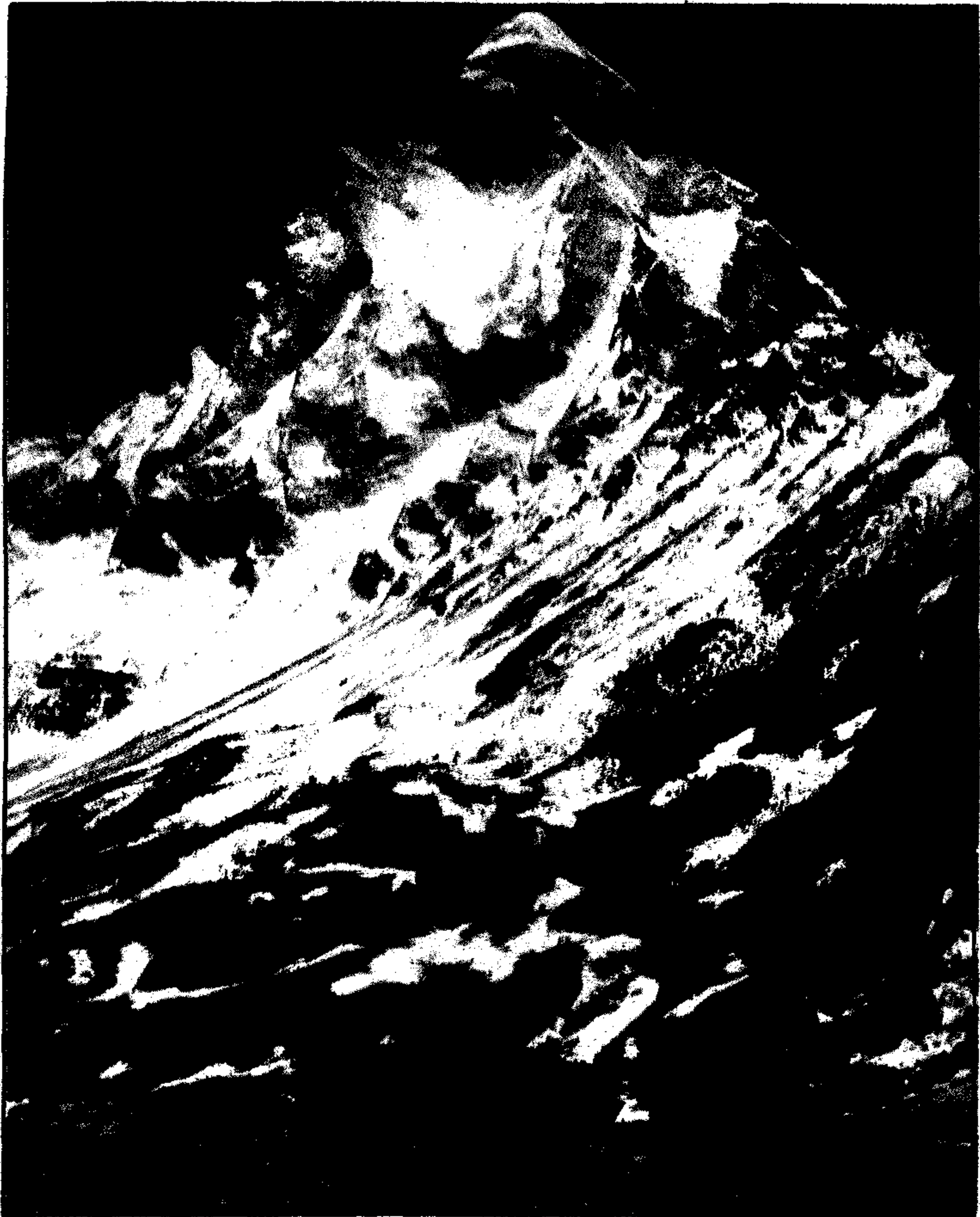


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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Prabuddha Bharata

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

Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 12

The Divine Message

The Mantra purifies the body. Man becomes pure by repeating the name of God. So repeat His name always.

* * *

Do not bother to know how your mind is reacting to things around. And do not waste time in calculating [about] and worrying whether...you are progressing in the path of spirituality. It is vanity to judge progress for oneself. Have faith in the grace of your guru and Chosen Ideal.

* * *

Be sincere in your practice, words, and deeds. ...God wants sincerity, truthfulness, and love. Outward verbal effusions do not touch Him.

* * *

All perform this or that discipline because they think it their duty to do so. But how many seek God?. No doubt you must do your duties. It keeps one's mind in good condition. But it is also very necessary to practise japam, meditation, and prayer.... Unless you practise meditation side by side with your work, how will you know whether you are doing the desirable or the undesirable thing?

* * *

One should not hurt others even by words. One must not speak even an unpleasant truth unnecessarily. By indulging in rude words one's nature becomes rude. One's sensitivity is lost if one has no control over one's speech.

* * *

The mind is everything. It is in the mind alone that one feels pure and impure. A man, first of all, must make his own mind guilty and then alone he can see another man's guilt. Does anything ever happen to another if you enumerate his faults? It only injures you. ...Forgiveness is a *tapasya*, helpful spiritual discipline.

* * *

If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.

* * *

Faith and firmness are the basic things; if faith and firmness are there, then you have it all.

Sayings of Holy Mother

Does Space Influence Mind ?

Sri Sarada Devi started from Calcutta a few weeks after the autumn worship of Durga and reached Banaras on the 5th November 1912. With her party she entered the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama and after a short rest went on to Lakshminivas, the newly built home in Varanasi of the Dattas of Calcutta. She stayed in Lakshminivas for about two and a half months with Golap-Ma, Nikunja Devi (M's wife), Radhu and a few others of her household. In expectation of the Mother's coming the owners had ceremoniously opened the house only a few days earlier. Mother was very happy to see the spaciousness of the living quarters. When she saw the wide verandah outside she remarked delightedly, "One must be fortunate to have such a spacious arrangement. Living in a small place one's mind also becomes small. In a spacious place, on the other hand, the mind also becomes expansive."¹

Holy Mother often retired to her native village after periods of stay in Calcutta. Calcutta even in those days was thoroughly congested and crowded. Streets and lanes were noisy, bazaars always humming, and living space was often cramped. Besides, free movement in and out of the house was not perfectly free, but was restricted due to traffic on the streets and to the hot humid weather which prevailed most of the time. And so many devotees came to the Mother's house every day.

The vast stretches of green paddy and sugarcane fields of Jayrambati were always a most welcome relief and change from Calcutta's busy atmosphere. Jayrambati's

tall shade trees, the fresh breezes, the abundance of fruits and flowers, and above all the relaxed and unhurried pace of life were rejuvenating. The free and open air, the bright blue sky stretching from horizon to horizon, cheerful faces and the laughter of healthy people in the overall closeness to nature made Jayrambati seem like a heaven on earth. The smooth flowing perennial brook, the Amodar, on the outskirts of the village even today adds to the charm of the rural setting. Here Holy Mother used to feel as happy as a young girl and she could move freely about the village talking and joking with companions she had known since her childhood. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna too used to feel free and lighthearted when he came back to Kamarpukur. Was it not because the unnatural restrictions of cities and towns are offensive to the innate free spirit of human beings ?

It appears that there is a close link between our minds within and space without. Though the influence is subtle and we may not be conscious of it, it is there. If we closely observe many of our moods and feelings, our thoughts seem to depend on the outer spacial surroundings we stay in. Physical space is an extension in which our physical bodies live and move. The buildings, factories, homes, mountains, rivers and forests occupy terrestrial space on our planet. Stars, planets, the sun, and the moon occupy celestial limitless space. Like the fish enveloped in the water of the ocean, we are also circumscribed by physical space. The moment we think of a person or a thing, naturally the mind visualizes the thing in terms of space. Directions like east, west, right, left, and above, below all denote spatial points. In common parlance we use

1. *Sri Sri Māyer Kathā* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1987) p. 281.

the word 'this building, or that ground is *spacious*'. We mean that they have an ample spacious quality about them.

The findings of neurobiologists at Berkeley University and elsewhere have supplied strong evidence that space exercises considerable influence on our emotions. In a large cage a few rats were kept. As long as there was plenty of space the animals behaved in a normal way. They played and frisked with each other happily. But when the scientists introduced more rats to overpopulate, as it were, the living space, a number of behavioural aberrations began to take place. First, activity began to decrease. Then the rats became restless, irritable and violent. Eventually the bigger animals started to kill the younger ones and even mothers did not spare their offspring. In that crowded cage aggressive and violent behaviour went on increasing everyday. Finally when the scientists removed some of the rats to different spacious cages, their behaviour again became normal. The experiment strongly suggests that the condition of our spacial surroundings exerts a powerful influence over human emotions and behaviour. Space exerts a salutary or disagreeable effect on the mind. Dr. Frank Brown of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois suggest that "...man may be a more diversely sensitive creature, more subject to the invisible influences of the surrounding universe than Western science usually considers him."² Overpopulated cities, crowded dwellings, congested streets and roads bear ample testimony in support of this. It is poignantly borne out by statistical studies that the crime rate, murders, suicides, heart attacks, and senseless violence are far more prevalent in our big cities than in sparsely populated countrysides. Because

of inadequate space to live in and move freely, and noise and other kinds of pollution, human beings are compelled to endure constant stress and strain. In our overcrowded communities, in buses and trains, offices and public places, there is no space at all. Always one has to jostle with others for a little standing room. For a few days such an ordeal can be endured or accepted. But if one has to live for years in such an awful condition the result may be the deadening of one's sensitivities or a sense of unbearable frustration. Under constant strain it would be natural to expect the manifestation of some kind of anger or violence. Scientists who have been mapping the stress route from brain to heart say that there is a link between mind and heart. The increasing number of heart attacks are due to stress.

Quietness has a healing power. After days of toil the mind and body desperately need recuperation, which is only possible in calm surroundings and atmosphere. But such opportunity is denied to ordinary people in big cities where they live in small homes with large families. There is neither space inside or outside. There is neither privacy nor silence. The atmosphere resonates with traffic and other noises, and people's loud chatter. Always in such an uproarious environment it is no wonder the human mind becomes restless and disorderly, and often goes haywire. A disorderly mind is not only insensitive, but dull. Such shallow mind is concerned only with its survival, its hard struggles, anxieties and fears. Human beings brought up in such surroundings are forced to succumb to 'unkindness and unconcern for others' as a way of life. In cities many accidents take place. People are injured and die. But such tragic happenings fail to elicit human responses from busy passersby or to elicit any feelings in them. Human life becomes trifling and is not taken seriously. Hurrying home or to places of work is a

2. *The Nature of Human Consciousness*, Robert E. Ornstein, Editor (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman & Company, 1973) p. 439.

battle, indeed. Living and moving always in a sea of humanity dries up tender feelings of the heart.

Neurobiologists are clearly demonstrating that aggression and ruthlessness have neurochemical basis in our bodies. They have found that aggression in humans appears to be regulated by two neurotransmitters—*serotonin* and *norepinephrine*. The first acts as a tranquilizer and the second is excitatory. Aggression and violent behaviour produce high levels of *norepinephrine* and low levels of *serotonin*. The interesting thing is that Dr. Goodwin of the National Institute of Mental Health, in the U.S.A. believes that the neurotransmitter-aggression link is not necessarily genetic, but that one's environment can trigger physio-chemical imbalances. Mind does not exist in isolation. It exists in relation to interactions with the environment. Unplanned cities, population explosion, poverty and illiteracy are social phenomena, but have psychological consequences. Our minds are shaped by our natural and man-made environments. We cannot escape the effects of harsh reality.

In hospitals too, owing to lack of space, in poor communities hundreds of patients are sometimes found huddled together. In the absence of individual attention and care by doctors they languish and ultimately perish, neglected. The problem of space has assumed enormous proportion all over the world in recent times. The more well-meaning ethologists like Austrian, Konrad Lorenz, William Thorpe of Cambridge, Niko Tinbergen of Holland, have predicted doom as the result of overcrowding, and urged that the space race may be a way of channeling aggressiveness and sublimating suffering. In his absorbing article, "*Biological Rhythms*," Gay Luce remarks: "The human being is often treated as if he were—or should be—a constant system with homeostatic balance,

capable of great flexibility in dealing with exigencies outside."³

The surroundings in which a patient recovers from an illness can also be important. The following incident bears ample proof of this fact. A team of doctors and health experts recently renovated a Veterans' Administration Hospital, transforming it from a bleak building that merely housed patients in crowded colourless cubicles, into a bright, spacious and cheerful hospital. Doctors expected to see some improvement in the condition of their patients, but what they really saw astonished them. Suddenly everyone seemed to start recuperating. Within three months many of the patients who had been in the institution from three to ten years, not only got healthy enough to be discharged, but once discharged they were able to resume normal lives. "We have seen the importance of treating the sick person as a totality," says Dr. Jerome Frank, of John Hopkins School of Medicine, "not just as a body in need of repair. This unified system of healing should be our goal."⁴ This new approach is called holistic medicine.

