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FEBRUARY 1986

# 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



*Editorial Office*

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat  
Dt. Pithoragarh 262524, U.P.

*Publication Office*

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Phone : 29-0898



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# Prabuddha Bharata

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FEBRUARY 1986

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# Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 2

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

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## INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS\*

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

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।  
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥

Act in unison. Speak in unison. Let the understanding in your minds be in unison. Be like the ancient gods who accepted their parts of the offering in harmony.

*Rg-Veda 10.191.2*

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी  
समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।  
समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः  
समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥

Let your chanting be in unison. Let your meeting be in unison. Let your minds with their thoughts be in unison. I repeat for you a common prayer. I offer for you a common oblation.

*Rg-Veda 10.191.3*

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।  
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥

May your willing (*ākūtiḥ*) be in unison. May your feelings (*hṛdayāni*) be in unison. May your thinking (*manah*) be in unison. Thus may there be beautiful harmony among you !

*Rg-Veda 10.191.4*

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\* The last hymn of the *Rg-Veda* is concluded here. The spirit of harmony so forcefully expressed here has always remained the distinctive feature of Indian culture. With this fitting finale, the annotated translation of selected passages from the *Rg-Veda*, which has been appearing in these columns during the last seven years, comes to an end.

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The realization of the highest ideal needs the undivided consecration of one's whole life, and this becomes possible only when self-alienation is eliminated from different levels of one's being. This is the theme of this month's EDITORIAL.

In the second and concluding part of her article AMERICAN WOMEN ENCOUNTER VEDANTA Ann Myren reviews Swami Vivekananda's early years of stay in America and examines the premises on which Swamiji based his high appreciation of American women. This insightful study will be of much use to research workers and general readers in understanding the socio-cultural situation of American women at the end of the last century.

In NON VIOLENCE IN THE VEDAS Dr. Sushma Virendra and Dr. Bhupesh Chandra of Meerut argue that Vedic yajñas were peace offerings and that the Vedas do not sanction animal sacrifice.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar M.A. (Triple), Ph. D., former principal of several colleges and now Fellow of the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Calcutta, touches upon several important points in his comparative study of LIBERATION IN ZEN AND VEDANTA.

ADHAR LAL SEN by Swami Chetanananda, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., is a brief biographical study of one of the brilliant lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

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## THE UNDIVIDED LIFE

(EDITORIAL)

### *Undivided consecration*

If we want to succeed in any enterprise we must give undivided attention to it. Undivided attention means undivided life, the consecration of one's whole life. The goal we aim at may be immediately attainable or it may take several years; in either case, as long as the goal remains unrealized, we have to give our whole life to it. This is one of the most important lessons we learn from the lives of great men, men who reached the height of excellence in their fields of activity: art, science, business, politics, spirituality. Michael Faraday the scientist, Thomas Edison the inventor, Joshua Reynolds the painter, Rodin the sculptor, Albert Schweitzer the

medical missionary, Francis of Assisi the saint—the life of every one of them was a total consecration to his chosen goal.

We have to first of all consider whether the goal we have chosen is the one that our hearts really aspire for, and whether it is worth all the sacrifices that it demands. Once we are convinced that it is, we should convert our entire life into a means for the attainment of that goal. If this total dedication is necessary for all worthwhile endeavours in secular life, it is all the more necessary in spiritual life. An anecdote recorded by Sister Devamata in one of her books vividly illustrates this point. A Christian missionary in Madras asked a merchant who was carrying offerings to a wayside shrine of Ganeśa, the Hindu god



reputed to be the remover of obstacles and bestower of prosperity: 'Why do you worship that stone idol? Why don't you worship the one true God?' The merchant replied: 'That wouldn't be honest... To worship the highest form of Deity I would have to cease to care for money. I would have to give up shop-keeping and devote my whole life to Him...'<sup>1</sup> The merchant's reply showed not only his sincerity but also his sound pragmatic sense. For anything short of the dedication of one's whole life will not be the worship of the one true God and will bring precious little of the treasures of the Spirit. Had that Hindu merchant turned to the worship of the one true God, he would have become as greedy of spiritual wealth as he had formerly been of worldly wealth. The missionary was probably a Protestant and was not aware of the famous Jesuit maxim, *Sis spiritualis avarus et mercator*, 'Regarding spiritual wealth be greedy like a merchant.'

The question is often asked: why is it that some people even after practising Japa and meditation for a number of years do not succeed in realizing the light of the Spirit? In most of these instances the chief cause of failure usually turns out to be lack of undivided application. The Gītā states: 'The intellect of a persevering aspirant is one-pointed, whereas the intellect of the unpersevering is many-branched and aimless.'<sup>2</sup> The same idea has been expressed with characteristic simplicity by Sri Ramakrishna: 'If you want sixteen

annas' worth of cloth, you must pay sixteen annas.'<sup>3</sup>

It is generally seen that as long as a person leads a thoroughly worldly life he has only one chief (though not high) aim in life—as for instance, to become the director of a company, the chairman of a department, the president of an institution, the principal of a college, a sportsman, a musician or a writer—is able to attune his whole life to the pursuit of that goal, and succeeds in deriving some satisfaction from that. However, when he turns to spiritual life, he finds his life divided between two mutually incompatible goals. Owing to this conflict of aims he is unable to intensify his effort in either direction. Lack of intensity reduces the zest for life, produces feelings of ineffectiveness and boredom, and prevents the person from attaining success in worldly life as well as spiritual life. His condition may be described as *ito naṣṭaḥ tato bhraṣṭaḥ* ('Deprived of this place, denied that place.')

### *Bhāber ghare curi*

All people may not have an acute awareness of the contradictions in their lives, and many of those who have it usually attribute them to external causes and 'obstacles'. The real cause is internal and may be best described as self-alienation.<sup>4</sup> Self-alienation means the estrangement of one part of the soul from another part. In most people the ego is cut off from its own foundation, the inmost Self or *pratyagātman*, or from Universal Life or Virāt. It is not external circumstances or other people that are preventing us from having one-pointed dedication to our chosen ideal in

1. Sister Devamata, *Days in an Indian Monastery* (La Crescenta, California: Ananda Ashrama, 1927) p. 70

2. व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुहनन्दन ।

बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥

Gītā 2.41

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974) p. 578.

4. The psychological and social aspects of 'self-alienation' were discussed in the Editorial of *Prabuddha Bharata* October 1983.

life but divisions in the soul. Official responsibilities, unfavourable living conditions, or unsympathetic relatives may cause temporary distractions, but these external factors will not deflect us from the main quest if the inner life is integrated.

Self-alienation is a form of spiritual loss which affects all parts of the soul—feeling, will and reason. Sri Ramakrishna has described this loss as ‘theft in the sanctum of the heart’ (*bhāber ghare curi*). Patañjali has referred to forgetfulness as theft (*sampramoṣa*) of the object of experience from the mind.<sup>5</sup> By ‘theft’ Sri Ramakrishna meant not mere absent-mindedness but something deeper. The cream of human feelings is love, and the heart is its sanctum. By ‘the room of feeling’ what Sri Ramakrishna meant was this inner sanctum. In spiritual life the heart serves as the altar where love is transformed into the flame of aspiration, *vyākulatā* (yearning) as Sri Ramakrishna called it. All the motive power for the pursuit of the highest ideal is provided by aspiration. It is the diversion of aspiration to lower ideals and the fulfilment of worldly desires that Sri Ramakrishna referred to as ‘inner theft’. When this happens, no amount of meditation and japa will produce spiritual awakening. That is why Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘If there is theft in the sanctum of the heart, all effort will be unfruitful’.<sup>6</sup>

### *De-alienation or re-integration*

The heart is the centre where self-alienation takes place. It is therefore in the heart-centre that de-alienation or re-integra-

tion of the self is to be effected. For this the very first step is to detect and understand the self-alienation process through meditation and keep a watchful eye on this process at all other times of the day. We must be constantly aware of the workings of the ego: how it separates itself from the foundational reality and operates independently in a sensual, selfish or arrogant way. This constant inward alertness is described as ‘guarding the heart’ in some Christian ascetical works like the *Philokalia*. Buddha taught it as the discipline of fixing the memory (*samyak smṛti* or, in Pali, *sati*) which later on developed into specialized techniques called *samprajanya* and *vipāśyana* (*vipassana* in Pali).

In Vedānta this inward alertness is achieved through the process of *viveka* or discrimination. *Viveka* is generally described as discrimination between the real and the unreal. But when this is done by an unawakened ego, it often becomes a form of spiritual romance or one of the several types of self-deception that the ego indulges in. That is why many people, in spite of reading about Maya and talking about the unreality of the world, continue to remain slaves of greed, hatred and other passions. A beginner in spiritual life should exercise his faculty of discrimination primarily to understand the process of self-alienation and to reduce his egoism and selfishness. This kind of introspective discrimination will lead to ego-awakening, and the awakened ego will be able to discriminate correctly between the Real and the unreal.

Introspective discrimination should be supported by an integral view of life. There are two ways of looking at the world: analytic or atomistic and synthetic or integral. In the analytic view life is seen as a vast stream of countless entities, living and non-living, mutually compatible or antagonistic. The self is only one among

5. Actually Patañjali defines memory as the absence of this ‘theft’. See, *Yoga-sūtra* 1.11

6. ভাবের ঘরে চুরি থাকলে কিছুই হবে না।

*Sri Sri Ramakṛṣṇadever Upades* (Bengali) Compiled by Suresh Chandra Datta (Calcutta: Mitra Brothers, 1388 B.S.) p. 176.



these types and consciousness is a rare and incidental part of existence. According to this view, human effort should be primarily directed to controlling nature. This view underlies Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya philosophies in India and science in the West.

In the synthetic view life is seen as one single organism with all its members projected and sustained by the Supreme Self. Consciousness is the fundamental reality. All problems are understood in their relation to one's own self and their solutions are sought primarily through the transformation of consciousness. This view is held mainly by the Vedānta system of philosophy based on the Upaniṣads. This is the view that can help us in ending self-alienation and in re-integrating our lives.

However, mere intellectual acceptance of an integral view is not enough; it must be lived; it must become a vision, an experience; one's whole life must conform to it; everything that one does, speaks or writes must be an expression of it. When this happens, objects, persons, events and experiences acquire a new meaning as parts of a grand scheme of cosmic evolution in which one's own spiritual evolution is included. It is the self that gives meaning to everything; anything that cannot be integrated into the self becomes meaningless. Love is not a mere emotion; it is a self-to-self contact. A married person may be faithful to his wife but, if he is unable to integrate her self into his, marriage will lose its ultimate meaning for him. Work is not mere activity, it is the expression of the soul's creativity. A person may do his work sincerely but, if it is not integrated into his self, it will appear meaningless to him. For a person whose inner life is well integrated, everything from the mighty sun to the lowly moss, from the Vedas to newspapers, from meditation to sweeping the floor, every person he meets, every

experience including sorrow, hardship and humiliation has a certain ultimate meaning in *his* life. He cannot do anything unless its meaning is clear to him, that is, unless he succeeds in integrating it into his own self. For him his room or house is not a mere dwelling place, but the external representation of his mind. The books that he owns are not merely sources of information, but the externalized records of his experiences. The people whom he loves become images of his own self. There is nothing superficial or casual about him as his whole life is anchored in the innermost Self.

Every aspect of human life is to be regarded as a department of the Self. The development of an integral life is not possible if there exist divisions and incongruities in these departments of the Self. It is therefore necessary to identify those areas of life where self-alienation takes place and to find out how it can be eliminated.

#### *The sacred and the secular*

The most commonly felt form of contradiction in life is the conflict between the sacred and the secular. The popular notion is that temples, churches, Gurudwaras, Ashramas and other places of worship are sacred, whereas offices, factories, banks, shops, schools and other places of work are secular; prayer, meditation, puja, reading of scriptures etc. are holy activities, whereas eating, washing clothes, writing accounts, business transactions, nursing the sick, reading newspapers etc. are worldly activities. Some people, especially sincere spiritual aspirants, feel this distinction between the sacred and the secular so acutely that they feel miserable when they are engaged in the so-called worldly activities. But they overlook the fact that the distinctions are almost wholly

subjective and man made; they have no validity per se. Activities such as farming, construction of buildings, keeping accounts, etc. which are generally regarded as secular cease to be considered so when they are carried out in monasteries and other religious institutions. In the larger scheme of divine creation these distinctions between the sacred and the secular do not exist.

The secularization, or desacralization as Abraham Maslow called it, of social life that is a characteristic feature of modern life has been to a great extent caused by the spread of western materialism. The roots of western culture lie in the Judeo-Christian tradition in which there is a wide separation between the sacred and the secular. In the Old Testament holiness is said to belong to God alone. Since God is a Person, wholly different, transcendent and fenced in by his unapproachable holiness, everything else that is not directly connected with God is profane, unholy.<sup>7</sup> When science and philosophy eliminated the concept of God from western culture, the idea of sacredness too got eliminated from it.

In Hindu culture there has never been a sharp demarcation between the sacred and the secular. There are some sects and schools of thought in India which do not believe in any kind of God, but this has not led to the vulgarization of life. Even those who believe in a personal God do not look upon the world as unholy, for God is immanent in it. The Advaitins look upon the world as *Māyā* but not as unholy, for it has Brahman for its substratum. In

7. *Agios*, the Greek word for 'holy' used in the Old Testament, implies separation or isolation. Holiness is a gift of God to man. Cf. 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God is holy.' *Leviticus* 19:2. For a study of this theme see I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharaism and the Gospels*, The Library of Biblical Studies (New York: KTAV, 1967).

the Upaniṣads the universe is described as consisting of vibrations of *Prāṇa* which itself being an emanation of Brahman. In the Tantras the universe is regarded as a product of *Śakti* which is the dynamic aspect of Brahman. In the *Brāhmaṇa* and *Saṁhitā* portions of the Vedas, the whole universe is regarded as an altar in which an eternal cosmic sacrifice (*yajña*) is going on continuously. What is common to all these views is the concept that 'the Supreme Self fills all space like a huge immovable tree', as one Upaniṣad puts it.<sup>8</sup>

If all space is filled by the Supreme Self, then everything is holy and every activity is a sacred rite. However, a mere intellectual understanding of this concept is not enough. If we want to eliminate the distinction between the sacred and the secular from our lives, if we wish to convert our work in factories, banks, offices and laboratories into spiritual techniques, we have to fulfil three conditions. The first condition is the development of an attitude of acceptance. We should give up all hostile or negative thoughts about life and people, and should accept all experiences, good and bad, as essential for our own growth and progress. We should look upon goodness, purity and joy as constituting the main stream of Universal Life, but should understand evil, sin and sorrow as coexisting with this main stream for the fulfilment of some universal purpose. We should not interfere too much in the natural course of events, should try as far as possible to live in harmony with our environment, and should allow freedom to everyone to grow according to his or her law of being.

