could not till the end of his life accept the above

3. *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, p. 76.

4. See, author's article *The Uncertainty Principle and the Omnijjective Reality in Prabuddha Bharata*, April, 1984.

view. He strove, without success, to unite relativity, quantum mechanics and nuclear science within one unified theory. Though the Special Theory of Relativity has been applied to quantum phenomena by Paul Dirac and others, the General Theory still remains outside the micro realm.

### *Maya and Space-Time*

One of the fundamental concepts of Advaita Vedanta is its theory of Maya. It is also its most controversial one. Maya is not mere illusion or ignorance understood in a worldly sense. Swami Vivekananda correctly characterized it as 'a statement of fact'. 'What you call matter or spirit or mind or anything else you may like to call them, the fact remains the same, we cannot say that they are, we cannot say they are not...A fact, yet at the same time, not a fact. This is a statement of facts, and this is what is called Maya.'<sup>5</sup>

Saṅkara had identified Maya with space, time and causation—*deśa, kāla, nimitta*. Swami Vivekananda followed Saṅkara's theory of Maya but gave it a thoroughly modern logical formulation. Long before Einstein, he clearly stated the relativity of time and space. In the following statement he advances concepts which come so very close to those of Einstein:

The one peculiar attribute we find in time, space and causation is that they cannot exist separate from things. Try to think of space without colour or limits or any connection with the things around—just abstract space. You cannot. You have to think of it as the space between two limits, or between three objects. It has to be connected with some object to have any existence. So with time; you cannot have any idea of abstract time [or absolute time, as Einstein put it—*author*] but you have to take two events by the idea of succession. Time depends on two events, just as space has to be

related to outside objects. And the idea of causation is inseparable from time and space.<sup>6</sup>

Maya was posited by Saṅkara in order to explain the existence of the phenomenal universe. The theory of Maya was a logical necessity. At the same time, he could not deny the principle of evolution in the phenomenal world. To reconcile evolution with Maya, the followers of Saṅkara developed the doctrine of Apparent Transformation (*vivarta vāda*). Dualists like the followers of Sāṅkhya and theists, adopted the doctrine of Real Transformation (*pariṇāma vāda*) according to which the world is the result of actual transformation of the ultimate reality. Explaining the *vivarta vāda* Swami Vivekananda stated:

According to the Advaitist proper, the followers of Shankaracharya, the whole universe is the *apparent* evolution of God. God is the material cause of this universe, but not really, only apparently. The celebrated illustration used is that of the rope and the snake, where the rope appeared to be the snake, but was not really so. The rope did not really change into the snake. Even so, this whole universe as it exists is that Being. It is unchanged, and all the changes we see in it are only apparent. These changes are caused by Desha, Kāla and Nimitta (space, time and causation) or according to a higher psychological generalization, by Nāma and Rūpa (name and form). It is only by name and form that one thing is differentiated from another...Again, it is not, the Vedantists say, that there is something as phenomenon and something as noumenon. The rope is changed into the snake apparently only; and when the delusion ceases, the snake vanishes.<sup>7</sup>

### *Maya and consciousness*

It is doubtful whether Einstein would have gone so far with Vivekananda in accepting the theory of Maya. But another great physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, did. In

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) Vol. 2 p. 112.

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2. pp. 135-36.

7. *Complete Works*, Vol. 1. (1977). p. 363.

a famous talk which he gave at the Cambridge University soon after the Second World War, Schrödinger said:

Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular... How does the idea of plurality (so emphatically opposed by the Upanishad writers) arise at all?

Consciousness finds itself intimately connected with, and dependent on, the physical state of a limited region of matter, the body... Now there is a great plurality of similar bodies. Hence the pluralization of consciousness or minds seems a very suggestive hypothesis. Probably all simple, ingenuous people, as well as the great majority of Western philosophers, have accepted it... The only possible alternative is simply to keep the immediate experience that consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown, that there is only one thing and that, what seems to be a plurality, is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing produced by a deception (the Indian Maya)—the same illusion is produced in a gallery of mirrors, and in the same way Gaurishankar and Mt. Everest turned out to be the same peak seen from different valleys.<sup>8</sup>

We have seen that Einstein's greatest achievement consisted not in showing that everything is relative but in discovering the way to truth through the relative world, in establishing the absolute validity of fundamental physical laws in spite of relativity. In a similar way, Vedanta does not simply describe the world as Maya and leave you there, but shows you the way to the Truth, the absolute nature of consciousness.