What is the fate of educational institutions? Are there any signs of change for the better? Unfortunately, except for a few good institutions, most will remain in the same lamentable plight, heart-rending though it may be. Crowded nursery schools situated in bleak small buildings with no space to spare present a pathetic sight. Young children are pushed as if into strait-jackets. When school classrooms lack sufficient space, the demand for spacious playgrounds for young students becomes a costly luxury. Classrooms when overflowing with pupils are noisy and in many of our urban centres, in such a condition our teachers can do

3. *Ibid.* p. 443.

4. Charles Panati, *Breakthroughs* (London: MacMillan, 1980) p. 19.

everything except teach. Without healthy happy teacher-pupil relationships, education has no meaning. Such conditions prevailing, that is why there is a large turning towards correspondence courses in India. Teachers can be dispensed with. If students cannot have large classrooms and grounds sufficient to satisfy the need for physical activity, what is the utility of schools? We all know that the brain needs for its healthy growth blood and oxygen. Sports, games, and physical exercise are absolutely necessary. It goes without saying that space is essential for life. In our overpopulated cities this appears to be a remote dream.

Is intelligence solely determined by genes and heredity or is it partly dependent on environment? Scientists are still divided. But there is undeniable truth in the view that environment does play an important role. This is supported by the research and experimental results of Drs'. Mark Rosenzweig and Albert Globus of the University of California, and of Krech and Bennet at Berkeley. To evaluate the effects of different kinds of environment on the brains of rats they placed some in standard laboratory group cages, and others in a large spacious cage outfitted with a variety of toys. The rats in the latter 'enriched' environment had plenty to do, ropes to climb, wheels to turn, and room to move and play freely in a large area. After a few weeks their brains were dissected. The first group showed less neurological development, i.e. less intelligence. In the second group the scientists discovered more brain development—an increased number of dendritic spines and nerve-cell connections—possible causes for enhanced learning capacity and memory.⁵

Our universities and colleges have turned into virtual battlegrounds of political agita-

tions and reckless violence. Students are restless and the slightest provocation sparks them into explosive behaviour. There might be other causes for this volatile behaviour, but it cannot be denied that the stifling environment in which they grow and learn has its effect.

The Upaniṣads and ancient epics tell us about the ancient *gurukula system* of India, and the spacious forest universities. These *gurukulas* were *āśramas* situated in forests at sites of natural beauty. They sometimes occupied vast areas of land with thick woods, tall trees, flowing streams, calm atmosphere and no morbid distractions. There developed sweet loving relationships between teachers and pupils, which fostered confidence and trust and made these places of learning ideal institutions. It is said that even the fierce animals of the forest used to become tame and gentle in those surroundings. Above all, there was a certain amount of healthy austerity that was practised by the students and teachers. They lived a simple life-style devoid of ostentation and luxury, and while in the university, there was for the time being, perfect equality between students of rich and poor families and background. Destructive tendencies and psychological problems were noticeably absent. These forest universities were, therefore, ideal places for serious academic pursuit and spiritual quest. It is perhaps why in ancient India there were great strides made in all kinds of material and spiritual learning and culture. The lofty thoughts of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, and the ancient philosophies were born in such elevating environment close to nature.

What is the life of modern man in the age of electronics and high-tech gadgetry? Concern over 'self and survival' have become an obsession, sapping the energy and devouring enthusiasm and zest. Titillation of nerves, petty entertainments and addiction

5. Richard M. Restak, *The Brain—The Last Frontier* (New York: Warner Books, 1979) pp. 124-25.

to alcohol and narcotics have vitiated the atmosphere. There is shallow pleasure but not happiness, self-forgetfulness but not self-control and mastery, gratification but not fulfilment, momentary enjoyment but not bliss. Such insensitive human beings destroy but can never create. Our films, literature and art forms all reflect sensuality.

The saddest part is that the younger generation has been nourished and brought up exclusively in such environment. They have, therefore, not been taught or trained to recognize or appreciate the higher things of life. The pure joy of being one with nature has been replaced with flimsy amusements. Modern man has no leisure or opportunity to look beyond the towering buildings at the bright stars in the evening sky, to enjoy the poetry of the soft moonlight or the sound of sweetly singing birds, or other natural joys due to the blare of vehicles, televisions and radios. Rather he must be content with viewing the natural beauties on the silver screen. In cities there is no space for trees, or woods, or parks or green lawns. Modern man has been paying heavily psychologically for this deprivation. The taut nerves, anxieties, anger, restlessness, and so on are the hallmarks of our highly civilized human society!

Sri Ramakrishna used to advise world-weary devotees to retire now and then to solitary places and meditate. Peace is the Golden Fleece, none has found it in the noisy busy world. It has to be discovered in oneself in an environment of quietude. It is a fact that a few days of retirement to a forest cabin or to a solitary place of scenic beauty refreshes the tired mind and its cathartic power unburdens the heart of all pent-up strong emotions. Only a quiet mind can release the shining light of the Soul that lies within. Space, therefore, is a powerful

factor. It can either contract or expand our mental horizons.

Emphasizing the importance of physical surroundings the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: "Let spiritual practices be done in a clean and level place protected from high wind, free from pebbles, gravel and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water or market-booths, and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye" (II. 10). *Kurma Purāna* mentions also 'jantuvyapta' (infested by wild animals), and *saśabda* (noisy) places as unfitting for spiritual exercises. The World Health Organization has published several research papers on the ill-effects of noise pollution on the body and mind. Ulcers, insomnia, irritability, loss of memory and deafness are some of the punishments that noise administers. In affluent countries people are running away from busy cities and settling down in quiet rural areas. The great thinker of America, Henry Thoreau, aptly remarked, "I never found a companion that was so companionable as solitude."

Population pressure, unplanned growth of our cities, indiscriminate expansion of industrial areas have swallowed up much space. Whether problems are social or economic, they always have their repercussions on the mental life of the people. Environment and man go together. In large families children often are neglected. But undernourishment in early life permanently handicaps brain development. The damage, neurobiologists say, is irreversible. It should be remembered that while solving economic issues we often create psychological problems. Human beings are complex. Only with the holistic approach can studies be made from different co-related angles with a sense of proportion so that true and lasting solutions can be found.

A National Language for India

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

This incisive essay by the ninth President of the Ramakrishna Order (August 1962 to October 1965), first appeared in the May 1930 issue of this Journal. Six decades after, we Indians are still nowhere near a solution. Will we ever find one?

One of the things that strike one forcibly on return from a trip to a foreign country like the United States of America is the diversity of tongues obtaining in this country. Over a dozen languages, each with a more or less developed literature of its own, divide among themselves the allegiance of three hundred and twenty millions of people. The persistence of this 'Babel' of tongues is all the more striking because the country is culturally one. Europe, too, has a great many languages, but it is a continent, and there is nothing strange in each country having its own language. But the existence of so many languages within the same country is a great hindrance to the progress of national unity. It subconsciously engenders prejudice in the minds of people speaking a certain tongue against those who speak a different tongue. The object of this article is to suggest some remedy for minimizing the evils which are due to the multiplicity of languages in India. The subject may not be new, but at this time of national awakening it is worthwhile to go over the ground to see whether we can find out a common language for India or not. By a common language I mean one that will serve as the medium of interprovincial communication, a language by means of which the residents of one part of the country can exchange their views with their brothers and sisters in another part. Nothing more than this is possible now, because each of the dozen languages is old and, as already said, has a literature of its own. It is neither possible, nor is it desirable, to stamp out any language under such circumstances. What then are we to do? We are to find out what language will best serve the purpose of the inter-provincial language we need so badly in India. Such a language must have a copious and comprehensive vocabulary capable of expressing ideas in the different fields of life, and possess withal a more or less rich literature. Here one may ask, 'Have we not already in English a language which is just doing this function?' The answer is that though English does this function in certain respects among the educated sections, yet it has some serious disadvantages which will for ever preclude any attempt to install it as the national language for India. The first drawback of English is that it is not an indigenous language of India. As such it has to be laboriously acquired. And everyone with some experience knows how many patient years of toil are needed before familiarity with the language is gained. Contrast this with some of the existing Indian languages. How much easier is it to learn them! The curse of a foreign language is that every single word of it has to be committed to memory, and as everybody knows, English idioms are a difficult study for an outsider. And as to English pronunciation, it is simply hopeless. As against this let us take up an Indian language, say Hindi. The very fact that Hindi is spoken by over one hundred and twenty millions of people, that is, nearly two-fifths of the entire population, naturally brings us into contact with it in season and

out of season. We are more or less familiar with its words and sounds. Moreover it has a simple grammar which, in spite of its exaggerated difficulties about one or two things to which I shall presently refer, is very easy to learn. And, what is of prime importance it is phonetic. It is also a language which is pre-eminently adaptive, and has a wonderful capacity—in common with most of the Indian vernaculars—for expressing religious and philosophical ideas, the thing which is India's special province. It has also a very rich poetical literature and a fast developing prose literature too. All these things should at once give Hindi a predominance over English, no matter how rich the latter is in literature. The treasures of English literature will be beyond the reach of the rank and file of the Indian people unless they can have a sufficient command over the language, which it will take them years to do. The dream of certain enthusiasts that Indian children will readily pick up English if they hear it spoken in their nursery, will never materialize in India, for the simple reason that there will never be available a sufficient number of English people to form the required background to the Indian home-life. On the contrary, there are a hundred times more chances for an Indian language, Hindi for instance, to be so wide-spread in the land as to be imbibed with the mother's milk by every Indian child. The odds against English are overwhelming.

There are indeed people who are so convinced of the importance of English as a world language that they cannot think how any other language can be the national language of India. I refer them to countries like Japan, or France, or Germany. They do not use English as the common speech, but are just as fully alive to what is going on in the world, by having the latest books on science or philosophy or literature transla-

ted into their own tongue. It is thus only that the millions can get into touch with the best thoughts of other countries in a short time. Of course France or Germany has English-speaking groups. India too will have them. They will be our specialists in that line. English will remain as one of the second languages in the country to be learnt at option. That is all. But that does not prevent Hindi or any other equally suitable Indian language being the national language of India. From whatever angle we look at the question, English cannot stand in comparison with any of these Indian languages as regards the ease with which it can be acquired and spoken *en masse*.

Now let me explain why I claim for Hindi advantages over any other Indian language. Why should we not choose Bengali, which is as easy to learn as Hindi, and much richer in literature, or Marathi, which comes next in order? Why not take up Tamil, that great language of Southern India, which is so ancient and so very rich in literature? The answer is, we must choose that language which is easy to learn, easy to pronounce, is widely spoken, is capable of great adaptability, and is rich in literature. If we consider all these five points, we shall see that Hindi's claims are the highest. As regards the first and last points, Bengali scores over Hindi. It is learnt more quickly because of its simpler grammar, and it has a very rich literature. Regarding this last point it yields place, if at all, only to Tamil. But Bengali pronunciation is difficult compared with Hindi, which is phonetic. Students of Northern India who have learnt Bengali through the eye, find great difficulties in speaking it correctly. They read and understand, but they cannot speak Bengali. The colloquial forms of expression are different from the literary forms, which makes it so hard for non-Bengalees to speak correct Bengali. In fact, they are so conscious of

their defects in this matter that they do not often dare to speak it for fear of exciting ridicule. So Bengali cannot be the language we are seeking for. I have conceded that Bengali has a richer literature than Hindi, but let it be remembered that the poetical literature of Hindi is vast and exceedingly rich, although slightly more difficult. Marathi and Gujarati are even more difficult than Hindi, because of their three genders, more or less arbitrary, instead of two, as in Hindi. Tamil is very much more difficult, specially as regards pronunciation, which every outsider can testify to. As regards the second point, Hindi, in common with Marathi and Gujarati has advantages over Bengali or any Southern language. While as regards the third point, extensity, it easily has the first place in India, with Bengali following at a distance. With reference to the fourth point, *viz.* adaptability, Hindi yields to no other Indian language. So taking all things together Hindi fulfils most of the conditions that a national language in India should satisfy.