The second condition is the possession of an impersonal outlook on life. This

8. वृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येक  
स्तेनेदं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम् ।

*Mahānarayana Upaniṣad* 12.13. *Śvetāśvatara* 3.9



means following a holistic approach to the world unconditioned by passionate feelings, prejudices and egoistic clinging to persons. It also means the ability to enter into a kind of mystic communion with Nature. Those who do not have this inherent ability (which cannot be artificially created or acquired) should at least have an artist's view of human beings, plants, animals, the sun, stars, mountains and rivers, or a philosopher's way of looking at everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, or a scientist's grasp of time, space and causation.

The third condition is the conversion of one's whole life into a *yoga* and *yajña*. Spiritual life is not an escape from the demands and responsibilities of life. Its most fundamental principle is the identification of the inner Self with the Supreme Self, which is attained by the transformation and transcendence of ego-consciousness. As this inner transformation proceeds, one's outer life becomes a participation in the great cosmic sacrifice of the Divine consisting of creation, sustenance and dissolution going on all over the universe continuously. The inner process of transformation and identification is *yoga*, and the outer process of participation is *yajña*. It is by coupling *yoga* and *yajña* that we can eliminate the distinction between the sacred and the secular.

The whole universe is in a state of flux, and everything from the blazing sun to the smallest bacterium owes its existence to the great cosmic sacrifice of the Divine so vividly described in the *Puruṣa-sūktam* of *R̥g-Veda*. From the Universal Life we continuously receive food and knowledge which undergo certain changes within us and return to Universal Life in the form of the work we do. This cycle of processes constitute *yajña*. Nobody can retain with him more than what is necessary for the bare maintenance of his life; everything

else must be returned to the universal stream as work. Whether we know it or not, the life of every one of us is a part of this eternal sacrifice. When we consciously participate in it, our whole life becomes a *yajña*. It is because we are either unaware of the sacrificial nature of life, or do not consciously participate in the cosmic sacrifice of the Divine, that we live in bondage and suffering—says the *Gīta*.<sup>9</sup>

The important point is conscious participation. How to do it? By transforming our inner consciousness. This is done through *yoga*. Thus *yoga* and *yajña* are inseparably connected. One of the key concepts in the *Upanisads* is that *yajña* has consciousness as its basis. The whole cosmic sacrifice is sustained by universal consciousness or Brahman. Every activity is a sacrificial act and every organ in the body derives its power from Brahman. The *Taittirīya upaniṣad* brings out this idea forcefully as follows:

The goodness that is in speech, the acceptance and maintenance that are in breathing, the action that is in hands, the mobility that is in feet, the expulsion done by the rectum, the plenitude that rains bring, the power of the thunderbolt, the fame that is in cows, the light that is in stars... (all these are powers of Brahman. Therefore) meditate on Brahman as the support.... meditate on Brahman as great.... meditate on Brahman as mind.... meditate on Brahman as worship.... meditate on Brahman as the Veda.... meditate on Brahman as destruction.<sup>10</sup>

9. यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।  
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥

*Gīta* 3.9

10. क्षेम इति वाचि, योगक्षेम इति प्राणापानयोः,  
कर्मैति हस्तयोः, गतिरिति पादयोः, विमुक्तिरिति पायो  
... तत् प्रतिष्ठेत्युपासीत ... तन्मह इत्युपासीत ...  
तन्मन इत्युपासीत ... तन्नम इत्युपासीत ... तद्-  
ब्रह्म इत्युपासीत ... तद्ब्रह्मणः परिमर इत्युपासीत ।

*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.10.2-4

In the Upaniṣads the distinction between sacred and secular activities is hardly found. All individual activities are parts of a universal dynamism derived from Brahman. Unfortunately, later Vedantic teachers rejected *yajña* as unnecessary for a spiritual seeker and dumped it into the limbo of the so-called Karma Kāṇḍa division of the Vedas. This removal of *yajña* from the sacrificial stream of Universal Life paved the way for the conflict between the sacred and the secular in modern Hindu society.

One point, however, should not be forgotten in this context. The removal of the distinction between the sacred and the secular does not at all mean the removal of the distinction between morality and immorality, between virtue and vice, between truth and falsehood. There is a universal moral law known as Dharma governing both the sacred and secular aspects of human life. The compelling power of *yajña* itself is derived from this law, and any violation of it will destroy the sacrificial nature of life and will bring its own retribution sooner or later.

#### *Monastic life and lay life*

Another area of contradiction related to the above is the conflict between the two ways of life, monastic and lay. This conflict occurs chiefly in those people who come into close contact with monks and monasteries. Lay people have two problems. One of these is the belief that a householder's life is full of distractions and temptations and it is difficult to attain spiritual enlightenment through it. This, however, is a wrong assumption. The real difficulty is the absence of intense aspiration and the courage and strength to pursue the spiritual ideal. What drains away aspiration and strength is not normal life or work but guilt feelings, repression, needless worries,

emotional involvements in the affairs of other people, and a sense of one's own worthlessness which a life of indulgence usually brings.

The other problem is the absence of a clear-cut spiritual ideal for householders. In India Sannyasa has come to be regarded as the highest ideal and the Sannyasin is alone believed to attain *mukti* or liberation. It is not widely recognized that the ancient Aryan ideal was that of the Ṛṣi and that the Sannyasin ideal became dominant only after Buddha popularized monasticism as an unavoidable path to Nirvāṇa. The Ṛṣi ideal does not see monasticism and social involvement as alternatives but as one unified path. The sages we meet in the Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa were mostly Ṛṣis, some of whom lived in forests training disciples, others lived in cities as kings' counsellors or even as kings themselves. This ancient ideal had for long remained eclipsed until Sri Rama-krishna revived it through his great life and raised it to its pristine glory. Sri Rama-krishna has revealed the spiritual significance and possibilities of the householder's life and has restored its dignity, though he has also imposed upon it a spiritual responsibility which is in no way less than that of the monk.

Present trends show that the Ṛṣi ideal is going to be the dominant religious ideal in the coming centuries. While monks are getting more involved in social service activities, there is a growing awareness among householders about the need for bringing into their lives something of the monastic spirit of renunciation, self-control, contemplation and common life. This trend is seen particularly in the West where a number of small communities of married and unmarried people have come up committed to holistic life, rejection of competitive success, spiritual fulfilment and collective sharing of work and



experience. A few monastic congregations have been functioning within the Anglican Church and some Protestant theologians now speak of 'open monasticism' for all people. The Catholic Church itself has started thinking of 'the monk as a universal archetype' (the theme of a symposium held in the U.S.A. in 1980).<sup>11</sup> The archetypal monk can be none other than the R̥ṣi.

The real conflict is not between monastic life and lay life but between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* which may be translated as self-indulgence and self-denial respectively. *Pravṛtti* is the search for sense pleasure, wealth, fame, power; *nivṛtti* is the search for Truth, God, the Supreme Self. The R̥ṣi ideal should not be mistaken to be a synthesis of these two paths. No, these two paths cannot be combined; you can't have the cake and eat it too.

#### *The individual and the society*

Another field of self-alienation is man's instinctive movements in relation to the human society of which he is a part. The triangle of three primary instinctive movements, *rāga* (love), *dveṣa* (hate) and *bhaya* (fear), forms the basis of all human actions and reactions. The ego remains trapped in this triangle.

To love is a natural quality of the soul. To love oneself is an expression of one's true self-existence. Ideally, to love other people should also be an equally natural tendency and there should be no conflict between love for oneself and love for one's neighbours. In fact in primitive social life, still surviving among the tribals, such a conflict is seldom found. The tendency to regard self-interest as antagonistic to social

interest or vice versa is generally found only in civilized societies. This is partly caused by socio-economic factors like the enormous multiplication of material objects of enjoyment. The means of producing the goods by feudal and industrial methods have led to inequality in the sharing of these objects of enjoyments. For centuries politicians have been trying in vain to solve this socio-economic problem, although social thinkers from Plato to Karl Marx have suggested several nostrums. These efforts at solving the problems of man by changing the whole society are beyond the scope of the present discussion. We are here chiefly concerned with the existential causes of the conflict between love for oneself and love for others and also between self-assertion and humility.

*Selfishness and selflessness.* Selfishness, self-centredness, self-love—all these are treated as synonymous and as a crime against one's fellow men. Most of the scriptures of the world condemn it in no uncertain terms and uphold selflessness as a divine virtue to be followed by all. Yet, people continue to live selfishly. There are of course people who claim to be selfless and are engaged in several forms of social service. If their claims to selflessness were true, then, according to the infallible law of Karma Yoga, they would have attained transcendental spiritual illumination, but this is seldom seen. Clearly, there is more in selflessness than meets the eye and that true selflessness is difficult to acquire.

The popular notion that selfishness is the same as self-love and selflessness is the same as love for other people is too simplistic to be true. The truth, paradoxical as it may seem, is that intense selfishness and ostentatious selflessness have both self-hatred (*atmavidveṣa*) as their common base. What differentiates the two attitudes is the direction that self-hatred takes. In

11. See, Raimundo Panikkar, *Blessed Simplicity—The Monk as Universal Archetype* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982).

the selfish person his self-hatred is projected outwards, upon other people; whereas in the selfless person it is projected inwards upon his own self. The selfish person does not love himself but appears to be so because he projects his self-hatred towards other people. The selfless person too does not love himself, but in his case his self-hatred is directed towards himself; as a result he appears to love other people, but really he does not. Both selfishness and selflessness are autocorrective psychological mechanisms to hide or compensate for lack of true love for oneself. It is self-hatred that usually manifests itself as hatred of other people or as a hostility towards life in general. People who have self-hatred in their hearts sow seeds of discord and discontent wherever they go; even when they are engaged in acts of selfless service. Self-hatred makes some people cling to men and women passionately; in some others it appears as renunciation and austerity; in some others it appears as agnosticism and atheism. Yet another manifestation of self-hatred is lust. The primary purpose of sex is procreation and to cement the marital bond. Indulgence in sex beyond or without this purpose is a form of self-destruction. Maya is so powerful that it keeps people self-deluded in many ways.

What causes self-hatred? There may be several socially determined causes like guilt feelings, wrong self-image acquired in childhood, parental neglect, introjection of parents' attitudes (the mutual dislike of husband and wife gets 'introjected' or incorporated into the minds of their children as self-hatred), failures in life which produce a sense of worthlessness, and social oppression.<sup>12</sup> But the ultimate

cause, clearly observed in spiritual life, is the separation of the ego from its foundation in the true Self, the Atman. This self-alienation is partly a result of the awakening of the luminous Self itself in comparison with which the ego appears dark and defective. Awareness of this difference first manifests itself as a highly sensitive conscience. This often leads to an acute awareness of one's evil tendencies, inadequacies, desires and weaknesses. In order to escape from this sense of inner oppression, people take recourse to various stratagems which may be useless activities like gossip and reading fiction or useful activities like social service.

Service rendered as a means of escape from oneself may appear to be selfless, but it will not cure the disease of selfishness, for both are based on self-hate. If we want to love others truly we should remove self-hatred from our souls. For this self-knowledge is necessary. The roots of the ego in the Atman must be discovered and the higher and lower selves should be integrated. When self-hate disappears from the soul, love for other people becomes a natural state, an extension of one's love for oneself. Then alone will selfless service become loving service.

In Judeo-Christian tradition selflessness is seen as a dialogue between *I* and *thou*; in Marxism selflessness is seen as the participation of *I* and *thou* in the dialectics of social life; in Vedantic tradition selflessness is seen as the integration of *I* and *thou* into the transcendental *We*. In Vedanta selflessness and love are seen not

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based on suppression, exclusion and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image they are made to represent by those who are dominant'. 'There is ample evidence of inferiority feelings and of morbid self-hate in minority groups.' *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968) pp. 58, 303.

12. About the effects of social injustice the well-known contemporary psychologist Erik H. Erikson says: 'Therapeutic as well as reformist efforts verify the sad truth that in any system



as virtues to be acquired from books and teachers but as the natural qualities of the human soul which are to be manifested. That is why an illumined person is called *ātmārāma*, 'one who delights in the Self'. What does this term mean? It means, 'one who has gone to the source of all love'. In order to love others you must have an abundant supply of love within you. Most people fritter away their love-energy through attachments, and therefore their hearts are empty. Nobody loves a person whose heart is empty of love. The heart of an *ātmārāma* is an unceasing source of love; everyone is eager to partake of that love, and so he is loved by all. Simply by 'delighting in his Self', by going to the source of all love, he fulfils the eternal Law of Love.

*Egoism and humility.* Another area of conflict in man's relationship with the society is the polarity of egoism and humility. Egoism is usually condemned and humility is praised, but very often these are found to be two sides of the same coin. We have seen that hate (*dveṣa*) is the basis of the polarity of selfishness and selflessness. Similarly, fear (*bhaya*) constitutes the basis of both egoism and false humility. Here by 'fear' is meant not the legitimate fear of road accidents, burglars, poisonous snakes, contagious diseases etc, but existential fear. Existential fear is the deep sense of insecurity inherent in man owing to the awareness of his existence as a separate individual cut off from universal life. Sartre and other existentialist philosophers have shown that a civilized man's existence has four attributes: individuality, freedom, choice, dread. This existential insecurity gets intensified by parental neglect, deprivation of love, unhappy experiences of childhood and unfavourable socio-economic conditions, which also produce feelings of inferiority. Some people react to these feelings of

insecurity and inferiority (of which they are seldom conscious) by becoming aggressive, arrogant or snobbish; whereas in some other people the reaction takes the form of timidity, submissiveness or false humility. Thus egoism and false humility (much of the humility we come across in life is of the false variety) are the ego's two different methods of defence against existential fear. Both are signs of inner weakness.

The root cause of insecurity and inferiority is, again, the alienation of the ego from its true foundation, the Atman, and also from universal life. These feelings will disappear when a person realizes that his true nature is the Atman which is immortal, free and the source of all power, knowledge and beauty. When the ego capsule breaks, individual life communicates freely with universal life. A person who has overcome self-alienation and alienation from universal life becomes free from fear and sense of inferiority. Such a person has no need to pretend to be more than or less than what he really is. He is neither egoistic nor humble: he just remains as he really is. Instead of egoism and humility he has one unique characteristic: great inner strength.