Einstein abandoned the hypothesis of ether in his search for higher truth, higher generalization. The Indian sages too had discovered something similar to ether, the elemental *ākāśa*, but they went far beyond that and discovered consciousness as the ultimate Reality: *prajñānam brahma*. Says Swami Vivekananda:

If the theory of ether failed in ancient times to give a solution of the mystery of the universe,

8. Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

working out the details of that ether theory would not bring us much nearer to the truth... What I mean is that, in inquiry into the principle, the Hindu thinkers were as bold as, and in some cases much bolder than, the moderns. They made some of the grandest generalizations that have yet been reached, and some still remain as theories, which modern science has yet to get even as theories. For instance, they not only arrived at the ether theory, but went beyond and classified mind also as a still more rarefied ether. Beyond that again, they found a still more rarefied ether. Yet that was no solution, it did not solve the problem.<sup>9</sup>

They found the solution by going beyond even the more rarefied ether or Maya, and by discovering the Absolute—the infinite, immutable, non-dual consciousness beyond all relativity, beyond all contradiction. Wherever there is contradiction there is relativity, there is Maya. The great first-century Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna used the attribute of contradictoriness to show the illusory nature of the phenomenal world. Teachers of Advaita Vedanta went one step further and, using non-contradictoriness as the test of absolute truth, discovered Brahman as the ultimate Reality.

#### *The contradictory nature of the phenomenal world according to quantum physics and Vedanta*

Modern physics has ended in the finding that the apparently hard reality of matter is, in the quantum world, a mere shadow. Electron is only a 'probability wave'. And this concept leads, says physicist Fritjof Capra 'to another pair of opposite concepts which is even more fundamental, that of existence and non-existence... we can never say that an atomic particle exists at a certain place, nor can we say it does not exist. Being a probability pattern, the particle has tendencies to exist in various

9. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2. p. 90.



places and thus manifests a strange kind of physical reality between existence and non-existence.<sup>10</sup>

These words seem like an echo of what Vivekananda said in London at the end of the last century, "This world has no existence". What is meant by that? It means that it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, your mind and to the mind of everyone else.<sup>11</sup>

Nobel physicist Robert Oppenheimer expresses this basic contradiction, this fundamental uncertainty in our knowledge of the world: 'If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say "no", if we ask whether the electron's position changes with time, we must say "no"; if we ask whether the electron is at rest we must say "no"; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say "no"'.<sup>12</sup>

These words seem like an echo of what an ancient Upaniṣadic seer uttered with equal force about Brahman, the ultimate Reality behind the phenomenal world:

It moves. It moves not.  
It is far, and yet it is near.  
It is within all this  
And it is outside all this.<sup>13</sup>

The Kāṭha Upaniṣad describes the ultimate Reality as 'smaller than the smallest and yet greater than the greatest'. In the same strain writes the Christian Mystic Nicholas de Cusa: '...the walls of the Paradise in which Thou Lord dwellest is built of contradictories.' And Dionysius the Areopagite: 'He is both at the root and in motion, and yet is in neither state.'<sup>14</sup>

10. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Berkeley: Shambhala 1973) p. 153.

11. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2. p. 91.

12. Quoted in *The Tao of Physics*, p. 154.

13. *Isa Upaniṣad*, 5.

14. Quoted in Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* (Harper Colophon books, 1978) pp. 108-9.

'Thus we find', says Vivekananda, 'that Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world. It is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction.'<sup>15</sup>