There is another point to consider. All the great North Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit. This is the reason why any one of them can be easily acquired by those who speak the cognate languages. All of them open the door to the vast cultural wealth which Sanskrit, 'the language of the gods', possesses more than any other language of the world. And it is impossible to overemphasize this point, for we, Indians, must always draw our inspiration from this inexhaustible mine of ancient treasures. Three of the four Southern languages, *viz.* Telugu, Canarese and Malayalam, too, have a large percentage of Sanskrit words in them. And for this reason no Southerner, except the Tamilian, will find it difficult to learn Hindi. On the other hand, a Northerner who wishes to learn Tamil or any other Southern language, knows how much more

laborious it is for him than it is for his Southern brothers to learn his own. I make bold to say that one born and brought up in Southern India, even a Tamilian, and possessing an average culture will be able to pick up Hindi in six months or even earlier. This should effectively silence those who oppose the idea of Hindi being chosen as the national language of India. Does not English exact fifty times more labour? One may question this statement by pointing to the perplexities of Hindi gender. But on closer scrutiny the subject will not appear so formidable as one thinks. There is method in its madness. French in spite of the same handicap is the continental language of Europe. Yet Hindi verbs, notwithstanding their complication with gender, are much easier than French verbs. The position of French as a continental language is a settled fact, and nobody demurs to it, while objections are raised against Hindi on the ground of difficulty, simply because it is a newcomer in the field. With a little familiarity the outstanding advantages of Hindi will be patent to one and all. Its association with the *Devanagari* script is another point in its favour, which links it up with Sanskrit. Moreover, Urdu, the language of Indian Mohammedans, is but a variant of Hindi. Therefore, since Hindi has so many outstanding advantages and can be learnt so easily, it is not wise to raise objections against its use as the national language of India, specially when national interests are at stake. Let me repeat that not one of the existing vernaculars of India will be cast aside. They will continue to be spoken just as they are, in the provinces. All we want is that Hindi should be made the medium of an interchange of views between one province and another. I have already said that English will remain as an optional language. It will lose its present position no doubt, but that

(Continued on page 496)

Sri Sarada Devi

V. GOPINATHAN

Some dissimilarities between Yasodhara, wife of Buddha, and Sri Sarada Devi are discussed in this interesting article. The author is from Kerala.

There are points of similarity in the lives of Gautama Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna in many respects, even in their approaches to the Supreme Truth or God, and both of them renounced the worldly life in the prime of their youth. Yet one was born in the lap of luxury in an exalted royal family, while the other was born in the home of an ordinary Brahmin family, amidst prayers and worship and the chanting of hymns and praises of God. Siddhartha was brought up in affluence and plenty, surrounded by worldly enjoyments, whereas Sri Ramakrishna was a lotus that grew up in a clear pool of renunciation and spirituality. Though it may appear to some that their lives were poles asunder, no doubt their goal was one and the same.

But when we consider the role of their partners-in-life, we take note of a gulf of differences and divergent natures. The way in which Yasodhara came into the life of Siddhartha and the unique appearance of Sarada in the life of Sri Ramakrishna are altogether unlike each other. When we contrast the two we can at once discern the great dissimilarity.

It was with the intent of holding back the mind of Siddhartha from being carried away on a wave of detachment and aversion to worldly enjoyment that Suddhodana, the king of Kapilavastu, arranged for the wedding of his son Siddhartha with the extremely beautiful princess Yasodhara. We know he succeeded in that purpose to some extent, for Siddhartha was infatuated with the stunning beauty of Yasodhara and enjoyed

the bliss of his marriage for many years. Finally, when Rahula his only son was born the clutches of Mahāmāyā were loosened and Siddhartha could come to his senses and into the consciousness of his great mission. Not only Yasodhara had no part to play in this vital turning-point, but she had not even an inkling of the great storm that raged in the mind of her beloved husband. Completely bound up in the pleasurable sense life of the royal court that she was, Yasodhara could not even remotely understand the true nature of Siddhartha. And what was the sequel? It was poignant heartache and severe shock at the deserting of herself and her child by Siddhartha. She could only shed tears over the callous (as it seemed to her) desertion of herself in the prime of her youth and her infant. She looked with misty eyes at the tender babe nursing at her breast and thought over the responsibility of bringing him up without the encouraging presence of his father. Only later on, when Siddhartha came back as the enlightened Buddha, Yasodhara's eyes were opened to the great reality. Then, chaste and devout lady as she was, Yasodharā placed herself at the feet of that Sannyasin Lord of hers and implored him to accept her as a humble disciple. Though with great reluctance at first, Buddha yielded to her wish eventually. Thus, only in the last days of their relationship as *guru* and *śiṣya*, Yasodhara got a glimpse of the light of the greatness of the Holy Beloved in her own heart. Thereafter Yasodhara became a model partner-in-life of the great Lord of Men and followed the noble Dharma. She dedicated herself to the furthering of

the great mission of the Buddha. Certainly Yasodhara underwent a great transformation in mind and spirit. But the credit of that transformation goes entirely to Gautama Buddha, the spiritual Luminary. Yasodhara was only the moon reflecting the glorious light of the sun, Buddha.

But Sarada Devi's life was entirely different from that of Yasodhara. For, she was married to Sri Ramakrishna at the tender age of five, before she was able to think and judge for herself. It was when she reached a mature age that she heard for the first time about her husband, that he was a crack who remained always immersed in contemplation of God. Yasodhara could enjoy a warm though short-lived married life with her loving husband, Siddhartha. But to Sarada Devi from the very outset a bitter cup offered itself. Yet how effortlessly, how contentedly and with what calm resignation did she take that cup of life! Not only so, but she was unperturbed by the gossip and rumours of worldly persons regarding her husband, for she knew intuitively that her Lord was a divine and extraordinary person of exalted mind. She felt herself blessed being his partner-in-life, and could rise to the occasion as required, even from her young age. Though not educated in the schoolish sense, she knew she had a part to play in his great mission. Sarada Devi could not, of course, serve Sri Ramakrishna in his physical form throughout her own life. But she partook of all the likes and dislikes of her husband while he yet lived in his body, shared all his joys and sorrows, and was a helpmate in his spiritual ministrations. She silently and devotedly served the Master in all ways. And after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna she took upon herself his unfinished work, guiding innumerable earnest souls, managed her own large household, and nurtured the fledgling Ramakrishna Order. The very incarnation of renunciation,

Sarada Devi ascended the mighty steps of service to God in humanity which could not even be dreamt of by Yasodhara.

Yasodhara enjoyed the life of wife and mother for about twelve years. Any woman blessed with youth and beauty wishes to fulfil these two dreams. Sarada Devi too was eminently and bountifully graced with both youth and beauty by God. Like Śakti to Śiva, Sarada Devi could have, if she had wanted, easily transformed Sri Ramakrishna into *Ardhanārīśvara*. (Lord Śiva is so called because half of his body was given over to his consort Pārvatī.) But she didn't make even a show of an attempt at that, for she was fully conscious of the great world mission of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna himself had avowed the truth of this on one occasion. Had it not been for Sarada's hearty cooperation, it is doubtful whether Sri Ramakrishna could have succeeded in the upward turning of his soul in complete surrender to God.

It is perhaps the dream of all married women to hold a handsome baby at the breast and to be cheered by its growing up to accomplished adulthood. When Sarada Devi's old mother wept that her daughter would never have the fortune of being addressed as 'Mother' by her own offspring (being married to a *sannyāsin* who practised absolute continence), Sri Ramakrishna told her thus: "Your daughter (Sarada) will have so many sons (in the spiritual sense) that she will become tired of hearing the repeated calls of 'Mother, Mother.'" But as we know, Sarada Devi somehow excelled this prediction of her husband. She never tired of the repeated calls of 'Mother' by her devoted countless sons and daughters. Each call of 'Mother' by her spiritual children strengthened her resolve to serve the Lord with determination, renunciation and love.

Yasodhara joined the institution started by Buddha and worked for the noble cause

to the end of her life. Nevertheless, she contributed nothing original. She only followed the footsteps of Buddha who had set everything right. But Sarada Devi inherited the stupendous task of erecting a great mansion out of nothing, so to say, except the single stone laid by Sri Ramakrishna. Of course, she was ably assisted by the monastic and lay disciples of the great Master, who did not spare themselves in the work. Still, it was a great and onerous responsibility for a young widow like Sarada Devi, who was compelled to work amidst grown-up men, some of whom were older than herself. And she had to lift them up with herself to the heights of spirituality. One can easily guess the predicament she was placed in. Without any resources at her disposal, Sarada Devi had to concentrate on the Feet of the Blessed Lord and pray fervently for His assistance in all matters. One is thrilled to remember the momentous things she managed with her meagre means.

Some entertain the erroneous idea that Sarada Devi was relegated to the background while Sri Ramakrishna was alive, and lived a hidden if not neglected existence as a housewife. But nothing can be further from the truth. Sarada Devi was incessantly active even then, only it was behind a curtain, as it were. Every movement and saying of Sri Ramakrishna brought to surface the latent power of Sarada Devi. Like *Mahā*

Viṣṇu before *Ādi Śakti* (the Primordial Power), Sri Ramakrishna was enacting and unfolding a divine drama of devotion, ecstasy and samādhi in propitiation of the great goddess Sarada Devi. He was fully aware of her greatness as the Mother of the Universe, capable of blessing one and all. That was why he selected her as his consort. Immaculate, beautiful, and purity incarnate, Sarada Devi was sanctified by her relation to Sri Ramakrishna like the Divine Mother was with Lord Siva. Sarada Devi, the incarnation of Śakti, came down on earth to make people realize the sublimity of the 'Śiva-Śakti union'.

It was with great reluctance that Gautama Buddha enrolled Yasodhara in his band of disciples. Truly, as he feared, these women inmates in time became responsible for the decay and degeneration of monastic Buddhism and paved the way for Buddhism's decline within a few hundred years after Buddha's death.

But it was the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi herself who laid the foundation of the Sri Ramakrishna Movement, resting it on the concept of the universal motherhood of God. The holy '*Tapasvinī*' (Ascetic-Mother) that she was, Sarada Devi through her life's example showed the way to both sannyāsins and householders.

Why should my sons lack food? They shall not. I myself prayed to the Master, "O Master, may your sons never suffer for want of food."

—Holy Mother

Child Krishna of Guruvayur

A. VISWANATHAN

The Lord becomes the servant of His own devotees. There is no end to His play. The touching story is told by Sri Viswanathan, who is the Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad.

In the Gita (Ch. VII, verse 21), Shri Krishna tells Arjuna:

*Yo yo yām yām tanum bhaktah
śraddhayā arcitum icchati
tasya tasyācalām śraddhām
tāmeva vidadhāmyaham*

I give unswerving faith unto each devotee who seeks to worship with faith, Me, in whatever form of Mine he chooses.

Many are the ways in which devotees take delight in worshipping the Lord. A most delightful way of approaching the Lord is with an attitude of parental tenderness and affection towards Him. In this too, most fortunate is that devotee, who can look upon Shri Krishna as a mother would on her own infant. A mother seeks nothing from her infant. She only gives and gives. There is only love, ennobled by tenderness and reinforced by strength. There is no egoism, no expectation of boons and blessings. It is sacrifice, with no thought about the self. Like the mother towards her infant, the devotee is blessed with a continuous awareness of the Lord. The great Yaśodā reigns supreme in such love for her Krishna. Hers is pure love, and there is no intellectual sophistication in it. Such love elevates the devotee spiritually, and makes a captive of the Lord. The *Nārāyaṇīyam* describes it beautifully:

*Nipāyayantī stanam ankagam tvām
vilokayantī vadanam hasantī,
daśām Yaśodā katamām na bhaje
saḥ tādrśaḥ, pāhī Hare! gadād mām!*

Feeding breast to Thee who had climbed onto her lap, looking at Thy beautiful visage and smiling at Thee, to what heights of ecstasy did not Yasodā rise! Mayst that Thou, O Hari, save me from my afflictions! (D. 41 v. 10).

The enchanting Child Krishna of Guruvayur (Kerala) continues to draw unto Himself, irresistably, many great devotees. Among the most remarkable was Kurūramma (1570-1640 A.D.). She belonged to a small village near Paravur in the then Travancore State. As was the custom then, as a young girl she was married into the Kurūr Namboodiri household (or 'Ilom'). Being the eldest bride, in course of time she became matriarch of the family, known by the name Kurūramma. Those whom the Lord loves, He ensures that they do not develop distracting ties toward the world. And so, before she could become a mother, Kurūramma became a widow.

Without a child of her own, Kurūramma began to look upon the infant Krishna as her child. She was no poet or savant. Intellectually, she was an ordinary person, and always resorted to only one verse of the *Nārāyaṇīyam* whenever she meditated on the Lord:

*Komalam kūjayan venum
syāmaloyam kumarakah
veda vedyam param brahma
bhāsatām purato mama*

The One who makes beautiful music from His flute, the Dark-hued One, the One

who is Himself the Param Brahma, the Ultimate Truth, extolled in the Vedas, may that celestial Young One appear before me in all His resplendence!

As Kurūramma advanced into old age, she became, day by day, weak and helpless with no one to take care of her. One day, after visiting the Lord in Guruvayur temple, she came back and sat down in the front of her house, utterly exhausted, and wearily uttering the Lord's name in her distress. Immediately thereupon, a handsome young boy came from a distance, saying that he was just passing by and had heard someone calling him by name, and could he help her in any way? Kurūramma in her innocence was none the wiser about the boy's identity. She talked to him about her troubles and asked if he would fetch her some water. The young boy set about to fulfil her wish with alacrity. Thereafter, to the delight of the old lady, he went on and completed all the remaining household tasks.