#### *Real life and unreal life*

A sizable part of modern man's life is unreal. The more sophisticated it is, the greater its unreality. Unreality in life is of two types. One type is to be unrelated to the realities of the world around us. Most people cannot stand the reality of the outer world too long. They have to spend some time in the unreal world provided by novels, magazines, cinema, radio and day dreaming—not to mention the 'real' dreaming in sleep.

The other type of unreality is the lack

of authenticity of a person's own life. When we deal with people we cannot fail to notice that the lives of many of them are not authentic; they are not really what they appear to be. There is a wide disparity between their inherent dispositions, tendencies, capacities and creative impulses, on the one hand, and their outer appearance, behaviour pattern, talk and actions, on the other. A person may work as an engineer or a teacher but his real aspiration may be to become a musician or a politician. A person may appear to be calm and cheerful while within him a storm may be raging. There are people whose behaviour, gestures, manner of talking etc. are an imitation of somebody whom they admire. There are others who have no clear-cut views, opinions or independent judgement but just drift with the social group of which they are a part.

Lack of this kind of existential authenticity becomes a serious problem in spiritual life. If a person's japa, meditation, theoretical knowledge gained from books, and outer religious observances have little connection with his inner life and tendencies, his spiritual practices will not bear the desired fruit.

Unauthentic life does not mean hypocritical life. Most of those whose lives are unauthentic, especially spiritual seekers, are sincere in their efforts. But they have repressed their real inborn tendencies, desires and views and shut them out of real life so effectively that they are either not conscious of them or refuse to recognize their existence. The major difficulty is the denial of one's past, the attempt (usually unconscious) to forget one's past. The roots of the ego lie in one's past experiences, and unless the past is integrated into the present life, the latter will continue to be unreal. It needs courage to face one's past and integrate it into one's present

life. It needs great courage to lead an authentic life.

### *Sādhana and yoga*

What is *sādhana*? Sadhana is the flow of one's *whole life* towards a spiritual ideal. This, however, is not the answer that suggests itself to many people. They usually think of *sādhana* in terms of the four yogas—Karma yoga, Rāja yoga, Bhakti yoga and Jñāna yoga—which are identified with certain techniques described in the books on them. These techniques in themselves have no value. They acquire meaning only when they are connected to real life. Real life is total life. The purpose of yoga techniques is to give a higher direction to one's whole life. If this primary purpose is forgotten, if yoga is regarded only as the following of a certain technique of meditation, repetition of mantra, etc, yoga will only create divisions in one's life instead of integrating it.

The problem becomes more complicated when we regard the four yogas as totally different techniques. Then the four yogas become four ways of dividing one's life. This is a wrong understanding of yoga. There is actually only one yoga as there is only one life. But yoga can be applied at different levels of this one life, and the four yogas are only one yoga applied at four different levels of consciousness. This understanding has to be put into practice in order to convert one's whole life into *sādhana*.

In conclusion it may be pointed out that all attempts at leading an integrated life and converting one's entire life into an undivided consecration will be only partially successful until the higher unifying spiritual centre known as *buddhi* or *dhī* awakens. For this awakening intense aspiration and divine grace are prime requisites.



## AMERICAN WOMEN ENCOUNTER VEDANTA—II

ANN MYREN

The Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 signalled a new age. And it was to this Exposition that Swami Vivekananda came for the Parliament of Religions. Swamiji was at the Fair for the seventeen days that the Parliament was in session, and he had previously visited the Fair for twelve days when he first came to America in July of 1893. This gave him ample opportunity to explore the Exposition, take in all the exhibits, develop a feeling for Western society, and come into contact with the mood and fact of industrialization that was sweeping the Western world. We must bear in mind that the Swami had the capacity to understand a culture to its very roots and to sense the direction which a society must take in order to assure its growth along the best and most elevating lines. This was an exceedingly important juncture in American history, the closing of the frontier and the shift toward urban and industrialized society. It was for this new society that the Swami, in his role as prophet, came to America, and it was to the new independent women that he spoke.

When Swami Vivekananda first encountered large numbers of American women at the World's Fair, he probably had a new experience, having come from a society where women lived very circumscribed lives within the strict confines of their own families. Here at the Fair, women were free to move about, to participate, to lead, to create, in general, to put to use all of their talents and character so long in the making in frontier America.

In several letters Swami Vivekananda commented on the independence of American women. He was struck by the

ability of American women to act without direction or interference from men. This was a quality that he appreciated very much and it is easy to see why. In spiritual life there cannot be any dependence on another. The realization of the Atman or Self, the goal of spiritual life, frees one absolutely from relationships and hence from dependence. And as Swamiji always sought in society the values that were most conducive to spiritual growth, it is not surprising that he appreciated the independence of American women. Thus when he came to the Fair, he must have been struck by the Woman's Building which housed the various exhibits of women from all the states in America as well as from all over the world. The exhibits included an extensive display of women's writing and the chronicles of the literary clubs which flourished everywhere, women's handicrafts from the past and present, a hospital and nursing display, art, sculpture, and music, women's organizations, political, scientific, and educational displays as well as other exhibits.<sup>26</sup> Besides these exhibits devoted to women, there was an organization called the World's Congress Auxiliary, and although the motto of the Congress was 'Not Matter but Mind; not Things but Men', there was a woman's branch, separate but equal, which was solely under the direction of women who commissioned women speakers.<sup>27</sup> All of these activities and displays were organized by women under the leadership of Mrs. Potter Palmer.

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26. Jeanne Madeline Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Academy, 1981). A detailed account of women's part in the Columbian Exposition.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 523

However, it should be noted that at the very beginning of the planning for the Fair, the issue of whether the women's exhibits should be integrated with the men's came up. The feminists held out for integration, but lost, so a separate woman's branch was organized. This proved to be a stunning demonstration of the capacities of leadership, planning, and organization of Mrs. Palmer and her assistants. One cannot help but wonder at the Swami's response when he came into contact with the work of these women. Always concerned about the condition of women in India who were so very dependent, he must have been fairly dazzled by these active, independent women, who were at the same time 'kindhearted and pure'.<sup>28</sup>

The Swami became acquainted with Mrs. Potter Palmer and refers to her in a letter as 'President of the World's Fair'<sup>29</sup> when in fact she was President of the Board of Lady Managers, which organized the entire woman's project, including a competition for the best design of a suitable Woman's Building by a woman architect, and the arrangement of exhibits within the completed building. He also referred to Mrs. Palmer as the 'chief lady of the United States', a position which she, in fact, filled at least in Chicago at the time of the Fair.<sup>30</sup> And although a wealthy woman, high in society, she was interested in women's issues and actively promoted several women's causes. For example, she worked for protective legislation for women through the Civic Federation to which she was recruited by the eminent social worker, Jane Addams, also a member of the Federation. Furthermore, she helped to

organize the Chicago millinery workers.<sup>31</sup> Swamiji continued in the same letter, 'She [Mrs. Potter] is much interested in raising the women of the world and is at the head of a big organization for women.' Whether the 'big organization' is the Board of Lady Managers or some other group is not known. Her activities on behalf of women were varied, and she expressed her ambitions to Swamiji. He wrote in the same letter, 'She wants to work apart from all religions to ameliorate the conditions of women all over the world. This would also be helping me a great deal in this country.'<sup>32</sup> Work for the general improvement of the condition of women would be a help to the Swami who wished to raise women spiritually, knowing that changes in the social condition of women would follow. Later, in August 1894, the Swami had another letter from Mrs. Palmer in which she asked to see him. From this it is clear that their relationship extended beyond the Chicago Fair.

Of course, Swami Vivekananda had come to the Fair to participate in the Parliament of Religions, which opened with a procession of delegates, including Mrs. Potter Palmer, President of the Board of Lady Managers, and Mrs. Charles Henrotin, Vice-president.<sup>33</sup> Aside from the rather obvious participation of these two important women in this ceremonial activity of the Parliament, women were not active in large numbers. Of the many, many lectures given over the seventeen days of the Parliament, only about a dozen were by women. Several of the speakers were notable, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, advocate of women's rights, Rev. Antoinette

28. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1956), Vol. 6, pp. 252-3 (Hereafter referred to as CW with the date of edition, volume and page.)

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-7.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Weimann, *Fair Women*, p. 594.

32. CW, 1956, 6:256-7.

33. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 3rd. edition, 1983), Part One, p. 77.



Brown Blackwell, one of the first women ordained as a minister in the United States, and Frances E. Willard, the organizer of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Each of these women indicated in her lecture that women should be given equality, not only social but spiritual as well. Later in 1894 in Boston Swamiji heard Frances Willard and Julia Ward Howe lecture, and he probably met them. Also at the Parliament a talk written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the initiators of the women's movement, was read by Susan B. Anthony, suffragist leader, because Mrs. Stanton could not attend. In this speech, 'The Worship of God in Man', she advocated a "religion of humanity" in which men and women will worship what they see as divine in each other.<sup>34</sup> Mrs. Stanton represented a current in the times, equality and liberality, a current that Swamiji alluded to when he said, 'In *America alone* there is that something in the air which brings out whatever is best in every one.'<sup>35</sup> Swamiji found in America a vigorous, democratic spirit, a spirit which made people open to new ideas and especially to the idea of the divinity of humanity.

The 'gracious and kind lady',<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Palmer, entertained the members of the Parliament at the Woman's Building.<sup>37</sup> At this reception Swamiji gave a brief talk on the condition of women in India, a topic of interest to Mrs. Palmer. And nine days later the 'Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean' of September 23rd reported a talk by the Swami on 'Women of the East' arranged by Mrs. Palmer and given at the

Women's Building on Jackson Street, Chicago.<sup>38</sup> We can see that Swamiji mixed freely in Chicago Society and had great latitude for his work, and that he must have formed a very clear picture of a certain type of American women. Both Mrs. Potter's own character and activities as well as her knowledge of American women undoubtedly caught the Swami's interest and helped him to understand the problems of women.

Swami Vivekananda's earliest recorded comments in America about women occurred in the talk which he gave at the Women's Building on Jackson Street. In the short newspaper account of this lecture there is a sentence of profound significance, indeed of such significance and meaning that it may be considered central to all of his other judgements of American women. It is, in fact, the core of his prophetic message to American women. Although he was speaking about women of the East in this talk, he addressed all women, whether of the East or West, when he said, 'The idea of perfect womanhood is perfect independence.'<sup>39</sup> Now, to understand the significance and implications of this statement, we must first examine Swamiji's experience with his own family in India. Next we must understand the relevance of his spiritual experience to the condition of women, and finally, look more deeply into his observations about American women.

In his personal life Swami Vivekananda came to understand, by observing the experience of his mother, what dependence on another person could mean. Bhuvaneshwari, his mother, an extremely strong, regal woman, was completely dependent on her husband, Vishwanath, for the financial support of her family. This, of course, was the custom in all Indian families of

34. John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions* (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), Vol. II, pp. 1234-6

35. CW, 1956, 6:363

36. CW, 1955, 8:319

37. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda*, Part One, p. 96

38. CW, 1955, 8:198.

39. *Ibid.*

that era. For example, Bhuvaneshwari had inherited some property from her father. And when her uncle-in-law, Kaliprasad, who had raised Vishwanath and was the head of the family, came and demanded the deed to that property, she, after an entire day of his demands, threw the deed at him and he took it. Later her husband asked why she had given him the deed and she replied, 'I could not stand the insult'.<sup>40</sup> Vishwanath acceded to his uncle's request. Later the uncle mortgaged the property, completely ignoring the legitimate right of Bhuvaneshwari and took the property out of her control forever.

An even more critical situation developed after Swami Vivekananda's father died. He had provided a very good living for his family, but had spent freely. The result of his easy-going attitude toward money was to leave his family penniless. However, they still had their house. But even this was not secure from the family of Kaliprasad, Vishwanath's uncle. Although by this time Kaliprasad had died, his wife brought a suit against Bhuvaneshwari to get her family home away from her. This naturally led to a feud and to the nearly absolute destitution of Swami Vivekananda's immediate family. Swamiji, then known as Naren, went through a period of severe trial when he could not find any means to support his family. He was at the same time longing to renounce the world. Naren saw the case through the courts, and finally it was decided in favour of his mother. Ironically, this same aunt became impoverished a few years later, and it was Swami Vivekananda who then gave her a lump sum of cash.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to these incidents there were other occurrences in Naren's family that

undoubtedly influenced his thinking about the dependence of women. When his mother was young and living in the joint family, she had for a while only one sari to put on. The other daughters-in-law had plenty. Finally Vishwanath complained to his uncle and things improved, but after that, as we have seen, there was a constant effort to get Vishwanath's wealth away from him or from his family. Although these circumstances were very difficult for the family to bear, there was a tragedy which tells us even more about the position of women. Swami Vivekananda's sister, Jogenbala, committed suicide in 1890. It seems that she had failed to adjust to the family into which she had been married. She had been the sister of whom Naren had been specially fond. Sister Nivedita traces '...some part at least of his burning desire for the education and development of Indian women to this sorrow'.<sup>42</sup>

We can imagine how the demeaning treatment that his mother had received affected Naren both as a boy and as a young man. He was a proud youth, powerful, active, idealistic, passionately devoted to his mother and family. And although severely limited by the customs of the times, the women of Naren's family showed talent in writing, advanced social attitudes, interest in education, and in general, a tendency toward more independence than was then customarily accorded to women. Naren's suffering at the time of the lawsuit was intense. He could not find a job to support his family, and he saw his own mother the victim of unscrupulous relatives. He must have been on fire from shame and helplessness.

40. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda, Patriot-Prophet* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1954), p. 140.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

42. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Calcutta, 1918) p. 77. quoted in Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 297.



Is it any wonder that when speaking in America about Indian women, he would state that 'The idea of perfect womanhood is perfect independence'. For his mother perfect independence would certainly have been a most desirable state.

However, it was not only his experience with his family that stimulated this idea of independence. The source of his revolutionary idea was his spiritual experience, *nirvikalpa samādhī*. Swamiji knew the real nature of humanity, that women and men were in themselves complete. The individual person as the Atman is the whole reality and depends on neither anyone nor anything for meaning, joy, knowledge, or being. The individual woman within her nature has perfect completeness and hence no need for dependence. It is the task of the individual person to manifest this wholeness, this completeness, this independence in life. The position of women throughout the world from the beginning of history reveals the revolutionary nature of Swamiji's statement that 'perfect womanhood is perfect independence'. Most societies have always been organized so that women have been either dominated by men or dependent on men or both. But Swami Vivekananda, prophet that he was, stated a new revolutionary goal for women based on their real nature, the Self.

The Swami's frequent experience of family life in America, contributed to his ideas about American women. One of his earliest experiences, which no doubt deeply affected him, was his being taken in by the Hale family. Living with the Hale family, Swami Vivekananda had a joyful and carefree experience of American family life. Mr. Hale, whom Swamiji called 'Father Pope', Mrs. Hale, affectionately known as 'Mother Church', their two daughters, a son, and two nieces made up the family. Not having to earn a living, both of the Hale girls were engaged in charitable work.