A man walking on the desert continues to see a lake although he knows it is only a mirage. The physicist tries to look at a subatomic object as particles although he realizes that the particle has already dematerialized into what particle physicists describe as 'interconnected patterns of dynamic energy', or, as physicist David Bohm likes to call it, a 'holon', a particle holographically connected with the entire universe. The whole universe is an 'implicate order' as Bohm puts it, where there is always a deeper unity underlying the surface. The individual electron as a particle is thus both real and unreal. The microcosm may sometimes behave as a particle, and sometimes it may also indicate that it is an inextricable part of the macrocosm. Modern physics has stepped into the world of a number of bewildering contradictions where particles behave as waves, and waves as particles; where a single particle is also a reflection of the whole universe; where objective reality, though apparently real is yet illusory; where we know what happens at the end of the reaction, but never know in exactitude how it happens because subatomic phenomena are like 'an unopenable watch' as Einstein said. To be aware of these basic contradictions in our knowledge of Reality, and in life, is to be aware of Maya. To struggle to go beyond the contradictions is the spiritual struggle. To succeed in this struggle is the attainment of Nirvana or Samadhi. But as long as we act, live and think in this ever-changing sense-bound world, we shall be compelled to live only

15. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2. p. 87.

in the midst of everlasting contradictions which go by the name Maya.

Vivekananda exposes the inescapable limitations of our intellect and the indomitable desire for knowledge in men struggling in a world of space-time-causality.

So with our intellect. In our desire to solve the mysteries of the universe, we cannot stop our questioning, we feel we must know and cannot believe that no knowledge is to be gained. A few steps, and there arises the wall of beginningless and endless time which we cannot surmount. A few steps, and there appears a wall of boundless space which cannot be surmounted, and the whole is irrevocably bound by the walls of cause and effect. We cannot go beyond them. Yet we struggle, and still have to struggle. And this is Maya.<sup>16</sup>

How to go beyond Maya? How to resolve contradictions? Vedanta says—by realizing that Absolute which is above and beyond the contradictions of the world of Maya. And this Absolute is not a personal God sitting somewhere on the clouds, but the self-luminous infinite consciousness everpresent inside every being. It is only by realizing the Absolute within that all contradiction ceases. This is the unanimous declaration of all the Upaniṣads. And Vivekananda concludes his exposition of Maya with this very idea of the Absolute within each of us.

We see, then, that beyond this Maya the Vedantic philosophers find something which is not bound by Maya; and if we can get there, we shall not be bound by Maya. This idea is in some form or other the common property of all religions. But, with Vedanta, it is only the beginning of religion and not the end. The idea of Personal God, the Ruler of Maya, or nature,

<sup>16</sup>. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2. p. 119.

is not the end of these Vedantic ideas; it is only the beginning. The idea grows and grows until the Vedantist finds that he who, he thought, was standing outside, is he himself and is in reality within.<sup>17</sup>

Attempts to go beyond the phenomenal world to the Absolute is not just a philosophical speculation. It is a part of man's spiritual quest through all the ages. Man can and does reach that stage. Says Vivekananda, 'The Jñāni takes nothing for granted; he analyses by pure reason and force of will until he reaches Nirvana which is the extinction of all relativity. No description or even conception of this state is possible'. Nearly 60 years after Vivekananda's passing away, physicist David Bohm concludes his book *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (Introduction by Nobel physicist de Broglie) with an identical observation. 'The essential character of scientific research is, then, that it moves towards the Absolute by studying the relative, in its inexhaustible multiplicity and diversity.'<sup>18</sup> In a sense, through Relativity and Quantum Mechanics, modern science has already reached the door of the 'transcendental' realm. Writes Milic Capek: 'To deny the transcendent qualities would be as uncritical as for a blind person to deny colours, for a deaf person to deny sounds, or for human beings to deny qualities which some animals undoubtedly experience under the impact of ultrasonic waves or ultraviolet rays'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2. p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>. David Bohm, *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1957) p. 170.

<sup>19</sup>. Milic Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc. 1961). p. 369.

# THE CONFIDENCE GAP

(A Review-Article)

[THE CONFIDENCE GAP: BUSINESS, LABOUR AND GOVERNMENT IN THE PUBLIC MIND. BY SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET AND WILLIAM SCHNEIDER. Published by The Free Press, MacMillan Publishing Co., 866, Third Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022. 1983. Pp. xxii + 434. \$19.95.]

Back in 1979 President Jimmy Carter talked about a serious threat to American democracy in the shape of what he termed the 'crisis of confidence' in the major American institutions such as government, church, newsmedia and schools. 'The gap between our citizens and our government has never been so wide', the President lamented in his television address to the nation on July 15, 1979.