From that day it became a regular duty with him to turn up at her house every morning and help the blessed lady with her household tasks. In return, she would reward him with some sweetmeats or a plantain, even as a mother would do for her own child. Whenever the youngster was around, Kurūramma felt an indescribable joy. She would spend her time laughing and playing with him. She would fondle him and whenever he committed some mischief, she would, like a mother, reprimand him. She found that if the boy was absent for any length of time she would be plunged into the depths of loneliness and gloom. After a long association with her young helpmate, the bond of Kurūramma's affection for him developed into mysticism, and all her other bonds to the world were severed. Kurūramma's mind was simple and unsophisticated; she knew *bhakti*, the love of the Lord, and only that. Once, when a person asked

her why she, a woman, committed the impropriety of doing 'Nārāyaṇa Japam' at all times round the month without interruption, her reply was simply "that Yama, the Lord of Death, when He comes, does not grant even a moment's reprieve. Ready or no, one has to go."

Another great devotee, a contemporary of Kurūramma, was the saint Vilvamangala. To him too, Shri Krishna used to appear every day. Vilvamangala, however, was inclined to ritualism in his worship of Shri Krishna, and had his preconceptions regarding the conduct required of a good devotee.

When Shri Krishna appeared to Vilvamangala everyday, He used to receive the holy man's offerings in the *pūjā*. Vilvamangala used to be aware that the Lord was bestowing His special grace on him. There are many stories about the lessons that Vilvamangala used to have from the Lord on the superior nature of egoless *bhakti*.

Once there was an old brāhmin who suffered from severe pain in his stomach. Hearing about Vilvamangala, and that he used to converse with the Lord everyday, as a last resort he came to him. He requested Vilvamangala to find a way to cure him of his ailment. For reply, Vilvamangala had only doses of philosophy to offer. He told the brāhmin that it was not possible for any person to escape the result of his own sins, either of the present or of previous lives. The only way was for him to endure his affliction and pain. Hearing it, the old man departed in great dejection, not knowing what to do next. Greatly distressed and utterly exhausted, he dragged himself to where Kurūramma was residing. He hardly knew anything of her greatness or devotion to God. When Kurūramma saw the old brāhmin at her doorstep, she rushed to give him comfort. She asked him to wash and sit for his meal, and began to lay out a

fresh plantain leaf for him with all kinds of delicious food. Watching her and seeing the food deepened the old man's anguish all the more. He told Kurūramma about his stomach trouble and that even the great Vilvamangala had not been able to intercede with the Lord to get him cured. However, as Kurūramma continued to insist, he had to sit down and try to eat. Much to his surprise, he suddenly found that all his pain vanished. Joyfully then, he proceeded to enjoy his meal, as never before for a long time. In due course, as intended by the Lord, the news of this happening reached Vilvamangala. The great devotee realized that he had never totally surrendered himself to the Lord.

On another occasion Kurūramma requested Vilvamangala to accept *bhikṣā*, the alms due to begging mendicants, from her home on a particular day. He agreed, but after a few days forgot all about his promise. On the appointed day, when Kurūramma went to the temple tank for her bath, she came to know from an aristocratic lady, also bathing there, that the latter was herself expecting the holy man to come to her house that day for his *bhikṣā*. This was a great shock to the pious and simple Kurūramma. She knew that she stood nowhere near this aristocratic lady to whom Vilvamangala was going, so she returned to her home lamenting her ill-luck.

It is customary in Kerala when a sannyāsi starts out on a journey, for a disciple of his to sound a conch to denote the auspicious moment. In this instance, when Vilvamangala started from his hermitage towards the noble woman's home, though the disciple tried to sound the conch as was usual with him, he could not get any sound out of it, however much he tried. Immediately Vilvamangala stopped to think, and it flashed into his memory that he had earlier given his promise to visit Kurūramma. Full

of regret for his lapse, he directed his entourage to the house of Kurūramma instead. Suddenly the disciple found that he could sound the conch.

On arriving at Kurūramma's place the great Vilvamangala was pleasantly surprised to see that excellent arrangements had been hastily prepared for the *pūjā* that precedes the taking of *bhikṣā*. And that the old lady was being assisted in this by a very comely looking young boy. As Vilvamangala commenced the worship and offered *tulasi* leaves at the feet of the idol of Shri Krishna, he found that each leaf of *tulasi* would instead fall at the feet of that young boy, who all the while was standing by the side of Kurūramma, watching with a faint smile on his lips. At first a trifle annoyed, he looked at the boy once again with his inner eye, and found standing in front of him was none other than Shri Krishna Himself, in all His resplendent beauty. Thus, once again a wise revelation came to him. That simple devout lady was so close to the Lord that He condescended to perform household chores for her!

Vilvamangala was himself known to be a sufferer from a gastric ulcer. However, he would perform the daily *pūjā* to the Lord, and only after Shri Krishna would actually appear and partake of the food offering, would the saint partake of it himself. One day he waited for long, but Shri Krishna was not to be seen. The acute pain of the stomach ulcer was beginning to make itself felt, and in anxiety and physical discomfort Vilvamangala began to pace restlessly back and forth between the entrance and the shrine, impatient for the Lord to appear. By evening Shri Krishna was seen to come running, breathless and covered with dust and dirt. Intimate devotee that he was, Vilvamangala proceeded to scold the Lord for delaying and for making him suffer so much. Replying, Shri Krishna told the devotee that He

was helpless. As He had unwittingly committed some mischief—capricious Child that He was!—while performing some household task at Kurūramma's house, she had got so annoyed with Him that she imprisoned Him by over-turning on Him a big earthen pot (traditionally used in Kerala for the ripening of bananas). It was only by evening, after

much pleading that Kurūramma relented and released the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient Lord from His imprisonment!

The tales of these devotees are sweet, and the devotees of the Child of Guruvayur are endless in number. May the enchanting Child and His devotees prosper in their love for each other!

A NATIONAL LANGUAGE FOR INDIA

(Continued from page 489)

should not deter us from exercising our judgement in this all-important matter. What we want is a suitable national language, and Hindi, as I have tried to show, is the best one available. So let us choose that.

The solution of the language problem in India requires some little sacrifice. If instead of choosing that language which has the greatest claims, we fight for our respective mother-tongues—for which we have naturally a partiality—it will be hampering the national cause. For a united India a common medium of intercourse, a national language, is absolutely necessary, and for this let us

throw overboard our personal predilections and be guided by practical considerations of the highest national importance. The one thing needed now is to provide facilities in every High School for learning Hindi. Let us earnestly do that, and the result will be marvellous. The national language cannot be delayed any more. The day is not far distant when Hindi will occupy its rightful place among the languages in India. We shall no more have to depend on a foreign tongue to speak to our own brothers and sisters of other provinces. A little more effort, and Hindi as a national medium of expression will be an accomplished fact.

A Polyandrous Tribe : The Kinnauri

AMIYA BHAUMIK

India's many subcultures, including that of the clannish mountain people under discussion in this article, have developed as the result of thousands of years of struggle with the physical environment, explains the author who is a research scholar in the Department of Anthropology at Lucknow University.

Inhabitants of each geographic area necessarily seek their adjustment with their physical surroundings through their constant interaction with it in order to fulfil most of their needs. As conditions of physical environment vary from one region to another, a diversity in human effort and social and cultural forms are bound to occur. They attract the eye of the layman as well as the social scientist.

Famous for its splendrous scenic beauty in the Western Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh, in the extreme north, is one of the states of the Indian Union. It is bounded on its four sides by Kashmir, Tibet, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana. Deep valleys, cascading mountain streams, thick forests of pine and deodar, sparkling lakes and green fields specially distinguish the state and make it a place of enchanting natural beauty. Towering snow-clad mountains rise to the vicinity of 22,000 feet all through and present sublime and spectacular scenery.

Himachal is divided into ten districts—Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Mahasu, Sirmur, Kinnaur, Simla, Kangra, Kulu, and Lahaul and Spiti. The capital is Simla, at an altitude of 7,262 feet, the most attractive tourist spot and hill resort, but Kulu, Manali, and Dharmasala (home in exile of the Dalai Lama) are also much sought-after hill stations in the summer. Other months see the whole upland region frequently lashed by icy winds and covered with snow.

Himachal's history goes back very far ;

even to the Vedic age, when the region was acclaimed. Its earliest tribal people were assimilated into the Aryan culture. These clans today—notably the Gaddis, Gujars, Kinners, Lahaulis, and Pangawalas, still follow Hindu traditions. Though each has its own dialect, the influence of Sanskrit is discernible in all of them. Some live in very remote and inaccessible areas. Road communication has been receiving priority, yet, during winter many places remain entirely cut off for weeks because of heavy snowfalls. Most of Himachal's indigenous folk are poor because of rocky soils and little industry. Generally they remain at the subsistence level.

Kinnaur is the north-eastern frontier district, the whole of which is secluded from other parts of the state and country. The district being made up entirely of rugged mountains is encircled by high hills and peaks. Its eastern border connects with the international border of western Tibet. This border is well-defined by water, parting the Zaskar Mountains. Southern boundary adjoins the districts of Uttarkashi, of Uttar Pradesh, and the next district of Himachal, Mahasu. On the west, Kinnaur touches Mahasu also, and the Kulu district. The northern boundary adjoins the Spiti sub-division of Lahaul and Spiti district. Covering an area of 6,520 square kilometres, there is a population of only about sixty thousand, but a large portion of the region is uninhabited due to the vast range of snowy mountains and inaccessible crags and forests. Besides, winter temperatures of -30° are common.

Kinnaur is intercepted by the river Satluj and its tributaries, namely, Spiti, Ropa, Taiti, Kashang, Mulgoon, Yula, Wanger, Shorang, and the Rupi. There are also the Tirang, the Gyanthing, the Baspa, the Duling and Saldang.

Prior to the merger of the former princely states, the area comprising Kinnaur was a *tahsil*, called Chini, of the erstwhile Bushahr State, under the charge of a *Tahsildar* or assistant collector. The present name of Kinnaur was adopted in 1960 when the region was made a district for the purpose of more convenient and better administration, 'Kinnaur' being derived from the name of the inhabitants, Kinners.

The princely Bushahr state had an interesting mythological history. In very ancient times, a good general of a raja (perhaps Dev Purna of Kamru) was envied by other courtiers. It is believed that he, therefore, went on a pilgrimage to the holy lake Manasarovar, and on returning from the lake he was followed down the mountain passes by a blue-water stream, the Shohneet of the Puranas, i.e., the present Satluj. After passing Shipki, in the domain of his ex-sovereign, Banasur established his own capital at Shohneetpur, named after the blue river. Shohneetpur is said to be the same as the present Sarhan. Banasur built and consolidated his kingdom and eventually reconciled with Dev Purna, who had remained without an heir. Later King Dev Purna offered his state, the Baspa Valley to Banasur when he was about to die. Thus the Baspa valley got added to the Shohneetpur and a new bigger state called Bushahr came into existence.

History of the Kinners

Inhabitants of the present district of Kinnaur are generally called Kinners or Kanauras.

Legends and mythology depict Kinners (Skt. *Kinnarās*) as a distinct race of semi-celestial beings living in mountains, sometimes described as 'horse-headed', also *Kim-puruṣās*. The Purānas describe *Kinnarās* as heavenly musicians or choristers. Heinrich, in his book *Myths and Legends*, pointed out that such creatures were supposed to inhabit a semi-celestial region high in the Himalaya, where saints of earth who attain perfection consort with these supernatural beings. Satyaketu Vidyalankar mentions that the area of mountains of the Satluj river where the erstwhile Bushahr and other states near the Simla Hills existed was anciently known as Kinnerdesh. The Kinnerdesh was situated between the mountains of the Satluj and the Yamuna. Inhabitants of the Kinnerdesh were called Kinners.

Kinnaur culture is full of folk songs and tales which go back to the *Mahābhārata* period. Kinnaur seems to be the region where the Pandavas spent the best part of their exile. Kinners, however, are mentioned in many of the Hindu religious books. The great poet Kalidasa remembers them in his famous book *Kumārsambhava*.

Therefore it is easy to be convinced that there did exist an ancient race of Kinners and that race inhabited the area now comprising our district, as well as adjacent areas of the Himalayas.

Social Life

Kinners are a closely structured group. The family is the smallest unit of social organization, but in Kinnaur it assumes a tripartite constitution, viz. nuclear, extended and polyandrous. Nuclear families are very few, consisting of two parents and their unmarried children, or husband and wife without children. But there are extended families, comprising members of several generations, both vertically and horizontally,

and polyandrous families that include wife and more than one husband and their unmarried children. Families of multiple wives (*polygynous*) are not found.