The McKindley nieces had to support themselves, however, and ran a kindergarten which was something of an innovation in those times. Mary Hale and Isabelle McKindley were both talented, beautiful, and very high spirited, although Swamiji remarked that teaching kindergarten had taught Isabelle patience and forbearance.<sup>43</sup> The atmosphere of the family and their attitude toward the Swami are indicated by an incident recorded in *Swami Vivekananda in the West*. It seems that Swamiji wanted to learn how to roller skate, so he did. He strapped on the skates and circled around the halls and rooms on the expensive carpets until he had learned all he wanted.<sup>44</sup> Obviously there was an air of freedom and fun in the Hale household with its four young women. Although Mary and Isabelle were the more vital of the girls, Swamiji loved the two Harriets also. He advised them all, wrote to them over the years, and counselled them about life. It was about the Hales that he wrote, 'I scarcely find a family so highly pure and kind...Oh, how wonderfully kind they are!'<sup>45</sup> Later Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale in 1899, 'Mary, it is curious your family, Mother Church and her clergy, both monastic and secular, have made more impression on me than any family I know of. Lord bless you ever and ever'.<sup>46</sup>

Here in the Hale family Swamiji saw the effect of affluence, the comfortable standard of living provided by Mr. Hale, and the effect of earnest endeavour by women, the McKindleys' kindergarten. He saw that work by women did not lower their social position as Isabelle was sought after socially for her beauty and 'scintillat-

43. CW, 1955, 8:389-90

44. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda*, Part One, p. 282.

45. CW, 1956, 6:291.

46. CW, 1955, 8:474.

ing' conversation.<sup>47</sup> For women in the 1890's a considerable degree of independence was socially acceptable. The Swami responded to the independent, free American women with a message of yet greater independence, spiritual independence.

It is through Swamiji's close contact with American women that he was able to formulate a message specifically for them. Thus his experiences of various types of women are important. In the Hale family he met independent, happy, free young women with whom he had a brotherly relationship. The Swami left Chicago and went to Detroit where he met Mrs. John J. Bagley who became his loyal friend.

Mrs. Bagley was born in 1833 and thus grew up during the period when the 'cult of true womanhood' dominated. Purity and piety unquestionably exerted their influence on her, but she seems neither submissive nor overly domestic, and excelled as a hostess. Her travels when young may have 'contributed to her liberal outlook'. Married in 1855 to a manufacturer and businessman, who later became governor of Michigan, Mrs. Bagley became one of Detroit's most influential women. She was known for her charitable activities and her intellectual and cultural interests; she was a member of the Board of Lady Managers of the World's Fair. When Swamiji went to Detroit he was introduced into society by Mrs. Bagley, who arranged for him to give lectures. He also was a guest in her house. It was through her that he met the important, educated and influential people of Detroit, where he was very well received. However, as time passed, opposition developed to the Swami and his ideas, and as a result his character was slandered.<sup>48</sup> However, Swamiji did

not stand alone; Mrs. Bagley and her daughter Helen in letters to friends refuted this slander. Even the Hales received a slanderous letter, which they threw into the fire. This letter warned Mr. and Mrs. Hale not to let their daughters associate with the Swami.<sup>49</sup> But Swamiji's close American women friends were above all loyal to him in spite of the women who slandered him. These slanderers the Swami ironically characterized as 'the Christians of Christians!' In America in the nineteenth century there was considerable feeling against foreigners, and there was also religious prejudice. These feelings sometimes resulted in violent clashes. The Swami was completely aware of these feelings and prejudices. But his American women friends stood by him loyally. He wrote saying, 'They stood my friends even when their own priests were trying to persuade them to give up the "dangerous heathen"—even when day after day their best friends had told them not to stand by this "unknown foreigner", may be, of dangerous character'.<sup>50</sup>

Another very loyal friend of Swami Vivekananda's was Mrs. Ole Bull, or as Swamiji called her, Dhira Mata, steady Mother. It was at her house in Cambridge that Swamiji found a much needed rest at the end of 1894. Sara Bull, the widow of the famous violinist Ole Bull, was a cultured, intellectual, and spiritual woman. It was at her house that the Cambridge Conferences were held. These conferences included such eminent persons as William James, psychologist, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, author and editor, Josiah Royce, philosopher, and Jane Addams, social reformer. Swamiji made Mrs. Bull's

<sup>47.</sup> Burke, *Swami Vivekananda*, Part One, p. 281.

<sup>48.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 451 and also Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 402.

<sup>49.</sup> Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 490.

<sup>50.</sup> CW, 1956, 6:248.



home his east coast headquarters.<sup>51</sup> And his friendship with Sara Bull was long, enduring, and of great importance to both his Eastern and Western work. His trust in Dhira Mata was absolute as can be seen in a letter he wrote to her. 'Through the mercy of Ramakrishna, my instinct "sizes up" almost infallibly a human face as soon as I see it, and the result is this; you may do anything you please with my affairs, *I will not even murmur...* Not only for the help you have given me, but from my instinct...I regard you as my mother and will always abide by any advice you may have for me, but only *personally*.'<sup>52</sup> Swamiji's Dhira Mata worked faithfully for Swamiji for the rest of her life. She was distinguished by her generosity, loyalty, and devotion to the Swami and the ideals of Vedanta. In knowing Sara Bull, Swamiji experienced some of the very best qualities of American womanhood.

Probably one of Swami Vivekananda's most unusual and original disciples was Madame Marie Louise, who later became Swami Abhayananda. Her background is interesting; a naturalized American citizen, she was a socialist and materialist, a friend of the anarchist Emma Goldman, and an advocate of the liberation of women. Given the highest vow, that of *sannyasa*, she directed classes for the Swami, but later in 1895 formed an independent 'Advaita congregation.' And although she always worked along spiritual lines after meeting the Swami, she did move away from Vedanta.<sup>53</sup> But the important thing about

Madame Marie Louise is that she was an American, a woman, and she was given *sannyasa* by the Swami. In bestowing upon her the highest vows, he saluted the future greatness of American women.

Only a few of the women that Swamiji knew have been discussed here. Beyond this small group it is clear that he met wonderful, fine, energetic, cultured, pure, intellectual, and spiritual women. He established very close relationships with them. In so doing he was able to assess the character of American women and to see their strength.

One of the strong points that Swami Vivekananda noted and appreciated was independence in women. An adept social observer, he detected a new current in American society when he pointed out that since the Civil War women did not marry unless they were truly in love. Otherwise they were unwilling to give up the rights they had acquired for marital dependence.<sup>54</sup> Several years later, in 1901, he wrote to one of his closest American friends, Miss Josephine MacLeod, that the days were gone when the natural ambition of a woman was to 'climb up' by leaning on a man. And then he said to Joe, as he called Miss MacLeod, 'You shall be great without the help of any man'.<sup>55</sup> Here the Swami foretold the coming changes in society which is, of course, the business of a prophet. The greatness which Swamiji spoke of was no doubt spiritual realization, independent endeavour and accomplishment.

Swami Vivekananda also found another cause which contributed to the advanced position of American women, and that was the attitude of many men toward women. In 1893 the Swami wrote, 'Do you know who is the real "Sakti-worshipper"? It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent

51. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 3rd. edition, 1984), Part Two, pp. 186-7.

52. CW, 1956, 6:309.

53. Carl Thomas Jackson, *The Swami in America: A History of the Ramakrishna Movement in the United States, 1893-1960*, xeroxed, (Ph. D. diss, University of California, Los Angeles. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979), Part 1, pp. 150-3.

54. CW, 1974, 7:471.

55. CW, 1955, 8:554.

force in the universe, and sees in women the manifestation of that force'. He goes on to say that many men in America view women in that light. And that it is because men treat 'their women' well that women are 'so prosperous, so learned, so free, and so energetic.'<sup>56</sup> About a year later he commented again on women when he wrote to his brother disciples about the relationship between American men and women, '[men] look with veneration upon women, who play a most prominent part in their lives. Here this form of worship has attained perfection.' And although the men may be responsible for the society which allows women such a high position, he warns that the men are about to be cornered by the women.<sup>57</sup> One reason Swamiji thought American society superior to Indian society was that women had such high position, freedom and independence, and thus he called them advanced.

Swami Vivekananda's appreciation of American women is thought provoking. He found women to be 'goddesses'.<sup>58</sup> He was 'struck dumb with wonderment at seeing the women of America'. He saluted them in Sanskrit saying that "Thou art the Goddess of Fortune, Thou art the supreme Goddess, Thou art Modesty.... The Goddess who resides in all beings as

Power."<sup>59</sup> He saw 'many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children are beyond expression' and many 'pure daughters and maidens'.<sup>60</sup> He found present in America women with culture and education, but most important of all, 'spirituality in the highest sense'.<sup>61</sup> It seems that the hope which Swamiji held for American women was boundless, and that the promise of American women was truly great. He saluted American women saying that they were like Lakṣmi in beauty, Sarasvati in virtues; they were the Divine Mother incarnate and one could attain perfection by worshipping them. And he further said that if he could 'raise a thousand such Madonnas, Incarnations of the Divine Mother' in *his* country before he died, he would die in peace.<sup>62</sup> Yes, Swami Vivekananda saw the very best in American women, he paid them the highest tribute. Prophet that he was, will his prophetic vision of spiritual, creative, energetic women as a strong, beneficial current in society be realized?\*

(Concluded)

56. CW, 1959, 5:26.

57. CW, 1956, 6:272.

58. CW, 1959, 5:51.

59. CW, 1956, 6:252-3.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

63. \*The author will explore the theme further in a two-part sequel to be published later on—Ed. P.B.

No life will be a failure; there is no such thing as failure in the universe. A hundred times man will hurt himself, a thousand times he will tumble; but in the end he will realize that he is God.

—Swami Vivekananda



# NON-VIOLENCE IN THE VEDAS

DR. SUSHMA VIRENDRA and DR. BHUPESH CHANDRA

Ahimsa or non-violence is a concept or an ideological tool today. In ancient India, especially in the Vedic age, it was not a mere concept but a natural feature of human behaviour which required a person to abstain from all acts injurious to any form of life. To many of us it may be astonishing to hear that the concept of Ahimsa is as old as our civilization itself. The Vedic hymns contain numerous references to this thought. No doubt, the concept and definition of Ahimsa underwent various changes during different periods of Indian history. It was during the sixth century or so that the idea of non-violence gained currency in a way which had never before existed.

In the Vedas Ahimsa means reverence for life. The most dominant thought of Vedic hymns is the desire for a long, happy and prosperous life. Vedas propound that life is the most valuable thing to be preserved and as such, most of the Vedic hymns are devoted to invoking the favour of gods who are regarded as being capable of bestowing happiness and prosperity on the virtuous and of warding off wickedness and malevolence. The Vedas do not sanction any consideration for the wicked. Even hostility is there considered heinous and those who put hindrance on the path of happiness of human beings are condemned in no uncertain terms. However, the expression of such adverse feelings towards evil doers does not imply the infliction of injury or harm upon the wrong doer. Rather, it only reflects the keen ethical sensibilities of the Vedic intelligentsia and their desire to infuse moral feelings in each and every heart.

Our Vedic seers dreamt of a society which would be entirely free from pain and

suffering. The Vedas declare that such an ideal state of society can only be achieved if people followed religiously the path of righteousness throughout their life. Dharma as propounded by the Vedas, is nothing but Ahimsa in practice. In the simplest sense Dharma means to enjoy the world without encroaching upon the interests of others. It furnishes the value of self-control in human life and fosters the feeling of universal goodness and love amongst living beings. It is said in the *Mahābhārata* that a person without Dharma is no better than animals.<sup>1</sup> This view is shared by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* which describes the process of handing over a child to his teacher as *paśu yajña* because it is only after getting proper training in moral precepts that an individual becomes worthy to be called a human being. Righteousness was thus held to be the supreme law of life and the world. The Aryan outlook did not stand for an acquisitive society but for a *dhārmic samāj* which allowed men to make wealth without contravening the principle of Dharma. The Vedic ideal for mankind was restated by the Gita as 'concern for the welfare of all'.<sup>2</sup> Vedas proclaim that service to man, gods, sages, animals and ancestors which constitute the *pañcamahāyajñas* or Five Great Sacrifices are the means to attain unending happiness in life here and hereafter. These social codes of conduct enable mankind to work for the common good.

1. घर्मण हीनः पशुभिः समानः ।

*Mahābhārata,*  
*Śāntiparvan, 294.29*

2. सर्वभूतहिते रताः ।

*Gītā 5.25 ; 12.4*

The Vedic concept of *karmaphala* further strengthens the value of goodness in human life. A man of good morals who never bears malice towards fellow beings earns high merit. On the other hand, injurious thoughts and actions bring woe to the doer. Hence the law of *karmaphala* certainly aims at discouraging people from doing evil actions thereby making the society pure and clean.

The concept of *ṛta*, as nurtured in the Vedic *samhitās*, advocates eternal truth and uprightness. The *Yajur-veda* states: 'Prajāpati established clear distinction between truth (justice) and untruth (injustice) and therewith ordained people to stick to the right way of living'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, *ṛta*, as a representation of moral order, works for the maintenance of unity on earth. It is opposed to evil and thus a synonym to *satya*. *Satya* or truth in personal conduct is to live in harmony with this cosmic order; to live out of harmony with it is falsehood (*anṛta*) and evil. The various gods like Varuṇa and Ādityas were regarded as guardians of the moral law of *ṛta* and prayers for forgiveness for guilt were offered to them.

The virtue of Ahimsa occupied a pivotal place in the Vedic concept of cosmic moral order. The desire for universal happiness and peace is invoked at many places. For instance, the *Rg-veda* states: 'May the sky and earth, invoked early, give us blessedness; may the atmosphere be a blessing to us. May herbs and forest trees be a blessing to us. May the victorious Lord of heaven bring us blessedness.'<sup>4</sup> The

*Yajur-veda* has delivered the same message in more clear words: 'May peace reign supreme in heaven, in the whole of intervening space and earth; may the waters, herbs, trees, all the gods, Brahma, and the entire universe, be in peace and harmony. And may that peace be mine.'<sup>5</sup>

The above hymns clearly indicate the desire of the Vedic people to secure peace and non-violence in the universe around them.