The book under review makes this statement of the President its starting point and asks several key questions: How real is the confidence gap talked about by the President? If it is real, how deep does it go? What are the causes and effects of the confidence gap on American institutions? What are its cures?

The book focuses on Americans' attitude to business, labour and government not at a particular point of time but over a period of the last half century. It examines the changing perceptions of Americans towards their institutions, their leaders, and their country, analyzes the reasons for the changes and continuity, and thus is able to identify the generality of trends over a fairly spread-out period of time. The enterprise involves a methodology which has been tried by few scholars before. The authors collected a wide variety of national surveys taken between 1936 and 1982 by leading commercial, academic and media-based public opinion research organizations, distilled the findings, identified the issues most relevant for today and above all, gave their findings a refreshingly original interpretation—an enormous task admirably performed by, Amitai

Etzioni rightly observes, 'two of America's best'.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I (Chapters 1-5) reports evidence of the decline of public confidence in American institutions from the late 1960s to early 1980s. Part II (Chapters 6-10) examines specific attitudes of the American people towards business, labour and government. It notes the disdain in which Americans hold these institutions, the limits they feel should be placed upon the institutions and, in that connection, their sentiment toward government involvement in the economy. Part III (Chapters 11 and 12) discusses the general causes of the confidence gap in terms of Americans' perception and assesses the consequences of such perception in terms of whether they create any crisis of legitimacy for the basic American institutions. Finally, the authors reflect on the possibilities and limits of creative leadership in terms of restoring public trust in the behaviour of power holders.

The themes mentioned above need an elaboration. The erosion of public confidence in institutions such as labour, business and government began in the mid-1960s, worsened rapidly in the period between 1964 and 1975 and reached record high levels by 1981.

While the business, labour and government, being the core of the system, bear the brunt of public dissatisfaction, others such as education, military, medicine, religion and the press are also not immune from people's increasingly negative feelings

towards them. The trend of downturn in public confidence is in this sense general. The state of the economy has something to do with the decline in public confidence from the mid-1960s to the present day. For Americans, used to relatively prosperous living, persistent inflation, recession, energy crisis and the steadily rising rate of unemployment during the last two decades were rather traumatic experiences. No wonder that they held the leaders, especially in government and business, responsible for the adverse economic conditions. No less unsettling for the Americans were events in the socio-political realms such as the racial conflict, Vietnam War and Watergate. The confidence gap that Americans exhibited was the cumulative effect of these economic, social and political factors.

What are the specific attitudes of the American people towards business? Does not business develop technology and promote economic growth? It certainly does, but at the same time it displaces workers by creating automation, it neglects the environment and does not bother to hold down the prices. 'The public believes that economic self-interest is the key motivation behind all business activity' and holds the business in disdain particularly for its money-making attitude and profit-mindedness. Business, so to say, is *productive but unpopular*. Even more unpopular are the labour unions. 'They are the least trusted major institution in American life', least trusted because they have too much power but too little morality. They are, no doubt, necessary to protect workers from the exploitation and arbitrary misuse of power by the employers, but their principal defect is that they often mind their sectional interests much more than the public interest. Labour unions are thus *necessary but unpopular*. Both the business and labour are viewed by the American people as self-interested bodies working for their advantage but labour leaders are generally looked

upon with greater disfavour than the business leaders. 'The widespread belief [is] that union leaders are personally corrupt, autocratic, and unrepresentative of their membership' and 'are less likely than business leaders to consider the national interest.'

What specific limits or regulations do the Americans feel should be placed upon the business? They would favour *moderate* government control in the following areas:

Product safety standards	(85 per cent)
Product quality standards	(83 per cent)
Pollution controls	(82 per cent)
Corruption, e.g. bribes, pay offs, illegal contributions	(75 per cent)
Equal employment opportunities for minorities	(69 per cent)
Allowable price increases	(54 per cent)

They would not, however, have anything to do with extreme governmental measures such as nationalization. If they are fearful of concentrated power in the hands of large business corporations they are even more distrustful of excessive powers in the hands of the state. Socialism as a concept has no appeal to the Americans; over ninety per cent of them favour free enterprise, and desire moderate government control only when it is absolutely necessary to check the abuse of private power. 'Americans fear concentrated power, whether in the state or in the economy. And following a classical American tradition, they seek to restrain self-interested power through checks and balances.' In other words, what the Americans want is not more power for government, but a better *balance of power* between government, business, and labour.