Society in Kinnaur is patrilineal with patrilocal residence. Both succession and inheritance of property occur in the male line. Each household is controlled by a strong patriarch. In a polyandrous family when one of the husbands dies, the property belonging to him is inherited by the surviving co-husbands. After the death of all husbands, the sons begotten by them inherit the patrimony in equal shares. Practically, as long as brother(s) of a deceased husband live, the death of that person is recorded in the revenue papers as 'issueless' and the property is mutated in favour of his surviving brother(s).

Children born unsanctioned (extramaritally) to a widow or to an uncommitted woman, called *poltu*, male, or *poltee*, female, have no claim to property by way of inheritance. Children of a legally married woman have the social sanction to get the whole property of the deceased father(s) through inheritance. The *poltu*, as a rule, (if accommodated by other members of the family) become servants to the rest of the household. They are supported by the family or sometimes are given a small portion of land and a small sum of money by the head of the family according to his means and discretion. Such an illegitimate child has no right to property.

There are two sets of rules in connection with the division of property in a polyandrous family. These are *jathong* and *kanchong*. *Jathong* refers to the right of the eldest and *kanchong* to the youngest of the family. Before the partition of property takes place the good land is given to the eldest brother and the ancestral house to the youngest. After distributing the above, the rest of the

property is then divided in equal shares. The ideology behind such practice is that the youngest son being just a starter or not an earning hand, should be given a new home for himself and that the eldest son should get the best land, in recognition of his seniority and experience in the matter of cultivation.

Wajib-ul-araz is a custom through which powers are restricted to the members of the joint family, either to alienate or otherwise transfer any property against the interests of reversioners.

Marriage

Generally, Kinners prefer polyandry, though monogamous marriages are also found. It is due to outside influences. Polyandry keeps the family close-knit and prevents both over-population and fragmentation of the already small agricultural holdings. It also provides sufficient able-hands to eke out a precarious living from the inhospitable soil, and allows full benefit of scarce resources by way of pooling them together. Moreover, formerly polyandry was directly encouraged by the imposing of penalties on the partitioner. Government banned the division of moveable and immoveable property among the brothers. Violators had to pay heavy penalties.

In the polyandrous marriage system, several brothers are shared by one wife. In some cases wife's sister is also brought as a second wife, if the former is barren. Sometimes also a younger brother can marry another girl because of the common wife's being older. In that case, if the new wife does not agree to accept other brothers as her husbands, then the division of property is inevitable.

All the husbands are reckoned as fathers of each child. The eldest brother is called *teg-boba* (elder father) and the others *gato-*

boba (younger father). Practically, the eldest brother is regarded as the father of all the children begotten from the wife.

During marriage ceremonies all brothers who are to marry a girl have to observe a special custom. Each is required to wear a turban, locally called *pag likshimu*, in order to have the status of bridegroom.

The most adverse effect of the polyandrous arrangement is that a number of the female population is left unmarried. They often take refuge in the monastic convents, becoming nuns.

Role of Women

In polyandry woman has an important role. This mode of marriage is an economic necessity for the Kinners, so long brothers have to live in a joint family and have to depend on local scanty resources for their subsistence. The unity of the family depends upon the ingenuity of the lady of the house who looks after all her husbands with equal favour, without giving any cause for offence to anyone.

Women are very industrious and play a vital role in the economic life. Besides the usual daily household cares, they are often seen afield, helping in various agricultural operations, save ploughing, which is always done by men. The women sow the seed, weed, irrigate and harvest the crops, make hay, collect firewood and pasture the livestock, and carry loads. Wool carding is also part of their job. Apart from these, they

help in any other type of work. Despite this solid contribution, they are to a great extent dependent on the men in all stages and situations of life, for shelter, food, and clothing. Except for articles given by her parents at the time of marriage, and to which she is customarily entitled, a woman (excepting a widow) has no right by way of inheritance, and otherwise to any property, either in her husbands' or in her parents' house. Even wages earned occasionally, by some women, are generally not retained or spent privately by them, but are handed over to the parents, in the case of unmarried girls, or to their husbands, by the married.

Summing up the role of the women, Dr. Van Der Sleen mentioned that the women do everything, including the heaviest jobs, and the only job to which the men attend to regularly is ploughing, which really is little more than addressing the oxen by means of a heavy cudgel. He says that women provide the best and the cheapest available labour in the area, and to procure it one may even [wish?] to marry four or five wives. Till such time as education among the women spreads, their existing condition is not likely to improve appreciably.*

* Fortunately, after independence, Himachal Pradesh has been taking rapid strides in the field of education and economic development. Tourism and road construction have substantially contributed to increasing prosperity in the state. Growing consciousness of changes taking place in the country has had an impact on the out-dated social customs.

There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.

—Swami Vivekananda

Hindu Eschatology and Cosmogony

SYAMADAS BANERJEE

The author discusses some of the aspects of cosmogony outlined in India's ancient Sankhya Philosophy. He is a former Director of Geological Survey of India. At present he is an honorary worker in our Ramakrishna Mission Centre at Narainpur (M.P.).

Eschatology is the branch of theology concerned with death, judgement, heaven and hell. For millennia, man's inquisitiveness has centred in such questions as what happens when a man dies, what is his origin and goal, what is his relationship with the phenomenal universe, and how the universe has come into existence.

The Hindu concept of cosmogony and cosmic evolution is mainly based on Kapila's Sāṅkhya Philosophy of the twenty-five principles. In addition, another important authority is Patañjali, but his system is also based upon the Sāṅkhya, the points of difference being very few. Patañjali admits a Personal God in the form of a first teacher, while the Sāṅkhyas admit of God as a nearly perfected being, temporarily in charge of a cycle of creation. Secondly, the Yogis hold the mind to be equally all-pervading with the soul, or *Puruṣa*, and the Sāṅkhyas do not.¹

Another important school, Advaita, believes in one Existence, the Absolute, or Brahman, and the universe as an apparent manifestation or *māyā*, having no real existence. To them, the soul does not go anywhere after its apparent death, because omnipresent is the true Self of man. Similarly, the creation and evolution are also apparent, and on removal of cosmic ignorance, or

māyā, nothing remains but One—the True, the Absolute.²

The First Principle is the undifferentiated *Puruṣa-Prakṛti*, the Prime Cause (*Mahākāraṇa*)—source and repository of all creation, beyond time, space and causation. It is the *Paramātmā* of the Yogis, and *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss), or Brahman, of the Advaitists. The *Brahman-Śakti*, or the Power of Brahman, is the *Prakṛti*, inseparable from Brahman, and wherefrom flows the creative energy, wherein lie in equilibrium the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, the psychic and physical material cause of the universe. The undifferentiated Brahman is beyond the reach of human mind and speech to describe, and can only be realized in *Turīya*, the state of cosmic consciousness.

The cycle of creation (*kalpa*) starts with a process of differentiation—a vibration, or stir, the emerging of the sound OM (AUM), or *Nāda-brahman*, the Pure Consciousness becoming conscious of Itself. Man's thinking power, or knowledge, could at best reach up to this point. The 'big bang' theory of the modern scientists for the creation of the universe may be something analogous. Even in the *Bible* we find 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' (St. John). The similar statement we have in our Veda:

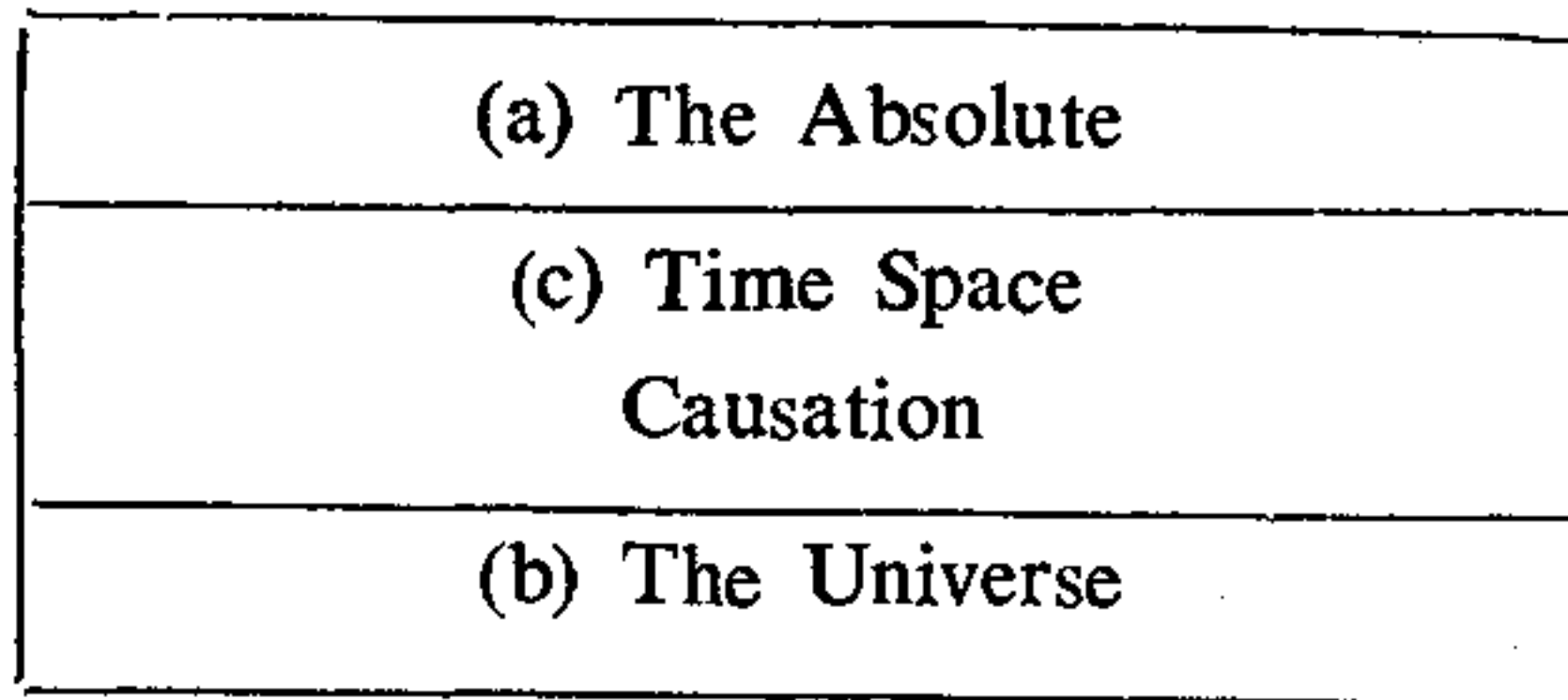
1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, p. 123.

2. Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980) pp. 324-325.

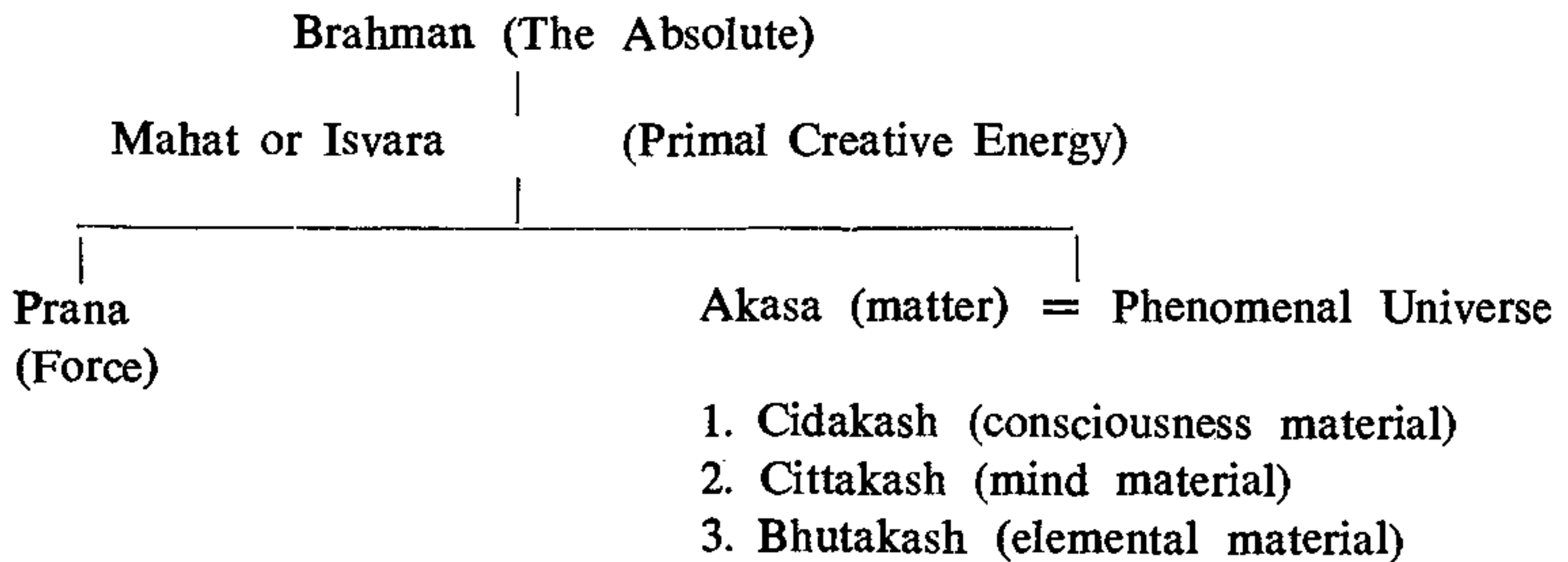
“*Vagvai paramam brahma*—Word indeed is God.”³

Differentiation and evolution in Nature are pointed out in modern science. For example, the formation of all rocks from a primal melted material termed *magma* by the geologists, and the explanation of evolution of all molecules—simple hydrogen to heavier complex and organic substances—from the primal cosmic energy, given by the famous Einsteinian equation $E = mc^2$.