Moreover, the Vedas exhort us to have harmony in our hearts, unanimity in our minds and freedom from hatred in our behaviour. The *Rg-veda* ends with this famous exhortation: 'Common be your prayers, common be your goal, common be your mind and deliberation; common be your conversation, common be your worship. Let your resolve be common, may you be of one heart, may you have the same mind and may you all happily agree.'<sup>6</sup> The *Atharva-veda* (19.9.4-6) draws our attention to the regulation of speech, mind and senses as the best of measures to attain this universal harmony and amity.

The last *mandala* of *Rg-veda* glorifies the spirit of liberality and friendliness to a very high degree. An individual should not live for himself alone. One should share one's food and drink with others also. To help others in distress, and to give alms to the poor and needy was

शं नो ओषधीर्वनिनो भवन्तु शं नो

रजसस्पतिरस्तु जिष्णुः ॥

*Rg-Veda* 7.35.5

5. द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिरापः  
शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः । वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः  
शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः । सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः ।  
सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥

*Sukla Yajur Veda* 36.17

6. *Rg-Veda* 10.191.3-4. (See 'Integral Vision of Vedic Seers' in this issue of *P.B.*)

3. दृष्ट्वारूपे व्याकरोत् सत्यानृते प्रजापतिः ।

अश्रद्धामनृते दधाच्छ्रद्धां सत्ये प्रजापतिः ।

*Sukla Yajur Veda* 9.77

4. शं नो द्यावापृथिवी पूर्वद्वृती शमन्तरिक्षं दृश्ये

नो अस्तु ।



thought to be extremely auspicious. Amity towards all the members of the family, neighbours and even towards unknown people is deemed essential. We should exert ourselves for the welfare of all living beings—human as well non-human. Thus our Vedic seers exhort us to develop a society in which there would be no jealousy, no hostility and no injury. The *Yajur-veda* expresses this sublime outlook as follows: 'May I look upon all beings with the eye of a friend. May we look upon one another through friendly eyes.'<sup>7</sup> This represents the highest form of non-violence attained by any society in the world.

The Vedas do not allow any kind of injury to living beings for personal gain. Killing of animals in sacrifices is nowhere prescribed in the Vedic *samhitās*. It was certainly a non-Vedic exercise. However, some of the commentators like Sāyaṇa and Mahīdhara and, of course, the Western scholars of modern times misinterpreted the Vedic hymns by distorting the meaning of original words through etymological jugglery or fanciful guess-work. The credit for unfolding the true sense of Vedic hymns goes to Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati who interpreted the hymns on the basis of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇinī (the most authoritative work on Sanskrit grammar) and thus opened our eyes to their true meaning and implications.

How ruthlessly the noble teachings of the Vedas have been dealt with by modern scholars can be well understood by comparing the interpretations of Indologists like Roth, Weber, Grassman and Oldenberg with that of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. For instance, a hymn in the *Yajur-veda* which speaks about the noble duty of gurus and guru-patnis of Vedic

times to purify the bodies and souls of their pupils has been taken by some scholars as an illustration of the ritual of killing animals in sacrifices. 'I purify your speech, I purify your vital air, I purify your eye, I purify your ear, I purify your navel, I purify your genitals, I purify your excretory organ, I purify your conduct.'<sup>8</sup> The hymn verily speaks of the high responsibility which ancient teachers were entrusted with. In clear words it states that the teachers and their wives should teach their pupils how they may keep their bodies clean and healthy and become men and women of good conduct. According to Western scholars, these words are addressed to the animal at the time of sacrificing it. This interpretation is not convincing at all. Firstly, how can one help anyone, man or beast, to purify itself after depriving it of life? Secondly, there is no sense in saying to an animal that it would be helped to purify its speech by listening to the chanting of the Vedas. Any effort to uplift the character of a creature of lower species is certainly ridiculous. It is, however, quite possible that the Vedic hymns were later misused by the priestly class in order to convince people about the scriptural validity of the manifold rituals which they associated with the original *yajña*. A good number of historians have accepted such distorted meanings and have projected the history of ancient India in a wrong perspective.

Likewise, the famous wedding hymn of *R̥g-veda* (X. 85.13) has been dealt with as an approval of cow slaughter.

7. मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे ।

मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥

*Sukla Yajur Veda* 36.18

8. वाचं ते शुन्धामि प्राणं ते शुन्धामि  
चक्षुस्ते शुन्धामि श्रोतं ते शुन्धामि  
नाभिं ते शुन्धामि मेद्रं ते शुन्धामि  
पायुं ते शुन्धामि चरित्रांस्ते शुन्धामि ॥

*Sukla Yajur Veda* 6.14

*Sūryāya vahatuḥ prāgāt savitā yamavāsrjat  
Aghāsu hanyante gāvo arjunyoh pari  
uhyate<sup>9</sup>*

With reference to *aghā*, Macdonell and Keith, the two well-known indologists, state that cows were slain in the lunar month of Maghā (when the moon is in the constellation Maghā). According to them, 'It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the reading of *R̥g-veda* was deliberately altered (from Maghā to *aghā*) because of the connection of the slaughter of kine with sin (*aghā*)—possibly too, with a further desire to emphasize the contrast with *aghnyā*, a name for cow.' This statement itself shows that killing of cow was undoubtedly taken as sin in the Vedas. Swami Dayananda took *gāvo* as a synonym of *sūrya* and as such translated the hymn in a totally different manner.

Yāska in his etymological dictionary called *Nirukta* interprets *adhvarah* (usually meaning 'sacrifice') as *ahimsrah* or non-killing.<sup>10</sup> According to Swami Dayananda, in the *R̥g-vedic* hymn (5.51.2) in which the word *adhvarah* is used, all righteous people are exhorted to take care of their country and thus ensure happiness and safety to all.<sup>11</sup> This shows the keen concern of Vedic seers for the welfare of all living creatures.

In *Atharva-veda* (7.1.5) those who perform *yajña* (usually translated as 'sacrifice') by killing animals are called fools. A hymn in the *Sāma-veda* ordains

9. Sāyana's interpretation of the hymn is as follows: 'Sūrya's bridal procession sent by Sāvitrī has advanced. The cows are whipped along in the lunar month of Maghā. She (Sūrya) is borne (to her husband's house) in the lunar month of Arjuni' (also called Phalguni). Note that Sāyana interprets *hanyante* (kill) as 'tādyante' (beat with sticks)—Ed. P.B.

10. ष्वरतिहिंसाकर्मा तत् प्रतिषेधो निपातः अहिंसः ।

11. ऋतधीयत आगत सत्यधर्माणो अध्वरम् ।

अग्नेः पिबत जिह्वया ॥

*R̥g-Veda* 5.51.2

that no living being is required to be slain for getting the favour of divinities. Gods should be worshipped by the constant chanting of sacred mantras.<sup>12</sup> Vedic sacrifices were intended to be beneficial to all living beings. It did not require the destruction of life.

Sacrifices were actually meant for the purification of the human soul. By performing the *Sautrāmanī* sacrifice the sacrificer hoped to absolve himself from all the sins he had committed either in the village or in the forest or in the assembly, such as cutting trees, killing animals, telling lies or physically injuring the gods, Śūdras or Arya (Vaiśya).<sup>13</sup> This clearly shows that by performing such a sacrifice the defaulter accepted his guilt and made amends for its expiation. In the *Yajur-veda* it is repeatedly said that milk, curd and ghee should be offered to gods in the sacrifice.<sup>14</sup> We are exhorted to perform *yajña* for the acquisition of harmlessness to all animate and inanimate creatures.<sup>15</sup> A performer of the *Sattra* sacrifice who donates his soul as a gift in sacrifice, is sure to get heaven. Such a person who identifies himself with others<sup>16</sup> will naturally become a devotee of Ahimsa.

In the Brāhmanic period of the Vedic age the cult of sacrifice became dormant in both the social and religious levels of social life. The original purpose of sacrifice was also gradually lost as various kinds of unspiritual rituals (including the killing of animals) were attached to the original *yajñas*. But the scriptures made tireless efforts to counteract such wrong practices by repeatedly stating that one could get the desired favours even without indulging in any untoward action like killing

12. *Sāma Veda* 2.9

13. *Vājasaneyā Samhita* 20.17

14. *Ibid* 21.29 ; 35.17

15. *Taittirīya Samhita* 3.1.9

16. *Vājasaneyā Samhita* 40.7



of beasts and so on. The virtue of kindness and sympathy is well emphasized in a passage in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* which states that man, horse, ox, sheep and goat are not fit for offering. Instead, the rice-cake is said to be the proper offering in all kinds of sacrifices including even the *paśu yāga* (animal sacrifice). Here the rice-cake has been taken as the victim which is killed; the chaff as the hair, the husk the skin, the polishing the blood, the pounded grains and fragments the flesh, and whatever gives sustenance as the bone. This *Brāhmaṇa* boldly states that one who sacrifices with rice-cake is equivalent to the man who sacrifices with the sap of all animals.<sup>17</sup> *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* confirms the idea that sacrificial cake is the substitute for animal sacrifice by which the sacrificer redeems himself from his debt to the gods.<sup>18</sup> *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* uses the word *aśva* for *agni* which is ordained to be appeased through fearless and non-injurious *Sāma-veda* hymns.<sup>19</sup>

In the later Vedic period the Upaniṣads gave a philosophical turn to the cult of sacrifice. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* opens with an exposition of *Aśvamedha* sacrifice as the cosmic form or *Viśvarūpa* of the Supreme Being.<sup>20</sup>

The story of *Śunaḥśepa* deserves special attention here.<sup>21</sup> We cannot take the episode as an evidence of human sacrifice because the narrative speaks strongly against the callousness of *Ajīgarta* who for the sake of a handful of money agreed to give his own son to become a victim in the sacrifice. *Śunaḥśepa* reproaches his father in bold words saying that such a heinous sin is inexpressible and even *Śūdras* do not commit such a brutal act. The *Śatapatha*

*Brāhmaṇa* refers to the performers of *puruṣamedha* as huntsmen, slayers of men and similar other obnoxious personalities.<sup>22</sup> This evidently shows that *Puruṣamedha* was actually meant for the eradication of wickedness and to make the earth free from fear and treachery. Dissuading violent ways of action, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* inculcates: 'As hunger ceases through food, thirst through water, so evil can be checked through goodness only.'<sup>23</sup> All this proves that the emphasis was gradually shifted from the gods to human beings. In the place of high adoration to gods, the cultivation of moral qualities were forcefully stressed. Virtues like truth, non-violence, chastity and forbearance henceforth came to be regarded as essential for the happiness and uplift of the individual and the society.

The practice of *pancamahāyajñas* (the Five Great Sacrifices) bestow further strength to the inference that Vedic sacrifice did not involve the killing of living beings. Such *yajñas* stood for the ideal of reverence to all kinds of life, human or animal. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* states that a person who devotes himself to acts of benevolence with no conceit procures eternal happiness; it matters little whether he performs material sacrifices or not.

Last but not the least is the spirit of selflessness or renunciation found in Vedic literature which strengthens further the principle of *Ahimsa*. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* exhorts us to 'maintain yourself through detachment'.<sup>24</sup> The Vedas do not preach renunciation of the world or action. They allow us to enjoy life but with a spirit of restraint and detachment. In other words, we should not attach ourselves to the

17. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 2.8 (6.8)

18. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.2.3.5

19. *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.2,18

20. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.1.1-2

21. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 7.17 (33.5)

22. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (5) 13.6.2.1

23. *Ibid* (4) 10.2.6.19

24. तेन ह्यवतेन भुञ्जीथा ।

worldly objects to such an extent that it may breed ill feeling in our heart. An individual who cultivates such a spirit will not feel remorse or arrogance when he is denied pleasures, and thus he will make himself free from crookedness and violence.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* condenses the whole of ethics in the syllable *da* which stands for self-control (*dama*), charity (*dānam*) and compassion (*dayā*).<sup>25</sup> By the observance of these three virtues people

25. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 5.2.3

become freed from craving, greed and anger. When Buddha asked us to put out of our hearts the monstrous fire of infatuation, greed and resentment, he was emphasizing the three virtues already enjoined by the Upaniṣads.

From the above discussion, although brief, it is clear that the concept of non-violence that has become a part of India's political creed originated in the Vedas and developed all through the centuries. It has always remained the hallmark of Indian civilization.

## LIBERATION IN ZEN AND VEDANTA

DR. SATCHIDANANDA DHAR

Liberation, Nirvana or *mokṣa* is an experience which is very difficult, almost impossible to be conceived of by any person other than the experienced. This is why the Buddha was silent about the state of Nirvana, though in some of his discourses he hinted at it. A common man may not have the experience of liberation, but he has the experience of the opposite state of bondage—the limitations which he faces in every walk of life. He may, however, conceive of a state of experience which is quite the reverse of his experience of bondage: boundless freedom, freedom from the fear of birth, decay and death. This is the nearest he can come to conceiving the state of liberation.

Zen is a sect of Mahāyāna Buddhism which was established by Bodhidharma in 520 A.D. in China. 'Zen' is the Japanese equivalent of the original Chinese 'Ch'an' which itself was derived from the Sanskrit '*dhyāna*'. Bodhidharma was an Indian Buddhist monk who was a brahmin by birth and was well versed in the brahmanical philosophy in his pre-monastic life. He

was further influenced by Nāgārjuna, the great master of Mādhyamika School of Buddhist thought. Like Bodhidharma, Nāgārjuna was also a brahmin by birth and by his education in brahmanical literature in his pre-monastic life. It is therefore reasonable to assume that both Nāgārjuna and Bodhidharma were immensely influenced by the doctrines of Vedanta contained in the Upaniṣads.

The concept of liberation in Zen, in our opinion, is almost like that described in the Upaniṣads. Zen, though a branch of Buddhism, is akin to the Upaniṣads in its general outlook on the world and on the inner self. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Gautama the Buddha himself reasserted some of the ways for the realization of the highest Truth taught by the seers of the Vedas. He says:

Our subjugation to time, to samsāra, is due to avidyā, unawareness, leading to infatuation, depravity, āsava. Ignorance and craving are the substratum of the empirical life. From avidyā we must rise to vidyā, bodhi, enlightenment. When we have vipassanā, knowledge by seeing,



clear perception, we will acquire *Samatā*, unshakable calm. In all this the Buddha adopts the Vedic criterion of certainty which is rooted in actual knowledge which is attained by immediate experience, direct intellectual intuition of reality: *yathā-bhūta-nāna-dassana*.<sup>1</sup>

Zen Buddhism points to the direct experience of the Reality. The essence of Zen Buddhism is that every human being is already liberated: every one is a Buddha by nature. 'Look into your inner self and you will realize that you are none other than the Buddha, the Perfect.' Liberation in Zen is to realize one's own nature, which is nothing but Buddhahood. *Avidyā* or ignorance is the chief obstacle to realizing our Buddhahood. When ignorance is removed, we shall realize that our inner self and the external world are but one and the same. Zen aims at the discovery of this unity of the individual with the external world. When we are under the regime of *avidyā*, there is diversity, there is sorrow and suffering. Zen-liberation takes place when duality merges into unity.