The tangible effects of Americans' low confidence in government can be seen especially in two areas. *The participation rate* in American Presidential elections showed a steady decline: from 62.8 per cent in 1960 to 54.0 per cent in 1980. People also seemed to show aversion to *higher*

*taxes*. This did not mean that Americans withdrew support from government programmes. This only reflected their displeasure with a leadership which, in their opinion, was inadequate and inept. The implication is that if the government has to restore confidence in itself, it has to enhance its responsive capability considerably more than what it is at present.

The effects of Americans' low confidence in labour can be seen from the fact that Unions' percentage of the labour force declined steadily from 30 per cent in 1961 to 21 per cent in 1980. Another indicator of reduced faith in labour unions is the consistent decline in its ability to win elections supervised by the National Labour Relations Board: from 77 per cent in 1940 to a mere 45 per cent in 1980. The minimum that the unions should do to improve their negative public image is to 'police their internal operations and reduce the widespread impression that corruption and lack of democracy characterize their internal governance.'

The business owes its negative image to the Americans' belief that the activities of business are in one way or other responsible for: unemployment, inflation, energy shortage and shoddy consumer products. Efforts to improve the image of business must, therefore, be directed towards the technological and administrative solution of these issues. In other words, Americans today have high expectations of *social responsibility* on the part of their key institutions. 'To regain confidence in such a context, business and other key institutions must not only "deliver the goods" in terms of economic prosperity, but they must also manifest some degree of commitment to the public interest as conceived by a better educated, more socially conscious public'.

Does the decline in public confidence in American institutions lead to a crisis of confidence in the American system itself? Is there a crisis of legitimacy? The

answer is in the negative. First, the Americans do not question the basic value and character of the country's political and business institutions. That is to say, they believe that the system is good, but the leadership is inept. To that extent, the crisis is not so much a crisis of confidence as a crisis of competence. The second stabilizing factor is that despite the critical eye on the performance of the leadership, Americans continue to see their personal situations in positive terms. Their continued sense of optimism is a sign of health which should silence the prophets of doom. The third factor helping to sustain the legitimacy of the American system is the American people's belief that—the failure being the failure of leadership—the system can be improved by changing the incumbent powerholders through the democratic process. The crisis is thus not yet fundamental or systemic. Much however depends on the ability of leadership. Persistent failure to solve the problems of the polity, the society, and the economy, accompanied by serious setbacks in these spheres, may give rise to movements in the 1980s seeking to change the system in a fundamental way.

The book provides a first-rate analysis of public opinion in the United States. It portrays what American people feel about business, labour and government, why they feel what they feel, what they expect of those institutions, and what these institutions could do to restore people's confidence in them. The first step towards curing a disease is to diagnose it accurately. The book performs admirably this diagnostic function. It tells all concerned what exactly the problem is. It flashes the danger signal and sounds the alarm bell to indicate that there is fire somewhere on the line. It is for the American policy-makers to put out the fire before it engulfs them and burns down in the process the basic structure of the American system.

The future of America in the decades ahead depends on the American leadership realizing the gravity of the situation.

For us here in India the study undertaken by Prof. Lipset and Dr. Schneider provides valuable insights into the socio-political situation prevailing in the country now. 'Confidence gap' is one of the major problems in India today, though the nature, extent and cause of this lacuna are quite different. Though expensive, the book deserves to be read by all conscientious people interested in public welfare.

Now, a word about the authors:

Professor Seymore Martin Lipset is the Caroline S. G. Munro Professor of Political Science and Sociology, and a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, at Stanford University. He had also served as Professor of Government and Social Relations at Harvard University and as a visiting professor at various schools and institutions throughout the world. A former president of the American

Political Science Association, Professor Lipset is one of the most respected scholars in the world today in the fields of political Science and Sociology. He is the author or co-author of seventeen books, including *Agrarian Socialism*, *Union Democracy*, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, *Revolution and Counterrevolution*, *Political Man*, *The First New Nation*, *The Divided Academy*, *Rebellion in the University*, and *The Politics of Unreason*.

William Schneider is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington, D.C.