Swami Vivekananda described evolution as subjective and explained it using the simple diagram⁴:



wherein the absolute Pure Consciousness becomes the universe through the medium of time, space, and the law of causation. He also gave the differentiation in the following manner:



The second Principle according to the above is *Mahat*, or *Isvara*, the Universal Mind. It is the first product of cosmic evolution after the start of creation caused by the play of the three *gunas*. The Cosmic Intelligence of the *Puruṣa* is transmitted, and it acts as the repository of all creative impressions (memory) like a giant computer. Herein, it is said, the three aspects of *Nāda-brahman* (OM), express as *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Siva*, the Hindu Trinity, the Gods of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. The Cosmic Intelligence evolves through *Prakṛti*, embodying the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. (A beautiful allegory of the creation of the world is given in the *Devī Māhātmyam*.)⁵

From the *Mahat* or *Isvara* are produced the individual souls or *jīvātmas*. The internal psyche of the individual embodied soul has three faculties: *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahankāra*. *Manas* or mindstuff records sense-impressions which yield knowledge and lead to action by the power of will. The *buddhi* is the discriminating faculty classifying the mind impressions and making possible reaction; and the *ahankāra* is the ego-sense, claiming impressions as individual, and misapprehending the Soul as the ego.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, pp. 57-58.
 4. *Jnana Yoga*, pp. 108-9.

5. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) p. 282.

This is the subtle *manomayakośa*, or mind sheath, one of the veils of *māyā* covering the Pure *Ātman* or Soul.

The next further evolution is that of the mind. The cosmic Principles, viz. the five subtle elements (*ākāśa*, *vāyu*, *tej*, *āpa*, *kṣiti* (space, air, colour, water and earth, respectively); the five sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue, nose); and the five organs of action (vocal organ, hands, feet, and the organs of generation and evacuation), and the five vital life forces (*prāṇas*) all evolve from it. These, along with mind, intellect, and ego or *ahaṅkāra*, with *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, compose the twenty-five Principles of Sāṅkhya. (known as *cosmic*, because they are found universally throughout nature). The *jīvātma*, thus evolved, with its subtle coverings and gross physical coverings is the embodied being. Due to all these evolutes, the Soul is also envisioned as dwelling within five *kośas* (sheaths). These are evolved as above, the sheath of the gross physical elements (*annamayakośa*), the sheath of mind (*manomayakośa*), the sheath of intellect (*vijñānamayakośa*), the sheath of the vital life-forces (*prāṇamayakośa*), and the thin sheath of cosmic *māyā*, the sheath of bliss (*ānandamayakośa*).

All gross evolutes have within them, due to the series of evolutionary steps described, the subtle evolutes, (just like a tree having its potential form present within its seed), and after the end of the cycle (*kalpa*), they revert back into their most subtle original unmanifested state. There they remain at rest or dormant. The souls proceed through this *śṛṣṭi cakra* (cycle of evolution-involution) adopting various bodies life after life impelled by the inevitable universal law of karma.⁶

Thus the universe pulsates between expansion and contraction. Evidence of the

6. *Jnana Yoga*, p. 302.

expanding universe is thus seen in the discovery of the 'red shift' or Doppler's Effect. A stage will come thereafter when an opposite movement (involution) will lead the whole creation back to the unmanifested subtle state from whence it came. When the universe is finally thus dissolved at the end of a *kalpa*, it is said to rest in *yoga-nidrā*, or yoga sleep.

The spiritual evolution of a *jīva* is not exactly that of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. It is a succession of events in the time-space-causation framework, involving apparently both evolution and involution, somewhat akin to the formation of a cocoon, wherein an insect or spider encloses itself within its own material and then comes out of it to find its freedom. In fact, freedom is the very nature of all *jīvas*. It is said that even an electron, strongly bound in the inner shell of an atom, tries to escape through a process known as 'electron tunnelling'. Nearly a hundred years ago Swami Vivekananda⁷ echoed the same truth that everything in this universe, right from an atom to all things sentient and insentient, are constantly struggling to escape to freedom.

Consciousness and life are also functions of the universe, the omniscience of which is indicated by the successful modern experiments on sub-atomic supraluminal consciousness transmission,⁸ showing the underlying unity behind the universe. The unit conception is also carried by the scientific fact that the sum total of energy of the universe (all mass converted) is constant. The cosmochemical abundance in the universe is also constant, according to geochemistry.

Life in the universe is ubiquitous. Bacteria are found inside meteorites coming from

7. Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984) pp. 104-5.

8. *Prabuddha Bharata editorial*, Vol. 95, May 1989; pp. 228-235.

space, and organic molecules in the interstellar dust. It is also very astounding that the microcosm and the macrocosm, the two extremes in nature, look so alike. The structure of an atom is just like a miniature universe; ontogeny repeats phylogeny (bio-science); and geological microstructures simulate the mega-structure.⁹ Even before these scientific discoveries were made, Vivekananda remarked that the microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan, just as the individual soul encased in the living body and the Universal Soul in the Living *Prakṛti*—the objective universe.¹⁰ No wonder that Sri Ramakrishna so often used to say that whatever is in our body is also present in the universe—(*Jā āche bhānde tāi āche brahmānde.*)

Now, let us examine the Hindu eschatology. Swami Vivekananda gave a good account of it in his letter of 13 Feb. 1896 to Mr. E. T. Sturdy.

When a man dies his gross body gets destroyed along with the elements that were the cause of the body. The soul in a subtle body escapes the dead body in a more fine and rapidly vibrating condition; therefore it is invisible to us. The subtle body takes away with it the subtle elements, the subtle senses, organs and *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṅkāra*.

The *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṅkāra* together form the character of the departed individual, depending on the sum total resultant impressions in his previous births. This is called the body formed by *samskāras*. What it is, is the outcome of all the experiences that impressed the mind-stuff in the past—past deeds, thoughts, etc., good and

bad. The *law of karma* thus effects the formation and shape of the subtle body, and the future characteristics of the physical body in births to come. The ingrained *samskāras* or impressions might be reflected by the modern discovery of RNA/DNA molecules in the genes of individuals, determining largely their character pattern.

Depending on this *samskāra* phenomenon, the dualistic school has developed a three-fold eschatology of possibilities for the individual soul when it leaves this world, namely: (1) heavens, (2) different spheres or lokas, and (3) ghosts and animal bodies.

Righteous people go to different heavens, but on the exhaustion of their *punyās* or the fruits of their good deeds, again they return to the earth assuming different bodies in different social environments. It is said that most of the souls strongly bound by *karma* (past actions) are reborn within a short period of their passing away.

The rebirth process has been described in the *Gītā* as the soul entering the earth through rain, and then getting fixed in crops grown on it, then passing into bodies after they have eaten the grains, and through blood and semen, forming new bodies. The transmigration of soul happens automatically in selectively compatible bodies, having energy in proportion to their holding capacity.

The wicked people become ghosts and remain somewhere in between heaven and earth. They mostly become animals on rebirth, unless emancipated by the grace of the Lord or a saint.

People having mixed *karmas* and having propitiated their ancestors go to *pitṛloka* or *suryaloka*; others to *chandra-loka* and thence to *jyotirloka*, depending on their good deeds

9. Banerjee, S. "Bhu-vidya" J. Geol. Inst. 45 (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1988) p. 14.

10. Swami Vivekananda, *Science & Philosophy of Religion* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1983) pp. 1-8.

Reflections on the Meaning of Sri Ramakrishna for Women

SRI SARADA DEVI, THE HOLY MOTHER

ANN MYREN

Concluding her series of articles befittingly with Sri Sarada Devi the author nicely explains how Holy Mother's luminous, totally unselfish life, offers an ideal for modern women in every part of the world. Ann Myren, for decades has been serving in the cause of Vedanta in America. Many of her learned articles have appeared in this Journal.

At last we come to Sri Sarada Devi, the woman in Sri Ramakrishna's life who was the most important and significant woman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her significance reaches beyond India, touching all womankind and, consequently, all humanity. It is she who teaches us how to live spiritually amidst the cares and tumult of the world, to work, raise families, be mothers, and care for each other. Sri Sarada Devi's spiritual responses to life's problems, common and uncommon, show us that she is an archetypic figure; that is, a universal model for women in the new age initiated by the advent of Sri Ramakrishna.

It seems quite odd that this archetypic woman would be born in a poor village in India and live her life out in humble, and often straitened circumstances. One might expect a woman of such extraordinary capacity to have flashed across the sky like a blazing meteor for all to see. But instead, in the subdued shadows of village India as well as in the traditional confines of a Calcutta home, she lived, worked, cared for her family, instructed her devotees and practised her religion. For that matter, she practised her religion by living, working, caring, and loving.

There is about archetypic figures a universality. They come from different times and cultures, but what they express always transcends time and culture. That is why they are considered archetypic. To understand the story of Sri Sarada Devi's life, we must explore two different levels: first, the existential experience which shaped her and to which she responded, that is, her experience within her culture. And second, we must go beyond her culture and consider her universality as archetypic.

Let us begin at the beginning of this drama. Sarada was born in 1853 in the village of Jayrambati in West Bengal. Here in this village of about 100 or so mud houses, Sarada's family, the Mukherji's, had lived for many generations. This is a lovely area, very peaceful even today, with rich farm lands, sturdy village houses, tanks, and the Amador river flowing nearby. During the early years of Sarada's life her family was very poor, as was the village, but later on the village began to prosper. Sarada's family and relatives were one of the two Brahmin families in the village.

From the time Sarada was a very small child she worked helping her mother, gathering feed for the cows, helping to raise her brothers, and doing other useful

things. Sarada was the first child of her parents ; she had one sister and five brothers. Her sister died at an early age. As the eldest, Sarada was a very important worker in the family. For her karma yoga began at a very tender age and lasted until her death. This was not unusual in a village in India, but Sarada's attitude was unusual. She seemed to be a natural 'karma yogini', always willing, always helpful. But it was not all work. She played with other children, worshipping the gods and goddesses, and playing house. Sarada often settled the quarrels of her playmates. The girl was mother to the woman. Sarada never lost her sense of fun. The joy and happiness of her childhood continued throughout her life. And about work, when she grew up, she prayed to the Lord that she would always have work to do as long as she lived.

Is it not rather romantic in this age of cities and machines to look back to a simpler time and place for values that will enrich and strengthen our lives—to seek the universal in a nineteenth century Bengali village ? Of course it is. But what we need in this troubled age is a way of life, charged with feeling and emotion, that will carry us to our innate nobility which is, in fact, our divinity. If we can find a universal model, whether in village or city, then we too can shape our lives and claim our birthright, our divinity.

This 'looking back' does raise a serious question. Are we being strictly honest if, when we look back, we pick and choose only what suits our cultural values ? For example, Sarada was married when she was a little over five years old. And now, of course, the trend in modern societies is to marry much later, allowing children to grow up before such a serious commitment is made. Not only has the age at which men and women marry changed, but in many societies there is often no prohibition against

living together without marriage vows. Clearly, we must distinguish in Sarada's life between those attitudes and actions which were appropriate only to her time and place and those which transcend a particular time and place.

Sarada herself was taught to make necessary distinctions in her actions when she learned from Sri Ramakrishna that one should behave according to the necessity of time, the necessity of person and the necessity of situation. Sri Ramakrishna himself practised these rules of behaviour when he married Sarada. Although at this period in his life he was deeply immersed in spiritual practice, the Master married at the request of his mother, following the social conventions of the times. He himself selected his own bride after his family had failed to find an acceptable one. He later instructed Sarada to say that she had been married at the age of five-and-a-half, making it clear that she too had acted according to the accepted conventions. There is probably another good reason he told Sarada to say that she had been married at that age. It made clear that she was his only choice, and although he would have to wait many years for her to come to him, she *was* his choice. If this is true, then we can begin to see the uniqueness of Sarada. To speculate, it may have been that the Master knew already, as divine incarnations do know, that his wife would share his mission. At a later time at Cossipore when the Master was ill, there was an important conversation between them. Sarada said to the Master after he had looked at her for a long time, apparently wanting to say something, 'Why don't you speak out what you wish to ?' He answered, 'Well, my dear, won't you do anything ? Should this (pointing to his own body) do everything single-handed ?' Sarada answered, 'I am a woman. What can I do ?' Then the Master said, No, no, you'll have to do

a lot.¹ This raises the question of Sarada's origins. Was she an ordinary woman whom the Master formed according to his need, to share his mission, or was she an extraordinary woman, who was divinity herself, and who had a special mission also? Judging from the evidence, it seems to be the latter.