Nāgārjuna's commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā* had an influence on Bodhidharma, the founder and First Patriarch of Zen Buddhism. The principal object of the *Prajñāpāramitā* text is to establish that the so-called external objects, qualities, attainments, even Nirvana, Buddha and Bodhisattva, are non-existent in the highest reality (*Paramārtha*). When an aspirant withdraws his mind from the unreal world, he will attain the bliss of enlightenment, Buddhahood. Like the seers of the Upaniṣads, Nāgārjuna accepted two kinds of truth: one is the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) and the other is the

highest truth (*paramārtha-satya*).<sup>2</sup> Liberation is the realization of the ultimate reality. This state is beyond expression, as neither our mind nor our speech can reach it. This is why the Buddha was silent about Nirvana. According to Nāgārjuna, the Buddha did not preach anything about the ultimate Reality (*Śivah*) which is undisturbed by origin and decay and is the cessation of all conceptions and descriptions.<sup>3</sup>

The phenomenal world, though unreal and non-existent has an apparent existence. This apparent existence is experienced by the ignorant, just as two moons are seen by persons having disease of the eye. When the disease is cured, one can see the real moon, which is one. The Upaniṣads also hold the same view as regards *avidyā* and its removal after attainment of the non-dual nature of Brahman. The state of Nirvana is expressed by Nāgārjuna in the following verse:

'Nirvana is that which is neither to be eschewed nor to be attained; neither is it subject to destruction, nor it is eternal; it has neither origin nor decay.'<sup>4</sup>

After the removal of *avidyā*, one will find no distinction between the phenomenal world and the Reality.<sup>5</sup> The Upaniṣads

2. लोकसंवृतिसत्यं च सत्यं च परमार्थतः ।

*Mūla-Mādhyamika-kārikā* 24.8

3. सर्वोपलम्भोपशमः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवः ।

न क्वचित् कस्यचित् कश्चिद्धर्मो बुद्धेन

देशितः ॥

Ibid 25.24

4. अप्रहीणम्-असंप्राप्तम्-अनुच्छिन्नम्-अशाश्वतम् ।

अनिरुद्धम्-अनुत्पन्नम् एतन्निर्वाणमुच्यते ॥

Ibid 25.3

5. न संसारस्य निर्वाणात् किञ्चिदस्ति विशेषणम् ।

न निर्वाणस्य संसारात् किञ्चिदस्ति विशेषणम् ॥

Ibid 25.19

1. V.P. Bapat (Ed.) 2500 Years of Buddhism (New Delhi: Directorate of Publication, Government of India, 1976) Foreword, p. viii

also hold the similar view as regards the identity of the world and the Brahman. The *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* declares in clear terms: 'Whatever is here is there too. There is no diversity whatsoever. He who sees diversity shall go from death to death.'<sup>6</sup> The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* proclaims that every object and all directions are pervaded by Brahman the immortal.<sup>7</sup> The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* points out, 'All this is surely Brahman'. 'The self is Brahman'.<sup>8</sup> All the other Upaniṣads also concur with one another in declaring the unity in apparent diversity.

According to the Upaniṣads, salvation or *mukti* is not a new state of existence, not an acquisition. It is only a matter of true realization. When the supreme Brahman is realized, all the knots of the heart are cut asunder; all doubts are dissolved. The guru of the Upaniṣad instructs his disciple: *tat tvam asi*, 'thou art That (Brahman)'. Realizing the identity of his self with the Brahman, the sage of the Upaniṣad utters: 'I am Brahman', *aham brahmāsmi*. This realization of liberation, the feeling of oneness with the universe, is possible in this very life and a person who has had it moves in this world free from all fear. He becomes a *jīvam-mukta*. 'Liberated-in-life'.

Zen Buddhism directly points to the true nature of man which is nothing but Buddhahood. Just like the sage of the Upaniṣad, the Zen teacher says to his disciple: 'Look into your pure nature. You are the Buddha's self. You are the ultimate Reality.' When enlightened,

6. यदेवेह तदमुत्र यदमुत्र तदन्विह ।

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4.10

7. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.2.11

8. सर्वं हि एतद् ब्रह्म, अयमात्मा ब्रह्म ।

*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 2

the Zen *sādhaka* moves in the world like a *sthitaprajña*—having unshaken knowledge of oneness with the universe, being undisturbed by any feeling of sorrow or pleasure. His state is similar to that of a *jīvan-mukta*.

Zen gives a new light or new perspective to look at the world. The enlightened Zen master views the same world with a changed vision; like the Upaniṣadic sage he becomes an *āvṛtta-caḅṣu*; he possesses the *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. Enlightened in Zen, he has nothing to accept, nothing to reject. He sees himself in everything, and everything in himself.

According to Bunan, a modern Japanese Zen master, a man, after being enlightened in the spirit of Zen, will live a life of the 'living-dead':

While living

Be a dead man,

Be thoroughly dead—

And behave as you like,

And all is well. (Bunan).

He is dead in the sense that he is not what he was before his enlightenment. He is now living a new life of freedom and he has realized what he really is. He is really fully alive in liberation, *jīvan-mukta*—and not a 'living dead', *jīvan-mṛta* as Bunan suggests.

Zen Buddhism, founded by Bodhidharma in China (known originally as Ch'an) in the 6th century A.D., took a new shape in the subsequent centuries through its interpretation by the later Chinese and Japanese Zen teachers. Bodhidharma did not prescribe any special scripture or any specific method of *sādhana* for the realization of the state of Liberation, 'Satori' as it is called in Japanese. Bodhidharma himself was devoted to deep meditation (*dhyāna*). Though the word Zen was derived from the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* and though Bodhidharma practised



deep meditation for a major part of his monastic life, meditation or *dhyāna* has little to do with the experience of the 'Satori' or enlightenment. Zen has no definite method for the realization of liberation, no scripture to study. The experience is sudden and spontaneous. 'In Zen there is nothing to explain, nothing to teach.' Realization covers the whole life.

The effect of Zen realization—the reaction of the enlightened mind—is well demonstrated in all activities of the Zen masters. The spirit of Zen is vigorously alive in the daily life of the Japanese—in their literature, art, social customs, architecture and even in the spirit of war. A Japanese soldier is inspired by the Zen realization that 'none kills none, and none

is killed by none.' Japanese Zen followers try to realize the existence of the universal Self even in their common acts like flower arrangement (*ikebana*) or in their tea-ceremony (*cha-no-yu*). According to Hideyoshi,

When tea is made with water drawn from the well of mind

Whose bottom is beyond measure,

We really have what is called *Cha-no-yu*.

In short, Zen claims to realize the unity of universal existence in every object, in every action, in every thought of every-day life. The experience of liberation in Zen is not a feeling of a moment; it pervades every aspect of life in time and space. After a study of Zen experience in practical life, we are tempted to equate it with the *brahma-bhāvanā* of the Vedic sages.

*They Lived with God*

ADHAR LAL SEN

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

It is said in the *Mahābhārata*: 'Human life is not eternal, and moreover no one knows when the all-devouring death will come. Therefore one should begin to practise religion when one is young.'<sup>1</sup> Sri Ramakrishna knew that Adhar's life would be short; so one day he said to him, 'Do quickly whatever you want to do.' The Master implied that he should

associate with holy people and strive to realize God. Adhar understood what the Master meant, and for six months he visited Sri Ramakrishna every evening after working at his office. For this he had to spend two and a half rupees every day for the carriage fare, and the trip took about an hour and a half each way. Sometimes he was so tired that he would fall asleep on the carpet in the Master's room. A few people criticized Adhar for this, but the Master said to them: 'What do you people know? This is the Divine Mother's place. It is the abode of peace. Instead

1. को हि जानाति कस्याद्य मृत्युकालो भविष्यति ।  
युवंव धर्मशीलः स्यादनित्यं खलु जीवितम् ॥

*Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparva, 175.16

of engaging in worldly talk, he sleeps. That is all right. A little peace still comes to such people.' Before the main gate of the temple garden was closed at 10 P.M., the Master would wake Adhar up and send him home.

Adhar's nephew Bepin Behari Sen, wrote in his reminiscences:

Almost everyday after returning home from his office my uncle would bathe, eat something, and then go to Dakshineswar. At that time there were no automobiles, so he had to go by a hired carriage, returning home about midnight. Sometimes his young daughter and I would accompany him to Dakshineswar, and on those occasions he would return a little earlier.

One day we were present at the time of the *ārati* [vesper service] at Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna stood before the Divine Mother with folded hands, looking at her intently. I noticed that his lips were moving. When the *ārati* was over a conch was blown. The Master then took in his hand that part of his cloth which was draped over his shoulder and touched the Mother's feet with it. Touching the cloth to his head, he returned to his room. In order that the Mother might not suffer any discomfort or pain from his hand he had touched her feet very carefully. His constantly moving lips indicated that, as long as he was in the temple, he was chanting hymns to the Mother.

Adhar Lal Sen was born on March 2, 1855, at Ahiritola, Calcutta, to Ramgopal Sen and his wife. This couple had two daughters and six sons, Adhar being their fifth son. Ramgopal was a wealthy thread merchant; he built a new house at 97 Beniatola Street in Calcutta to accommodate his large family. In accordance with their family custom, Adhar was married at the age of twelve, in 1867.

Adhar was a precocious boy. His academic record was extraordinary, and he was awarded the Duff Scholarship in English literature. He graduated from the Presidency College in 1877. A poet by nature, he had two books of Bengali poems published in 1874, when he was

only nineteen. These were *Lalita Sundari* and *Menaka*. Three years later, just before his graduation, two more were published—*Nalini* and *Kusum-Kānan*. In 1880 he translated *The Wonderer* by Lord Lytton, the then Governor-General of India, into Bengali, and it was published under the title *Lyttoniana*. In spite of his youth, Adhar received much praise from the literary circles of Calcutta. In his writings one gets a glimpse of his loving and idealistic nature as well as his religious fervour. Further, his questioning of idol worship and animal sacrifice in *Lalita Sundari* shows the influence which Christian and Brahma teachings exerted on him. In *Menaka* he doubted the existence of God, but later, in the 'Mahavir' poem of *Kusum-Kānan*, he glorified the ideas of non-dualistic Vedanta.

On February 10, 1879, Adhar was appointed deputy magistrate at Chittagong in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). This was a high government post, and Adhar was then only twenty-four. Seeing the beauty of the place—the river, the sea, the mountains, and the forest of evergreens—Adhar was greatly moved. In 1880 he went on an official visit to Sitakunda, a sacred spring, and explored its antiquities. He then wrote a paper, 'The Shrines of Sitakunda', which he read at the March 2, 1881 meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society. His fellow members were impressed with the depth of his learning. Adhar was transferred from Chittagong to Jessore on July 14, 1880, and again on April 26, 1882, to Calcutta.

Through his writings and his position in the government, Adhar became acquainted with the elite of Calcutta society, including Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Haraprasad Shastri (who had been a classmate of his), Mahesh Chandra Nayaratna, and Krishnadas Pal. Adhar was younger than most of these



writers and scholars, but nevertheless they held him in high regard.

Although Adhar doubted the existence of God for some time in his younger days, he was basically a devotee. His father, Ramgopal, was a devout Hindu and observed various religious festivals in their home. This religious environment naturally made a deep impression on Adhar's mind. Ramgopal died on November 16, 1880.

Through the influence of some Vaiṣṇava friends Adhar began to study the *Sri Caitanya Caritāmṛta* and the *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavat*. He also read in the *Indian Mirror* and the *Sulabh Samachar* newspapers about Sri Ramakrishna, and cherished a desire to meet him. After he was transferred to Calcutta that opportunity finally came. On Friday, March 9, 1883, M. recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

The Master enjoyed a nap after his noon meal. Adhar and other devotees gradually gathered. This was Adhar's first visit. He was a deputy magistrate and about thirty years old.

Adhar (to the Master): 'Sir, I have a question to ask. Is it good to sacrifice animals before the deity? It certainly involves killing.'

Master: 'The Śāstra prescribes sacrifice on special occasions.... I am now in such a state of mind that I cannot watch a sacrifice.... Again, in a certain state of mind I see God in all beings, even in an ant. At that time, if I see a living being die, I find consolation in the thought that it is the death of the body, the soul being beyond life and death.'

'One should not reason too much; it is enough if one loves the Lotus Feet of the Mother. Too much reasoning throws the mind into confusion. You get clear water if you drink from the surface of a pool. Put your hand deeper and stir the water, and it becomes muddy. Therefore pray to God for devotion....'

A Devotee: 'Can one see God?'

Master: 'Yes, surely. One can see both aspects of God—God with form and without form. One can see God with form, the embodiment of Spirit. Again, God can be directly perceived in a man with a tangible form. Seeing an Incarnation of God is the same as seeing God

himself. God is born on earth as man in every age.'

Adhar was deeply impressed with the Master at his very first meeting with him. His doubts about God were completely dispelled. Surrendering himself to the Master, he experienced peace and joy. Sri Ramakrishna in turn recognized Adhar as one belonging to his inner circle of devotees and began to treat him as his own.

On April 8, 1883, Adhar visited Sri Ramakrishna for the second time. He also brought some of his friends, one of whom, Saradacharan, was filled with grief over the death of his eldest son. Saradacharan was a retired deputy inspector of schools and passed his time in meditation and prayer. Because of his depressed state of mind, Adhar had brought him to the Master for consolation. The Master was in *samādhi* when they arrived. After regaining outer consciousness he gave some valuable advice to the householder devotees, and then heard from Adhar about his friend's bereavement. Immediately Sri Ramakrishna began to sing, as if to himself: 'To arms! To arms, O man! Death storms your house in battle array!...' Then he said: 'What can you do? Be ready for Death. Death has entered the house. You must fight him with the weapon of God's holy name. God alone is the Doer.... Give your power of attorney to God. One doesn't come to grief through letting a good man assume one's responsibilities. Let His will be done.'

Knowing that Adhar's life would be very short, Sri Ramakrishna took him to the northern verandah of his room and gave him some special advice. Adhar died eighteen months later.

Master (to Adhar): 'You are a deputy magistrate. Remember that you have obtained your position through the grace of God. Do

not forget him, but remember that all men must one day walk down the same path. We stay in the world only a couple of days.

This world is our field of activity. We are born here to perform certain duties. People have their homes in the country but come to Calcutta to work.