The Free Press deserves the unreserved praise of all for bringing out such an important book. The get-up and printing are, even by American standards, of the highest order.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE TIME FALLING BODIES TAKE TO LIGHT:** BY WILLIAM IRWIN THOMPSON. Published by Rider and Company, 17-21 Conway Street, London W1P 6JD. 1981. Pp. 280. £ 5.50.

PARABOLA, the American journal of myth and the quest for meaning, described (in I, iv, Fall, 1976) William Irwin Thompson as 'a protean speculator', 'chronicling in essay-form' the 'search for a viable contemporary sacred way'. The journal notes 'his intellectual odyssey around the world from Esalen to Lindisfarne, the spiritual think-tank and prototype community on Long Island he now heads, with way stations enroute at M.I.T. and Toronto's York University'.

Whatever the 'way-stations', physical and psychic, Thompson is an unusually perceptive explorer of 'the sacred way'. This has led him to an intensive study of the nature and modalities of the mythic consciousness which lies imbedded

in the sacred way. In terms of this mythic awareness, Thompson feels (echoing Sri Aurobindo) that today 'we are at an evolutionary quantum leap in which consciousness is going into a radical mode of thought'. He sees this 'leap' as involving 'a sacrifice' of several empirical, behaviouristic modes of the West, 'of a lot of consumerism and exploitation of nature'. The West, in effect, is progressively forced to give up its 'heroic industrial ego that dominates nature'. While this would mean 'a surrender in spirit to the East', obviously this surrender cannot be localized. Though the 'quantum leap' seems for Thompson to be centred in North America, the implicit spirit as a pervasive 'union of all the great world religions' is evident in most cultures exposed to technology and the resultant reappraisal of their roots.

The book under review is an extension of these convictions (already spelt out in Thompson's

earlier books notably *At the Edge of History*). The controlling principle now is human Sexuality. This is regarded as a pervasive paradigm illumining several aspects of the complex relation between myth and the origins of human culture. Whether it is in the sphere of language or history, art or religion, social structures or political organizations, Thompson sees the history of consciousness as an attempt to achieve an 'asexual state', for 'to be asexual means to be immortal'. As such 'asexuality' can be seen as assuming protean forms from its mythic base. Whether it is the myth of the Fall of man or the processes of hominization or symbolization evident in the development of virtually all cultures, our attitude to sex—basically our attitude to woman—determines the modes through which our consciousness functions.

Our technological civilization, says Thompson, is overshadowed with 'the cast of Lilith, "the Maid of Desolation" who dances in the ruins of cities...when man will not deal with Isis, through the path of initiation, he must deal with Lilith'. In effect, for Thompson, the basic fallacy lies in our 'rape of the feminine' through, among other things, socio-biology and genetic engineering. The results of the reductive fallacy of seeing 'gene as a hunk of matter rather than a crystal of sacred geometry and frozen music' are evident everywhere: the search for altered state of consciousness gets dissociated from the sacred way and violence and pornography reduce sexuality to genetics. The inherent power of sexuality as a mode to 'accelerate evolution' and create individuals who are exempt from the pathological need 'to return to the womb, to the heard, to the church, to the totalitarian state' is

bypassed or misunderstood. Eventually even language gets fossilized as a semantic referent cut off from the mythic logos. Above all, mythic time and clock time instead of functioning in unison as both physiological and psychic—as in the physiological and psychic changes of the human body both male and female—get into dichotomous cages.

The overall loss is a loss of mythic consciousness which is not, as Thompson rightly notes, a way of knowing but 'a relationship between the known and the unknowable', that 'shoreline where the island of knowing meets the unfathomable sea of our being'. To perceive this interesting point—not as a cerebral hypothesis but as a live, experiential truth—is in effect, the leap of the time-falling bodies to light.

Thompson's book is instinct with a range of reflections which is of inestimable value to virtually every discipline. For us, Indians, particularly, the assertion of the truth of the External Feminine as the key to the processes of both time and timeless—a truth exemplified in the life and sādhanā of Sri Ramakrishna in our own age—comes with a peculiarly satisfying immediacy. Though one cannot always agree with Thompson—his views on the theory of the *chakras* and on Yoga in general seem to me fascinating but debatable—, *The Time Falling Bodies Take To Light* is, indeed, persuasively stimulating and as such compulsive reading for all those interested in the 'sacred way'.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, SINGAPORE

#### *Report for 1982*

*Spiritual and cultural activities:* Daily worship and vesper service were carried on and *Ramanama sankirtana* was conducted on ekadashi days. Hindu festivals and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swamiji and great religious teachers were celebrated.