Sarada in her eventful village life was always busy. Her brother Kali said in later life, 'Our sister is Lakshmi incarnate. She spared no pains to keep us alive. Husking paddy, spinning sacred thread, supplying the cattle with fodder, cooking,—in short, most of the household work was done single-handed by our sister.'² But apparently she did not always work alone. She later said in reference to her early days, 'As a girl I saw that another girl of my age always accompanied me, helped me in my work, frolicked with me; but she disappeared at the approach of other people. This continued till I was ten or eleven years old.'³ A similar thing happened to her when visiting the Master at Kamarpukur when she was thirteen or fourteen in 1867. She wanted to go to the tank for a bath, but she felt shy as she was a married woman and unaccompanied. Then she saw eight girls come toward her. When she stepped on to the road, four girls came and walked in front of her and four in back of her. They all went to the tank, had their dip, and then returned in the same way. This happened everyday when she went to bathe during her stay in Kamarpukur.⁴

It is impossible to know Sarada's state of consciousness at any time in her life. inclu-

ding her childhood. But these two incidents, reliably reported by Sarada Devi herself, give us just a faint insight into her perceptions. Now we must ask ourselves, what was her persistent state of consciousness? We have no way of knowing other than what she reported herself. We know, once again from her own words, that after she stayed with the Master in his village in 1867 and received instruction from him, she felt as if a pitcher of bliss had been installed in her heart. Imagine that joy!

When Sarada made this visit to Kamarpukur in 1867, she saw the Master for the first time since she was seven. Now she was fourteen and a young woman. The Master had not visited his village home in the interim. During his stay in Kamarpukur a situation arose which could have caused much conflict and bad feelings on the part of Sarada. The Master had brought the Bhairavi Brahmani with him on this visit. She wanted to protect the Master from anything which would mar or interrupt his spiritual sadhana. She had, for example, objected to his being initiated by Tota Puri into nondualism. But neither the Master nor Tota Puri paid her any heed. When Sri Ramakrishna was initiated by Tota Puri, Tota Puri had said, regarding the Master's marriage, 'What does it matter? He only may be regarded as really established in Brahman whose renunciation, detachment, discrimination and knowledge remain intact in all respects in spite of his wife being with him.' Tota Puri went on to say that only when a person attains to Brahman can he look equally on both men and women.⁵ Undoubtedly, it is because of this 'equal vision' that the Master is an *ideal* teacher for women. The Bhairavi, however, did not have Tota Puri's view of the Master and, consequently, believed that the Master's

1. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi* (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969), p. 120.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

evening for *darśan*. Instead of going to meet the Mother first, I sat listening to Swami Yogananda's absorbing conversation with Devendra Nath Mazumdar, a lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Yogananda said: "Thakur was wisdom personified. He often told us that the Divine Mother had taught him everything. His teachings and parables show his power of keen observation, deep thinking, and subtle reasoning. They throw new light on and illumine the mind and dispel all doubts and problems. We did not understand him then. But, now, as time goes on, we are getting glimpses of the infinite knowledge and unbounded love that the human form (of the Master) enshrined. Even his ordinary utterances and actions seemed to us to have a deep meaning. Truly, the Vaiṣṇava devotees say of Chaitanya that whatever he did in deep ecstasy and inebriation of God was a divine dispensation (*līlā*). We know this now about Thakur through our own experiences. Even from his early childhood he was a God-intoxicated man. His wisdom, character, and unique personality drew people to him from the highest to the lowest rank of society. We never saw him despise anybody, be he a sinner or a saint. Ordinary people will not be able to fathom the depth of the meaning of his teachings and message, of his wonderful life, unstained purity and infinite love, of his all-embracing spiritual realization, and of his unprecedented *tapasyā* and renunciation. His life is a demonstration of all the spiritual truths expressed in the scriptures and realized by prophets and *Avatāras*. Naren (Swami Vivekananda) was specially brought by him from the *sapta-ṛṣi-maṇḍala* for preaching his lofty ideals, for the elevation of the masses, and for the good of humanity." Devendra Nath Mazumdar also spoke on Sri Ramakrishna and emphasized the grace and kindness he showered on him at a time when he had resolved to renounce the world.

Thakur reminded Devendra of his grief-stricken old mother by way of consolation and said, "Your brother Surendra is dead and it is your religious duty to look after the mother who is to you a living 'Mother of the Universe'. Renunciation arising from grief and misery does not last long. Live in the world and serve your mother—this is your primary duty and religion. Do it sincerely and you will be able to advance in the path of spirituality." I listened to these talks with rapt attention. As it became late at night, Devendra Nath Mazumdar went away. Immediately after his departure it struck me that I had not yet seen the Holy Mother though I had come there specially for her *darśan*. I told Swami Yogananda about it. He called Golap-Ma and told her to inform the Holy Mother about me. But Golap-Ma replied, "Mother has gone to bed." Seeing me dejected and disappointed, Swami Yogananda told me, "There is no help now. Mother is asleep. Come tomorrow." As soon as he finished saying this, Golap-Ma called me and said, "Mother is waiting for you, come immediately." My heart leapt with joy and I at once went upstairs and was fortunate in touching the feet of the Holy Mother. Mother asked me, "Why did you delay so long?" I replied, "Mother, I was listening to the conversation between Yogen Maharaj and Deven Mazumdar so attentively that I forgot everything else for the time being." Mother smiled and blessed me saying, "Oh, I see you were with Thakur and enjoying his divine *līlā*, so you forgot your Mother!" I remained speechless as I could not find any suitable reply. Mother told me softly, "Go home now; it is already late at night." With a joyful heart I went downstairs and took leave of the Swamis living there. I then thought within myself what deep affection and kindness were shown to me by the Holy Mother! She came out, leaving her bed at night, only to grant me *darśan*.

them as far as Dakshineswar which was a few miles north of Calcutta. On the way Sarada was overcome by a high fever and stayed overnight in a small wayside inn. Sarada's fever left her after a rather strange encounter with a Kali-like woman who entered her room and told her that she was from Dakshineswar and was also Sarada's sister. This dark woman stroked Sarada's body, the fever subsided, and Sarada was ready in the morning to walk on to where the Master lived. However, a palanquin was found, and further on when they arrived at the Ganga, they took a country boat for the last leg of the journey.⁷ All this took place in March of 1872, a year of exceptional significance. For women 1872 is a watershed in their history as well as the history of the world. But more about that later. First, let us see how Sri Ramakrishna received Sarada Devi and what kind of a life she led living in the holy precincts of the Kali temple which had been dedicated by the prescient Rani Rasmani.

Here something must be said about the Master's meaning for women. Because Sri Ramakrishna was a man, he could live and act in much freer ways than a woman in the very traditional Bengali culture. He could be mad with divine love; he could lose himself in samadhi for a month; he could let his cloth drop off while in ecstasy. Women could not do these things in public. Judging from historical records, there were accomplished holy women in India during this period, but the society was so restrictive that little is known about the details of their lives. In contrast to the history of holy women, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about Sri Ramakrishna. And we have it because he was a male, free to act, and because men wrote his history. How-

ever, it must be pointed out that we have much of the history of Sarada Devi because she was judged to be so great by later generations of monks.

Now, in this drama of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi we will see how the Master has deep meaning for women as a holy, wise man, a teacher whose purpose was to raise women, actually to expand their horizons and endow them with God-knowledge and Self-knowledge. He not only shared this mission with Sarada Devi, but he gave her power to carry out the long remainder of his mission after his death.

When Sarada came to Dakshineswar she was very well received by her husband. He immediately saw to her comfort; she moved into his room, the one which is referred to as Sri Ramakrishna's room, and then he began her training.⁸ An accomplished young woman of eighteen, she had already learned many things. But she still had more to learn under the guidance of the Master. We have seen what his role as a teacher of women was in previous articles, but perhaps a few inferences can be made which indicate to us the mood, content, and method of his teaching for Sarada. As to the mood or attitude the Master took when teaching Sarada, it must be remembered that he was absolutely straightforward. He could surrender everything to the Divine Mother but truth. As a result there was no hemming and hawing, no artifice; he was perfectly without guile. On the other hand, he was particularly kind to women. He cared for them, respected their sensitivity, and cultivated that feminine capacity himself.

The second characteristic of the Master's teaching was his meticulousness. No detail escaped his eye, no carelessness went unno-

7. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1962), pp. 35-6.

8. Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sri Ramakrishna's Dakshineswar* (New Delhi: Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, 1986), p. 22.

ticed, every action was to be perfect. We know this from his teaching of others. For example, when he sent someone to the market, he cautioned him to pay only a fair price and to carefully select the purchase. He told the persons who took care of him always to put an article in its proper place so it could be easily found. He reminded those he was with to look around themselves before leaving a place so that nothing was left behind. The Master expertly handled the details of his life and expected the same of everyone else.

With regard to his mood, he was almost always joyful, whether giving spiritual instruction or teaching about the ordinary tasks of life. Perhaps the only times he was sad was when his close relatives or devotees died. For three days he grieved for his nephew, Akshay. But those days were not the rule. Generally he was merry, joyful, happy, full of mirth and he talked about God, Truth; Reality, and this mood carried right into life's routine tasks. This does not mean that he was never serious nor that he never corrected anyone ; to teach is to correct.

Sri Ramakrishna, the master teacher, taught by example, direct statement, metaphor, and parable. For example, when he told Sarada how to behave according to the necessity of time, of person and of situation, he was teaching her directly by stating a traditional Bengali practice. But he also taught the same thing by his own example. He was careful about his dress when he visited important people but more casual when among the devotees. He teased and joked, but he also exemplified courtesy, particularly in his relationship with his wife. One time when she entered the room, he mistakenly thought she was a servant and spoke to her using the familiar form which in Bengali is reserved for servants and children. He was quite taken aback when he realized his mistake and he apologized.

The Master's instruction was rich in metaphor. Once he told the life of Sri Krishna to Sarada and his niece, Lakshmi. Then using the metaphor of the cow chewing her cud, he told Lakshmi that they, Sarada and she, should discuss at night what they had heard from him, as the cattle who eat all day and chew their cud at night.⁹ Furthermore, the Master was an artist. As a boy he drew, made images of the gods and as a young man mended a holy image perfectly. So when he taught Sarada about yoga he actually drew a picture of the six *chakras* for her.¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna's teaching skill was such that all teachers could take lessons from him.

For Sarada there were two basic kinds of knowledge that the Master gave her: that which was concerned with her work and that which was spiritual. He taught her such things as what preparations to make for travelling, arranging household objects, care of the oil lamp, and how to dress vegetables and prepare betel leaves.¹¹ She learned how to manage a very large household, to cook for many people, to prepare a great variety of dishes, to get the correct amounts of provisions, in general all of the necessary skills for the expert management of a household of many persons. One might ask, why bring all of this up, it is just what women of that era did. That is true, but Sarada expressed her divine mission through the medium of running a household. So humble, and so great.

Sarada worked her whole life managing a household. Historically, work has always been defined as something that is done by men outside the house. Men go to the fields, factories, places of business, and there they work while women run the household,

9. Gambhirananda, *Shri Sarada Devi*, p. 106.

10. Ibid.

11. Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother*, p. 39.

which is not defined as work. And in most of the world women also work in the fields or outside the house. This misconception about the role of work in a woman's life has been one of the great contributing factors to drawing women out into the world of men's work. Only in the male domain do women find that their work is given recognition and value. Have the value, dignity and indispensability of woman's work ever been recognized by the power-holders? Never! We even have an expression in English showing the demeaned status of household work—'women's work'. 'Women's work' is generally uttered with contempt and is often used when men refuse to do certain tasks associated with children and the household. But, is there anymore important work than to be the carriers of the culture to the young? Women are the culture-bearers and when this valued function of the female part of the population begins to wane, the culture is in trouble. Someone must teach the children!

Sarada's whole life was spent in managing a household. And it just may be that this aspect of her life bears an important message for both women and men. For women the message is that this work can be a path to God-realization and that raising a family has dignity and meaning. For men the message is that taking care of the house, bearing children, looking to the human needs of the family is a noble work. Every work has value and dignity according to the philosophy of Vedanta.