It is necessary to do a certain amount of work. This is a kind of discipline. But one must finish it speedily. While melting gold, the goldsmith uses everything—the bellows, the fan, and the pipe—so that he may have the hot fire he needs to melt the metal. After the melting is over, he relaxes and asks his attendant to prepare a smoke for him. All this time his face has been hot and perspiring; but now he can smoke.

One must have stern determination; then alone is spiritual practice possible. One must make a firm resolve.

There is great power in the seed of God's name. It destroys ignorance. A seed is tender, and the sprout soft; still it pierces the hard ground. The ground breaks and makes way for the sprout.

The mind becomes very much distracted if one lives long in the midst of 'woman and gold'. Therefore one must be very careful.... Always keep your mind fixed on God. In the beginning you must struggle a little; later on you will enjoy your pension.

It was on this occasion that Adhar first saw the Master in *samādhi*. He had previously observed his friend Saradacharan go into ecstasy while listening to devotional songs, but he was disturbed by it, for Saradacharan's face at that time seemed to be full of pain and sadness. Seeing the bliss on the Master's face, Adhar was happy and relieved. Later Adhar said to Saradacharan: 'By seeing your trance I conceived a disgust for it. It seemed to suggest a great suffering within you. Can divine ecstasy ever cause pain? The blissful ecstasy of the Master has opened my eyes. I would have found it impossible to come here anymore if his ecstasy had been like yours'.

Adhar had many good tendencies and was eager to follow the Master's advice.

Sri Ramakrishna told him that the easiest way for a householder to keep the mind in God was by associating with holy people. Therefore, besides coming himself to Dakshineswar, Adhar would also invite the Master to his house quite often and arrange a festival or a *kīrtan*. On July 14, 1883, Sri Ramakrishna went to Adhar's house to hear a recital by Rajnarayan of the *Caṇḍī*, a hymn glorifying the Divine Mother. When Rajnarayan sang, 'I have surrendered my soul at the fearless feet of the Mother; am I afraid of Death anymore?' the Master went into deep *samādhi*.

On July 21 the Master again went to Adhar's house. Adhar had been yearning to see the Master that day, but he had not known definitely whether Sri Ramakrishna was coming or not. Seeing the Master, Adhar earnestly said: 'You haven't been here for a long time. I prayed to God today that you might come. I even shed tears.' The Master was pleased and said with a smile, 'You don't mean that!'

In order to impart spiritual knowledge to people, an Incarnation of God lives in the world in the company of devotees, and wherever he finds genuine spiritual hunger he immediately responds. On August 18, 1883, Sri Ramakrishna again visited Adhar's house. He sang and danced in ecstasy in Adhar's drawing room. While he was still in a divine mood, he said to Adhar, 'My son, meditate on the Deity whose name you chanted.' M. wrote in the *Gospel*: 'With these words he touched Adhar's tongue with his finger and wrote something on it. Did the Master thereby impart spirituality to Adhar?'

In March 1884, the Government of India appointed Adhar a member of Faculty of Arts of Calcutta University. Adhar was glad to have the opportunity to help spread education among the masses, so he was quite busy attending meetings of



different committees in addition to his regular duties. Because of this he could not visit the Master for some time. On March 24, 1884, he went to see Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar.

Master: 'Hello! Why haven't you come all these days?'

Adhar: 'Sir, I have been busy with so many things. I had to attend a conference of the school committee and various other meetings.'

Master: 'So, you completely lost yourself in schools and meetings and forgot everything else?'

Adhar: 'Everything else was hidden away in a corner of my mind. How is your arm?'

Master: 'Just look. It is not yet healed...'

After a time the Master suddenly said to Adhar: 'Look here. All these are unreal—meetings, school, office, and everything else. God alone is the substance, and all else is illusory. One should worship God with one's whole mind.'

Adhar sat without speaking a word.

Master: 'All else is illusory. This moment the body is and the next moment it is not. One must make haste to worship God.'

'But you don't have to renounce everything. Live in the world the way the tortoise does. The tortoise roams about in the water but keeps its eggs on land. Its whole mind is on the eggs.'

Adhar was a serious and reserved person, and people seldom saw him show emotion in public. But he did not hesitate to express his inner feelings to the Master. Adhar had read in the *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*: As the fragrance of musk or the blue lotus captures the environment, so also does the sweet fragrance of Kṛṣṇa's body. The nose of a person is useless which does not smell the divine fragrance; it breathes mechanically like a bellows. Kṛṣṇa's touch, like the philosopher's stone, illumines the devotee's heart. He who is not touched by Kṛṣṇa is wretched, and his body is like a piece of black iron.

Perhaps with this in mind, Adhar humbly said to the Master: 'Sir, you haven't been to our place for a long time. The drawing room smells worldly and everything else appears to be steeped in darkness.' Sri

Ramakrishna was very much moved at Adhar's words. He suddenly stood up and in an ecstatic mood blessed Adhar, touching his head and heart. In a voice choked with love, the Master said: 'I look upon you as Nārāyaṇa Himself. You are indeed my own.'

Once Adhar went to the home of Mahimacharan Chakravarti, a wealthy and learned but also proud man, who often visited Sri Ramakrishna. Mahima was at that time studying Tantra scriptures from a scholar. Adhar listened to the scholar's elucidation for a while but did not approve of his interpretation. The three of them then started debating on the theme. Not being able to come to any conclusion, they at last decided to consult Sri Ramakrishna, who had practised Tantra and knew the subject very well. As soon as they arrived at Dakshineswar the Master, without hearing anything from them, started to talk about that very subject, and his words shed new light on it. Adhar was very much impressed. This incident increased his faith in the Master.

'As long as I live, so long do I learn', Sri Ramakrishna once said. Although he taught his disciples, he also learned many things from them. On August 3, 1884, Adhar told the Master about his visit to the Chandranath Hills and to Sitakunda, sacred places of Chittagong. In the course of conversation Adhar mentioned: 'Near Sitakunda I visited a well where I saw fire in the water. It is always burning on the water with leaping tongues.' The Master was surprised to hear that, and he asked, 'How is it possible?' Adhar explained that the water contained phosphorus.

On September 6, 1884, Sri Ramakrishna went to Adhar's house to listen to a kirtan. Both Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) and Vaishnavacharan sang many devotional songs, causing the Master to go into *samādhi*. Later Sri Ramakrishna sang, and

he also danced, intoxicated with ecstatic love. An intense spiritual atmosphere was created in Adhar's parlour. At the sound of the loud music a large crowd gathered in the street. Adhar had also prepared an elaborate meal for the Master and the devotees. When the feast was over, Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar.

The next day Adhar visited the Master. He had previously asked Sri Ramakrishna to pray to the Divine Mother to grant him the job of vice-chairman of the Calcutta Municipality. The salary for this job was one thousand rupees a month. In his efforts to get it, Adhar had talked to many rich and prominent men of Calcutta. But the Master did not like the idea that Adhar had flattered so many people just to get a job. The Master said: 'I said to the Mother: "O Mother, Adhar has been visiting you. May he get the job if it pleases you." But at the same time I said to her: "How small-minded he is! He is praying to you for things like that and not for knowledge and devotion..."' The Master then continued: 'Nivṛtti [inwardness of the mind] alone is good, and not pravṛtti [the inclination to outer enjoyment]... Be satisfied with the job you have. People hanker after a post paying fifty or a hundred rupees [a month], and you are earning three hundred rupees...' Adhar replied: 'Well, Narendra can support his family with fifty or with a hundred rupees. Will he not try for a hundred?' Immediately the Master said: 'Worldly people think highly of their wealth. They feel that there is nothing like it... But does God care for money? He wants from his devotees knowledge, devotion, discrimination, and renunciation... Listen, there is no scarcity of moths when the lamp is lighted. When God is realized, he himself provides everything for his devotees.'

Though Sri Ramakrishna asked Adhar to be content with his present position, one

day when he met Jadu Mallick, a very wealthy and influential man of Calcutta, he asked him to help Adhar get the job. Sometime later, however, the Master saw Jadu again and told him that Adhar had not been accepted for the position. Jadu comforted the Master, saying that Adhar was young and could try for it later.

Sri Ramakrishna never forced his devotees to renounce the world. He helped people to grow in their own ways. Once he told Adhar, 'You have both—yoga and bhoga [enjoyment].' But at the same time the Master did not hesitate to say harsh truths to his beloved devotees when necessary. On one occasion he said to Adhar: 'You are a scholar and a deputy magistrate, but with all that you are hen-pecked. Go forward. Beyond the forest of sandalwood there are many more valuable things: silver mines, gold mines, diamonds, and other gems. The wood cutter was chopping wood in the forest; the brahmachari said to him, "Go forward".'

On another occasion, Adhar went with the Master to Jadu Mallick's house to visit the goddess Simhavāhinī (another name of Durga), but he did not give an offering to the goddess as is the custom. When the Master said something to Adhar about it, Adhar replied, 'Sir, I did not know that while saluting a god or goddess one is supposed to offer something.' Sri Ramakrishna came to fulfil and not to destroy. He wanted his disciples to follow the ancient traditions. At the Master's behest, Adhar engaged Vaishnavacharan, a famous devotee and singer, to sing devotional songs for him every day after his office work.

Adhar used to perform the Durga Puja every year in his home. Bepin Behari Sen, Adhar's nephew, wrote in his memoirs:

Once Sri Ramakrishna came to our house at the time of the Durga Puja to attend the worship



of the Divine Mother. Master Mahashay [M.] and Rakhai Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] were with him. Sri Ramakrishna stood before the image with folded hands and went into *samādhi*. After returning to normal consciousness he said, 'I have never before seen such a smiling image.' Because of his presence our house was crowded and overflowing with joy. My uncle was so absorbed in serving the Master that he could not think of anything else. After an hour Sri Ramakrishna ate something and then left. Although the worship was still going on, all of us felt an air of sadness in the house after his leaving.

Swami Adbhutananda mentioned Adhar in his reminiscences:

We often went with the Master to Adhar Babu's house in Shobhabazar. He looked upon Adhar Babu's house as one of his Calcutta parlours. Sometimes Adhar Babu would arrange a festival at his house and would feed us well. His mother was a great devotee. She would buy costly mangoes in the off-season and send them to the Master, together with bananas and sweets. The Master took great delight in these things. On one occasion at Adhar Babu's house the Master told him, 'Please be sure not to give me a sour mango'. So Adhar Babu brought him the best mango he could find. The Master relished it greatly and said, 'Most likely this one was selected by your mother!'

One day we were invited to Adhar Babu's house, but Adhar Babu had forgotten to invite Ram Babu. Ram Babu was greatly offended and complained to the Master, 'What wrong have I done to have been left out like this?' The Master tried to console him and said: 'Look, Ram, Rakhai was asked to arrange this, and he simply forgot to invite you. Should you be angry with Rakhai? He is just a boy.' Later Adhar Babu himself went to Ram Babu's house and invited him to the gathering....

Many famous kirtan singers would come to Adhar Babu's house. I remember once hearing a song based on the *Caṇḍī* that impressed me very much....

One day Adhar Babu asked the Master, 'What powers do you have?' The Master laughed and said, 'By the grace of the Mother I lull to sleep those very deputy magistrates who are feared and respected by many others.'

The Master visited Kalighat [the famous Kali temple in South Calcutta] now and then and would rejoice there with the devotees.

Adhar Babu would provide his carriage for the Master on those occasions.

On December 6, 1884, Adhar arranged a festival and invited several other deputy magistrates to meet the Master. These men wanted to judge Sri Ramakrishna's holiness. One of them was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, perhaps the greatest literary figure of Bengal during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Adhar introduced Bankim to Sri Ramakrishna, saying: 'Sir, he is a great scholar and has written many books. He has come here to see you.' A detailed account of this meeting is given in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Swami Adbhutananda mentioned this meeting in his reminiscences: 'It was also at Adhar Babu's that I first saw Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Bankim was extremely intelligent. He tried to test the Master, but he came away outdone.'

Sri Ramakrishna once warned Adhar not to ride a horse, but Adhar did not take his words seriously. On January 6, 1885, Adhar went on horseback to inspect the Manicktala Distillery. On his way home, at Shobhabazar street, he fell from the horse, fracturing his left wrist. Tetanus quickly developed, and he completely lost his voice. Bepin Behari Sen wrote:

My uncle fell from a horse, fracturing his left arm and incurring the fatal injuries from which he passed away eight days later. Once during these last days Sri Ramakrishna came to see him. The Master looked very pale that day. He stroked my uncle's body and wept. By then my uncle had almost lost his voice, but when he saw the Master, tears rolled down his cheeks. The Master talked to him a little, but since I was so young I could not follow what was being said. I did observe, though, that my uncle's face beamed with joy when he saw the Master. After a while the Master ate something and with a heavy heart left.

Later Sri Ramakrishna told the devotees that the accident had occurred because Adhar had had a vision of his Chosen Deity

while riding the horse. Overwhelmed with joy, Adhar had lost control of the horse. He passed away at 6 a.m. on Wednesday, January 14, 1885. When the news of Adhar's death reached the Master, he immediately went into samadhi. Regaining normal consciousness, he wept and said to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, you asked me to stay in the world with the devotees,

cherishing devotion. Now look, how much pain I have!' It is something to think about—that an Incarnation of God would cry for his devotee. It is said that out of grief Sri Ramakrishna remained in bed for three days, covering himself with a cloth. He also told the devotees: 'One by one my parlours are closing. I see an end coming to my gatherings.'

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THOUGHTS FOR DAILY MEDITATION, VOL. II. BY ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM. Aquinas Publications, Bandra, Bombay 400 050. 1984. Pp. 200 (Price not stated).

This is the second volume of *Thoughts for Daily Meditation* by Anthony Elenjittam covering the months of April, May and June. The first volume (already noticed in *P.B.*) covered the earlier months. Following the pattern of the first volume, this one also gives the reader one relatively lengthy passage and a short *mantra* in the form, usually, of an aphorism, for meditation, each day.

The areas suggested, for enquiry and contemplation, through these passages are quite varied reflecting several facets of spiritual life with its implicit moral and ethical preconditions. Among the aspects covered are the nature of 'the inner light', 'integral' and 'universal' consciousness, the 'Incarnation', the several obstacles that beset the seeker and the methods to overcome them. While all the entries, coming from a person of the stature of Elenjittam, evidence transparent sincerity, catholicity of outlook and, above all, a sense of immediacy and pragmatism, those on 'psychotherapy', 'Disease and Spiritual Conversion' and 'Genesis and Nature of Temptations' seem to me to deserve special mention.

'We have to be ever on the alert', says the author, 'and vigilant lest thoughtlessness and the *laissez faire* rolling-down-the-hill tendency of mind may not bring us disaster. It is for this that one needs arm oneself with a complete arsenal of powerful thoughts to combat and neutralize and conquer negative thoughts...which corrupt our higher nature.'