There was on Saturday evenings a class on 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' and on Sunday evenings a class on the Bhagavadgita. A regular exposition of Srimad Bhagavatam on Tuesday evenings was started in December 1982. Visiting sadhus of the Ramakrishna Order gave discourses on religious subjects. The President addressed several meetings and satsangs held in Singapore, Johor Bahra, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Penang, Seremban (West Malaysia), Kota

**Kinabalu (Sabah), Jakarta and Manila.**  
*Educational activities: Library and Reading Room:* Serving as a reference library it made available to the readers books on religion and philosophy. The reading room received a number of periodicals. Ramakrishna Order's publications in English, Sanskrit, Tamil, Bengali and Hindi were made available to the people through the Mission's sales department.  
*Boys' Home:* There were 39 boys during the year in the Boys' home varying in age from 8 to 17, studying in primary, secondary and vocational schools, and coming mostly from broken and disturbed homes. They are provided free board and lodging and facilities for study, games, singing and taking part in prayer and worship etc. under the care and supervision of sadhus, voluntary workers and teachers. After completing school the boys normally go back home, take up a job or enter National Service unless helped by the Mission to take up tertiary education in rare exceptional cases. A separate library provided books for the use of these boys.

The recurring expenses of the boys' home currently amounting to 150,000 Singaporean dollars are met out of public donations, the Social Welfare Department giving a grant of only \$15/- per boy per month. Donations to the boys' home are exempt from Income Tax. To meet the expenses in conducting and organizing various programmes of social service and celebrations the Mission has set up a permanent fund the donations to which are not exempt from Income Tax. People well disposed to such activities are invited to send their contributions to the President at 179 Bartley Road, Singapore 1953.

### RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, DINAJPUR (BANGLADESH)

#### *Report for 1982-83*

*Spiritual and Cultural activities:* The Ashrama, started in 1923 and affiliated in 1942, conducted during the year, besides daily worship of Sri Ramakrishna in the Ashrama shrine,

classes and discourses on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature at the Ashrama and in some 40 villages and towns of Bangladesh. Kalipuja, Saraswatipuja, Dolyatra, Nabanna, Mahashtami and other religious festivals and birthdays of Buddha, Jesus, Shankaracharya and such other religious celebrities were observed. 6,000 poor people were fed as part of the birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda in which thousands of people took part.

*Educational activities: Students' Home:* The home accommodated 20 students during the year under review, of whom were provided all facilities free of charge, and two others on a part-free basis.

*Free Library:* Out of a total 1,969 books in the library, 300 were issued during the year to 156 people. The number of periodicals received was 6.

*Publication department:* Set up for the dissemination of the life-giving ideas manifested in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the department published 10 titles.

*Medical activities:* 4 charitable homoeopathic dispensaries treated 42,932 (31,422 new) cases during the year. 3 charitable mobile allopathic dispensaries working on only one day every week with aid from the U.S.C., Canada, treated 79,556 (25,750 new) cases. One charitable allopathic dispensary located within the Ashrama premises treated 60,291 (36,646 new) cases.

*Relief work:* Pecuniary help of Taka 2,757.50 was given to 56 persons, and Taka 2,323.15 to 9 poor students. Old saris and garments were given away to the needy.

*Rural work:* With a view to helping at least some people become economically self-supporting, a humble beginning was made this year with distributing: 3 sewing machines to 3 persons, 2 handlooms to two poor weavers and a ricksaw to a ricksaw-puller. Two night schools for adults and 3 primary schools were started in different villages.

*Milk-feeding programme:* 450 card-holders received 1,62,846 units of milk provided by the U.S.C., Canada.



# SWAMI NIRVANANANDAJI MAHARAJ

## AN OBITUARY

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing away of Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, at the Belur Math on 6 April 1984 at 1.08 a.m. He was 94. For the last few years, he was leading a quiet life at the Belur Math.

Born in May 1890 in Tulasar, Palang District, Bangladesh, his pre-monastic name was Girindra Kumar Sen. From his school days, he was a nationalist and a freedom fighter. He became an active member of the Anushilan Samiti, an anarchist movement, which relied on revolutionary ideas of overthrowing the foreign government from India. It was customary in those days for the members of the Samiti to read Swami Vivekananda's literature to get inspiration from him. Young Girindra also read Swamiji's works, but soon discovered the spiritual source of Swamiji's life, namely, Sri Ramakrishna and his *Kathamrita*, which he read avidly. There he learnt about Swami Brahmananda, and an intense desire gripped him to meet the Swami, who was looked upon as the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna and who was then President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Swami Brahmananda was then staying in Varanasi at the Home of Service. Girindra went and met his future *guru* there in 1912. He joined the Ramakrishna Order at the Sevashrama in Varanasi the same year.

It is said that in order to avoid the harassment of the alien police force and the persecution of the foreign government because of his earlier political connection, Girindra assumed a new name 'Surya' at the time he joined the Order. That name stuck, and he was till the end popularly known as 'Surya Maharaj'.

He was initiated into Sannyasa by Swami Brahmananda in 1916 and served his *guru* for many years. In 1926, when the first Working Committee was formed, soon after the First Convention of the Math and Mission the same year, he was nominated one of its members. He was elected a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1929, and made the Treasurer of the twin organizations. He was also Manager of the Belur Math for several years. In 1966, he was elected Vice-President of the Order, which position he continued to occupy till the end.

He was head of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Bhubaneswar, from 1931 to 1939. While at the headquarters, he also organized several relief works of the Order.

In the year 1956, he accompanied Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj, the then General Secretary, to the U.S.A. and visited the Centres of the Order in that country as well as those in the United Kingdom and France. On their return journey, they visited Geneva, Rome, Athens, and Cairo.

For nearly two decades, he initiated a number of spiritual aspirants, both men and women, young and old. They all feel orphaned by his demise. The Ramakrishna Order has sustained a loss which is irreparable. His absence has created a vacuum which will take a long time to forget. We pray that the departed soul may rest in eternal peace.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *Linguistic Surgery on the Scripture*

The U.S. National Council of Churches (N.C.C.) has released the first volume of the new translation of the Bible authorized by it. This august religious body consists of 32 Protestant and Orthodox denominations with 40 million members. The purpose of retranslating the Bible is to provide readings for worship services that are free from 'male bias' in Scripture that militant feminists have been complaining about for a decade.

The translation has been done by Rev. Victor Roland Gold of California's Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary with the assistance of four male and six female scholars one of whom is a Roman Catholic nun. The panel's new book *An Inclusive Language Lectionary: Readings for Year A* rewrites 209 passages from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible, also sponsored by the N.C.C. The other volumes are scheduled for 1984 and 1985. The N.C.C. committee contends in its Introduction that 'male chauvinism' is obvious not only in the extant English translations but even in the original Greek and Hebrew texts. The committee believes that readings from the old versions of the Bible exclude half of these who attend church services—the women.

It was the concept of God the Father that posed the toughest problem. The radical feminists' suggestion of 'God/ess' was unthinkable and 'parent' seemed too impersonal. So the committee came out with the solution, 'God our Father (and Mother)' alternating with '(Mother and) Father'. Among the other novel changes the following are noteworthy. 'Son of God' becomes 'Child of God'; 'Son of Man' becomes 'Human One'; 'Lord' is replaced with 'Sovereign' or 'Sovereign One'. To give a sample: Mathew 11:27 becomes in the new translation, 'All things have been delivered to me by (God) my Father (and Mother): and no one knows the Child except God, and no one knows God except the Child and any one to whom the Child chooses to reveal God'. This is not all. The translators have even made additions to some of the existing passages. For instance, in verses that mention Abraham alone they have brought in Sarah, Abraham's wife, and even his concubine Hagar!

Though the new translation seems to bring the Bible closer to Indian conceptions of the Deity, it raises fundamental questions. A scripture can be regarded as Revelation only if it is based on eternal, universal and immutable truths. If these truths could be altered through semantic surgery, the scripture would lose its validity. In this context it is good to remember Swami Vivekananda's dictum: 'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth, or die.'

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