*Thoughts for Daily Meditation* is, indeed, one such complete and helpful arsenal!

M. SIVARAMKRISHNA PH. D.  
Reader in English  
Osmania University

SRI KRISHNA: A RE-CREATION: BY A. N. ROY. Published by On Calcutta, 49/11 A Hindusthan Park, Calcutta 700 029. 1983. Pp. xviii + 70. Rs. 25.

In the book under review, Sri A. N. Roy attempts a literary re-creation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by tapping various sources written in Sanskrit, Bengali and English by Indian and Western authors. The treatise is divided into two parts preceded by a short note on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life and vision. The first part is subdivided into three small sections depicting his beautiful figure, the epic character in the context of the Mahābhārata, and also his intimate friends. The second part, portraying the universal Form (Visvarūpa) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the light of the Gita, is the most interesting portion of the book. It highlights the transcendental nature of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who resides in the heart of every being as the all-embracing universal Spirit, as the greatest harmonizer of all contradictions. The incomprehensible and supra-mundane image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as directly seen by Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, which aroused his awe and bewilderment, has been delineated by the author very vividly. In order to make this theophany more convincing and relevant to the modern mind, he has made use of the scientist's viewpoint and pertinently alluded to the astronomical dimensions of space and time.

Admittedly it is an uphill task to accomplish a perfect literary re-creation of an a cosmic,



transhistorical personality like Śrī Kṛṣṇa, both in his human and divine dimensions. Sri Roy's attempt in this direction is undoubtedly praiseworthy, but his achievement leaves much to be desired. He has touched upon some significant aspects of the life and līlā of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but in most cases his formulations are lost in the labyrinth of lengthy quotations, which are not always very much relevant to the contexts. As a result, when a reader comes to the last page of the book, he does not feel much enlightened. Nevertheless, there are flashes of originality here and there which make the reading rewarding. The absence of diacritical marks in this work would confuse the reader. Exact references and an index should have been provided in such a treatise. Printing and binding are excellent.

PROF. RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE  
Dept. of Philosophy  
Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya  
Kailashahar, North Tripura

A CONCORDANCE TO THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA: BY KATHARINE WHITMARSH. Published by Vedanta Society of Southern California, 927 Ladera Lane, Santa Barbara, California 93108, USA. Pp. vi + 640. \$ 50.

Sometime ago, the reviewer was trying to remember a short passage from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Not being able to remember it clearly enough for his purpose, nor remembering where in the *Gospel* it was located, he was faced with the prospect of searching through almost a thousand pages of text for this brief, outwardly insignificant passage. How many times this had happened, not only to him, but to all students of the *Gospel*!

Then, with great relief he remembered the newly published *Concordance to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Relief turned to the joy of new discovery as he remembered two key words from the passage: 'prayer' and 'Self'. Under PRAYER he found forty-one entries, including the one he needed: '*sincere*: Inner Self realized through s. [i.e. sincere] prayer. (mys.) 256:g.' The page number was 256 and the 'g' meant the seventh paragraph. (The notation '(mys.)' indicates that Sri Ramakrishna was in or coming down from a mystical state, or that he was relating a mystical experience, and serves to alert the reader to Sri Ramakrishna's state of mind.) Thus the desired passage was found in a matter of minutes, and doorways to further related enquiry were revealed. Each subsequent

entry into the *Concordance* has similarly been an experience of discovery, opening new horizons.

For this *Concordance* is far more than a glorified index, more than a concordance. It is an invaluable guide to the *Gospel* which, while facilitating location of material through its 45,000 entries, also provides an extensive system of cross-references allowing in-depth study of various subjects dealt with by Śrī Ramakrishna.

A glance at the contents gives a brief idea of the nature of this massive work. It contains a thorough 'Guide to the use of the Concordance', essential in a work of such complexity. Following this is the main body of the work: 'Concordance to the words of Sri Ramakrishna' of 503 pages. This is much larger than it sounds, since the pages are 8½" by 11" and the type quite small, though easily legible. Because the Master's teachings were so often illustrated by stories and parables, these illustrations have been dealt with separately, designated as EXAMPLES under the relevant subject headings. There are more than 1,300 'examples' in the concordance. A further aid to researchers is a special category of references called 'subject references', in which information on a particular subject is compiled in one place in the concordance without strictly adhering to the specific words used by the Master. Subject references are designated with an asterisk.

Next there are seven fascinating appendices which separately index valuable material from the *Gospel*: 'Mystical Experiences and Ecstatic States', 'Names A: Contemporaries of Sri Ramakrishna', 'Names B: Gods, Incarnations and Historical Personages', 'Names C: Miscellaneous Proper Names', 'Prayer', 'Song', and 'Charts'. The last mentioned gives a chart of the seven yogic *cakras*, based primarily on Sri Ramakrishna's descriptions as recorded in the *Gospel*. It also tells where in the *Gospel* to find songs about *kuṇḍalīnī*, and lists relevant topics found in the body of the concordance.

The volume has been put together with the fond student in mind, from the elaborate organization yet simple presentation to the binding and price: it is bound with a simple ring binder so that it opens flat, thus freeing the hands. Though the price may seem exorbitant to Indian readers, it is actually nominal for a voluminous reference work like this in small edition.

It should be mentioned that the *Concordance* is designed for use only with the New York edition of the unabridged *Gospel of Sri Rama-*



*krishna*. Because the pagination in the standard Madras edition is totally different, the *Concordance* will not work with it.

This work is the result of fifteen years of steady labour by Katharine Whitmarsh and several able helpers. (Miss Whitmarsh is a great niece of the Francis Leggett who figured so importantly in Swami Vivekananda's life in the West, and was held by the great Swami as a young girl of two.) The devotees and students of Sri Ramakrishna owe her and her assistants a deep debt of gratitude for this product of their devotion which makes the Master's thought so much more accessible.

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA  
*Vedanta Society of Southern California*  
San Diego

**ACCUPUNCTURE:** By P. G. SHAH. Published by Thakorbhai Govindbhai Shah. Gurjar Grantharatna Karyalaya, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad 380 001. 1984. Pp. 44. Rs. 15

Accupuncture is one of the latest additions to the existing systems of medicine like Allopathy, Homoeopathy, Ayurveda, Unani and Naturopathy. Though it had been practised in China from very ancient times, it became popular outside China only during the last two decades.

Accupuncture seems to be one of the promising alternative systems of medicine for non-infectious chronic diseases for which there are no specific remedies in the modern medicine. The harmful side-effects of symptomatic drugs like pain-killers and steroids used in chronic illness could be eliminated to a great extent through alternative therapy. The advantage of accupuncture in inducing anaesthesia in general surgery, dental surgery and obstetrics has already been well established in China.

The author of the book under review is a medical graduate who underwent advanced training in accupuncture at Hong Kong. The book is the translation of the author's original work in Gujarathi language. It is a useful publication on Accupuncture for a layman. The book gives in brief the history, theory and practice of Accupuncture. The author has also briefly dealt with specialities in Accupuncture—Scalp accupuncture and Ear accupuncture. The illustrations and case studies make the book authentic.

This book is a welcome publication in popularizing accupuncture.

DR. H. SUDARSHAN, M.B.B.S.  
*Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra*  
B.R. Hills, Mysore

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SRI SRI MATRI MANDIR AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA SEVASHRAMA, JAYARAMBATI

REPORT FOR APRIL 1984 TO MARCH 1985

*Sri Sri Matri Mandir:* The little village of Jayarambati remains much as it was when Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was born here in December 1853. It is now an important centre for pilgrimage well known among the seekers of truth in India and abroad. On the ground where Mother was born a temple enshrining her marble image has come up, and the two old cottages which served as her places of residence from 1863 to 1915 and from 1916 to 1920, and where numerous devotees were received by her and given initiation, are being maintained as shrines. All the year round thousands of devotees from all over the world come here to take back with them their share of holiness and inspiration. Daily religious discourses, Bhajan and prayers, as also Ramanam Sankirtan on every Ekadashi

day, are held. Birthdays of great spiritual teachers—Sri Shankara, Sri Buddha, Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ, Sri Ramachandra, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are also celebrated. The annual Pujas of Durga, Jagaddhatri and Kali are performed. About fifty thousand devotees received cooked prasada here during the year. The small library had 2,500 books.

The sub-centre, Ramakrishna Yogashrama at Koalpara, 8 kms from Jayarambati, where Mother stayed on several occasions and installed the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna and herself in the shrine for daily worship, is being maintained as a place of retreat, as also is the Jagadamba Ashrama near by, where also Mother lived occasionally.

*Pallimangal:* The integrated rural development project known as Pallimangal was started in June 1980. Fertilizers worth Rs. 22,588.92 were supplied to 25 farmers for the cultivation of



rice in 30 acres of land, Potato in 150 acres, Mustard in 2.40 acres and Wheat in 4.9 acres. Under the self-employment scheme, training was imparted in the following cottage and small-scale industries: Hobby Loom, Dhooop making and Hosiery units. These units were handed over to the beneficiaries and they have become almost self-reliant. The mobile medical service provided medical relief to 5,942 people, and under Child Welfare scheme 6 litres of milk were distributed among some 30 children every day.

On Swamiji's birthday, the Youth Day was celebrated in a function attended by about 300 boys and girls of surrounding villages who actively participated in elocution, essay writing, recitation, singing and other activities.

**Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama:** The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Charitable Dispensary, started at the instance of the Mother in 1916 as a humble homoeopathic dispensary, treated 29,924 patients during the year. A branch of this dispensary, opened at Ramakrishna Yogashrama in Koalpara in November 1983 treated 13,884 patients during the year. The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyapitha—begun as a night school during Mother's lifetime—now consists of a junior high school, two junior basic schools and two pre-basic nursery schools is providing education to 723 students including girls. Aid from the State Government being meagre, the Sevashrama has to depend on the public in order to make these schools worthy of the Holy Mother's name. The library had 5,000 books.

**Present needs:** 1. Construction of a boundary wall around the Mandir campus: Rs. 3 lakhs. 2. Construction of a boundary wall around the school campus: Rs. 3 lakhs. 3. Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama School Development Fund: Rs. 2 lakhs. Remittances may kindly be made in the name either of Sri Sri Matri Mandir or of Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, P.O. Jayarambati, district Bankura, West Bengal, PIN 722 161

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CHENGALPATTU

#### REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1984-85

Started in 1936 with a school in Vedachalanagar in the Chengalpattu district of Tamil Nadu, the institution was affiliated to Ramakrishna Mission in 1940. Since August 1981, the Mission has been executing a Development Project on its land of about 15 acres in

Hanumanthaputheri Village. The Mission was able to shift to the new Ashrama premises on Aksaya Tiritiya, Friday 4, May 1984. It now runs the following educational institutions.

1. **Boys' High School.** Started in 1941, the school has a strength of 801 students with 17 sections and 26 members on the teaching staff.
2. **Girls' High School.** Started in 1950 with 123 girls, the school now has a strength of 565 students with 15 sections and 21 members on the teaching staff.
3. **Primary School.** Started in 1947 with 25 children, the school has now on its roll 742 children (344 boys and 398 girls). It mainly caters to the needs of the poor and backward classes of the locality.
4. **English-Medium School.** Started in 1970, the School has now 740 children on the roll from L.K.G to standard V.
5. **Students' Hostel.** A Students' Hostel was attached to the Boys' High School in 1939 to provide educational facilities to students of outlying areas of the State. The Hostel is now functioning in the new campus at Hanumanthaputheri. There are now 51 students in the Hostel, looked after by the monastic members of the Mission.
6. **Sunday Religious School.** Started in 1983 to impart Religious education to young children through Bhajans, prayers, yogasanas etc. More than 100 children attend the school which is being run by a band of dedicated workers.

Besides running these educational institutions, the centre maintains a shrine for the hostel boys and devotees to pray and meditate. Regular puja is conducted in the shrine, and also Ramanam-sankirtanam on all Ekadashis. Birthdays of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Shankara, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and other sages and saints are observed with special puja and talks by eminent speakers. Regular classes are conducted in English to a select audience on the Gita and other scriptures.

**Immediate needs:** An assembly-cum-prayer hall (for which the foundation stone has already been laid) and library-cum-reading room for the boys of the Home and for the general public and devotees. Public are requested to contribute generously towards the maintenance of the Ashrama and for the Temple fund. All contributions, exempted from income Tax, may kindly be made in favour of 'Ramakrishna Mission, Chengalpattu'.



# NOTES AND COMMENTS

## *Rural Administration in India*

The evolution of rural development in India from the early 1950's to the present day is a long story. On the attainment of Independence, India inherited from the British a administrative pattern the most important feature of which was a departmental structure superimposed upon a unitary district administration headed by a cross-departmental functionary called the District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner. When the Government of India started community development programmes (with the cooperation of the departments of agriculture, education and social welfare) each district was divided into 'Blocks' and development work in each Block was entrusted to the care of a Block Development Officer. All the Blocks were under the administrative control of the District Magistrate. This pattern continues to this day.

Owing to various causes the community development programme failed to produce the expected results. Its major drawback was its failure to mobilize the rural masses and to involve them in development work. This is in striking contrast to the situation in China where development work is initiated and controlled by the local people themselves. In India development is thrust upon the people by a rigid bureaucracy which is itself outside the stream of development. Of course an attempt was made to create an institutional framework of popular control and involvement through what is known as the Panchayati Raj. But this failed to be an important agency for mass mobilization because leaders at both national and State levels were not seriously concerned about creating leadership in villages. Moreover, the caste and economic inequalities in villages have created several problems for which no adequate solution has been found. The overall outcome is that dominant groups have come to control and manipulate the new development inputs and institutions. A new class known as the 'land owning class' (some of the members of whom were formerly landless tenants) has come to capture socio-economic power in the villages. The government's administrative machinery at the district level has, as a consequence, lost contact with the masses of poor people and weaker sections of society.

These undesirable trends were detected early and from the late 1960 there emerged a number of programmes seeking to benefit the disadvantaged section. While executing these area-based or group-oriented rural activities the problem of overlapping and lack of coordination became important. This problem has been sought to be tackled through what is known as Integrated Rural Development Programme. Already steps have been taken to amalgamate the various on-going programmes and a new agency called the District Rural Development Society has been added to the existing structure of district administration.

The important question now is whether the present model of centralized planning and service-delivery system is really suitable for rural development in India. That it is not is the experience of last thirty years. The rural masses can be involved in development only if planning is done at village level taking into consideration local needs and potentialities, and if local leadership is created and integrated into the existing administrative structure.

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