The Master also schooled Sarada in the arts of human relations. Always following the principle of acting according to time, place and circumstance, he taught her to have consideration for the feelings of others, to be tactful, to be nice to her neighbours, and if anyone became ill, to inquire about the person's health from time

to time.¹² Sarada developed a growing concern for other people which was one effect of the Master's teachings. One time the Master came at three in the morning to wake up Sarada and Lakshmi. He wanted them to get up and meditate, so he playfully poured water under the door. Sarada was quite willing to get up, but asked, in defence of the others in the room, why he disturbed their sleep.

To sum up Sarada's life, it was one of extreme endurance and incessant activity. The Master was a careful and thorough teacher when it came to everyday activities. However, as a spiritual teacher he was incomparable because of his far-reaching and perfected knowledge of spiritual states and Divine Being.

As mentioned before, the year 1872 in which Sarada arrived in Dakshineswar is significant. In this year three important events took place: Sri Ramakrishna finished his spiritual practices; he began his period of instruction by teaching Sarada in a very comprehensive way; and, most significantly, he worshipped Sarada Devi as *Sodāṣī*, the Divine Mother in her form of a virgin of sixteen.

Sarada, his first pupil and a star, came to him wellprepared. She had already learned the myths, heard devotional songs, and probably sang them herself, and had seen many religious dramas about the gods and goddesses during her village life.¹³ She had been raised in a very orthodox family by her father who was a devout follower of Rama, and earned his income by being a priest, and a mother who said that her household was for God and His devotees.¹⁴ Of course, this kind of religious culture was common in Bengal at that time, and coming to

12. Ibid.

13. Gambhirananda, *Shri Sarada Devi*, p. 32.

14. Ibid., p. 16.

Dakshineswar did not mean that she was in any way to live in a foreign atmosphere. But to find a husband, almost constantly in high spiritual states, who needed her help to come down from these states, must have been at least a little surprising to her. Her role in assisting the Master made her a helper to her husband as well as his student in the subject of spiritual attainment. During her first two visits to Dakshineswar, she had to learn to recognize the moods of his ecstasies so that she could say the correct mantra and bring him back to a normal condition. She witnessed diverse spiritual states representing many different spiritual levels. From this experience she learned how to recognize spiritual states and how to judge the level of spiritual development of a person. What a school the Master provided for Sarada! Naturally, Sri Ramakrishna also initiated Sarada.

On one of her early visits to Kamarpukur, before she ever visited Dakshineswar, Sarada and along with Lakshmi had been initiated by Purnananda, a sannyasin. Purnananda gave both of them the *Shakti* mantra. Later the Master reinitiated them. He wrote something on Lakshmi's tongue and gave her the Radhakrishna mantra which was the 'ture' mantra for her. He also wrote something on Sarada's tongue,¹⁵ but we do not know what mantra he gave her, although it is believed that her *Ishta* was Jagaddhātṛī.

The worship of Sarada as *Sodāṣī* was the culminating event of the Master's spiritual practices. *Sodāṣī* was known to the Master in a special way. During his sadhana he had had a vision of her. None of his previous visions of the Mother in her various forms could compare in beauty to *Sodāṣī*, who is always worshipped as a girl of sixteen, a virgin, whose special characteristic is radiant light. In the Master's vision he saw 'the

beauty of the person of *Sodāṣī* which melted, spreading all around and illumining the quarters.'¹⁶

The worship of *Sodāṣī* took place in the Master's room where preparations had been made. There was a special seat for the goddess where the Master had Sarada sit. The worship began with a prayer by the Master who was by now in a semi-conscious state :

O Lady, O Mother Tripurasundari who art the controller of all powers, open the door to perfection! Purify her (the Holy Mother's) body and mind, manifest Thyself in her and be beneficent.¹⁷

Sarada soon lost consciousness of the outer world completely and was united with the Master on a transcendental plane. At some point during the worship she became filled with the awareness of Divine Motherhood. As the worship came to a close, Sri Ramakrishna offered himself to the Divine Mother as manifested in Sarada. Then he offered everything to her: the results of his sadhana, his rosary, his spiritual practices, himself, and all that was his.¹⁸ He recited another prayer:

O Thou auspicious of all auspicious things, O doer of all actions! O refuge! O the three-eyed One! O the fair-complexioned spouse of Siva! O Narayani!, I bow down to thee, I bow down to thee!¹⁹

The close of this auspicious worship with the recitation of sacred words signifies the

16. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, trans., Swami Jagadananda, 6th rev. ed., 2 vols. (Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1983), 1:233.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

19. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 109.

end of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practices, his sadhana. But it also signifies the beginning of a new era for women and the world.

Why did the *Soḍaṣī*-worship signify the beginning of a new era for woman and the world? First, the Master offered himself to the Divine Mother as manifested in Sarada Devi. Now, exactly what does that mean? One interpretation might be that he would be the instrument of the Divine Mother working through Sarada Devi. Or it could also be said that Sarada Devi received the

power that Sri Ramakrishna had accumulated through spiritual practice to use for the good of humankind. This means that Sarada Devi received in a mature form knowledge, detachment, discrimination, devotion and many other spiritual qualities, all of which would come to fruition as her life unfolded. However one looks at this event, it is clear that great spiritual power became accessible to Sarada Devi. She had from 1872 onwards power to do great things.

(To be concluded)

HINDU ESCHATOLOGY AND COSMOGONY

(Continued from page 504)

and guided by higher souls. *Brahmaloka* is the highest sphere.

Suryaloka or the solar sphere is the lowest, most condensed, wherein exist the visible universes; *prāṇa* is there a physical force and *ākāśa* a sensible matter. The next higher, the lunar sphere, or *chandraloka*, has the habitation of gods, with *prāṇa* as the psychic force and *ākāśa* as *tanmātras*, or fine particles. In the *jyotirloka*, the *prāṇa* and *ākāśa* are almost inseparable, and the electric force (energy) and matter are indistinguishable.

In the highest *brahmaloka*, neither *prāṇa* nor *ākāśa* exist. Both are merged in the mindstuff, the primal energy. In the absence of both *prāṇa* and *ākāśa*, the *jīva* or individual soul, contemplates the whole universe as the *samastī*, or the sum total of *Mahat*.

This appears as a *Puruṣa*, an abstract Universal Soul (*Īśvara*). This is not the Absolute *Puruṣa*, as multiplicity still exists, but where from the *jīva* at least can apprehend that Unity which is the be-all and end-all.

The dualists go no further. They want "to taste the sugar" and not to "become it". Following the path of divine love (*bhakti-yoga*), the *bhaktas* like to enjoy the proximity of the Lord in states of *sāyujya* or joined together (not merged); *sārūpya*, or having similar form; or *sālokya*, dwelling together in the same *loka*. While the advaitic stand-point is, *Tat-tvam-asi—Thou art That*, or *Aham-Brahmāsmi, I am Brahman or Truth*.

We find that we have come out of divinity (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*); therefore, the fact is, that each soul is potentially divine.

Srimad Bhagavatam And Its Eternal Message

A. VISWANATHAN

The author, an engineer and Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad, brings to the fore in this short paper the eternal appeal and profundity of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

Sri Krishna was born in Dvapara Yuga. His incarnation (*Avatāra*) is the latest of the ten (*Daś-avatāra-s*) of Mahā-Viṣṇu. As the Lord Himself said to Arjuna: “*When dharma wilts, and adharma awakens, thereupon I shall issue Myself into the world.*”

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam sings about all these *Avatāra-s* of Lord Viṣṇu, but it is overwhelmingly the story of the delightful *Avatāra* of Lord Krishna—*Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*, Sri Krishna is the Lord Himself. He is the *Pūrṇa-Avatāra*, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is primarily the story of Lord Sri Krishna.

It is interesting to consider how the story is narrated. It is narrated through three different sets of storytellers and listeners, of differing maturities and capabilities. The first pair are Suta and Saunaka, who represent ordinary individuals immersed in the day to day ministrations of the world. The next pair are Narada and Vyasa. The enlightened eternal sage, Narada, prompts Veda Vyasa to sing the *Bhāgavatam*. Veda Vyasa has just completed the stupendous task of outlining all types of human interactions through the story of the Mahabharata, but he still feels some vague apprehension, some dissatisfaction that something is not completed. Narada advises him that he can only get rid of this feeling of inadequateness and dissatisfaction if he sings about the *Pūrṇa-Avatāra* of Lord Sri Krishna.

Such transformation to serenity is something that all of us have experienced at least briefly some time or other. For a short spell

we experience the close proximity of God, and that buoyant feeling seems to last for days and days, until finally it wears away by the attrition of everyday life in the world. What better way to make the happiness last long, than to sing the glory of the Lord!

And then we have the final pair: Sri Suka, the purest of the pure, with whom the bathing *Apsarās* did not find any embarrassment at all, and the virtuous and valorous Parikṣit, who, like many among us, fell victim, partly due to his stars, and partly to a brief lapse arising from his proud royal bearing, and who was disquieted still further by the spectre of his own death within seven days. Sri Suka recited the story of the *Bhāgavatam* to him in these seven days time. Listening to the *Bhāgavatam* cannot ward off destiny, but after these seven days Parikṣit becomes calm and self-possessed, ready to face his inexorable destiny with equanimity, and in fact, eager as a king to uphold the curse laid on him by the forest sage and make it come true. Herein lies the message of *Bhāgavatam* for all of us!

About this sacred book it has been verily written “*Svādu svādu pade pade*”! From one syllable to the next, it is nothing but nectar. Innumerable stories, like pearls, are strung together, each as beautiful as the others. A few stories stand out. One such is the story of the devotee Prahlada and his father Hiranyakasipu who bore inveterate and uncompromising hatred towards the Lord. Little do we realize that the path to the Lord may take various routes. If love

for Him can be a route, hatred too (with its continuous and total absorption in Him), may become a way equally effective. The Lord is free of all our ordinary relative conceptions of what is good and what is bad. If we can understand Hiranyakasipu, we can truly understand the world better and live with our fellow men. When, finally, the father challenges Prahlada to demonstrate the Lord's presence, the Lord condescends to help the innocent Prahlada and make his words come true, by issuing forth from a pillar. When the celestials became frightened at the approach of Lord Narasimha in his towering rage, they sent for the innocent Prahlada to pacify him. Bhakta Prahlada is clear minded and refuses the temptation to receive a boon from the Lord. Instead, he seeks continuous Awareness! Is this not a lesson for us ordinary mortals, who strive and struggle for worldly gains?

Another story that stands out is the story of Gajendramokṣam. Indra Dyumna, no doubt virtuous, but so obsessed with his own rituals and pursuits as to shut out the whole world (as we see so many such around us), himself turns into a similar animal, viz. an elephant. Preoccupied with the householder's responsibilities, and victim to all the attendant dangers, the elephant sinks deeper and deeper into the lake, only the tip of his trunk being left above water. But, attributable to his past karmas, and owing to his great good fortune, the elephant retains the memory of his previous birth, and with the last vestige of life left in him he offers a lotus flower in supplication to the Lord. Have not many of us at some time or other passed through such an experience? On becoming aware of the devotee's supplication in his time of danger, the Lord rushes instantaneously to rescue his devoted *bhakta*. Verily, this story offers solace in times of distress.

The story of *Vāmana Avatāra* (the Dwarf Incarnation of Viṣṇu) too, has a deep inner meaning: the vanquishment of worldly pride in Maḥa Bali by the small nucleus of goodness that in its inherent Power grows steadily larger and larger in the shape of Vāmana. The story of Ambarisa shows how the steadfast devotee has no need for any form of anxiety: All the forms of danger that attempt to overthrow him go the full circle of futility, and come back to the devotee with bowed head, seeking his pardon.

Through the medium of Parikṣit, Sri Suka thus narrates many such stories, and steadily lifts our consciousness Godward. When we become fit to receive the greatest story of all, Sri Suka begins to unfold *Srī Kṛṣṇa Caritam*, the story of the life of Sri Krishna. After His birth in the thick of adversity and dangers, from babyhood onwards, Sri Krishna performs many miracles—the destruction of Putanā, and the sublimation of her body by the mere act of His divine touch; the revelation of His all-enveloping Cosmic Form when He opens His mouth to the wondering foster mother, the blessed Yaśoda; the destruction of various demons that beset Gokulam and Himself. These are all sweet and elevating stories of the Divine Incarnation. *Brahma* represents the unripe intellect of Man that does not comprehend the Lord's mystery, and dares to doubt and question Him. And in *Kāṭiya Mardanam*, we are told how the Lord painstakingly and laboriously extracts the poisons from the mind of Man. Total absorption in the Lord leaves no room for consciousness of self or the world—this is the story of *Gopi Vāstrā-paharaṇam*. The umbrella of God's protection is total, as in the lifting of the Govardhana mountain. When a devotee is enamoured of the Lord, he wishes to be possessed and permeated by Him—totally, atom by single atom. There is no place for

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Silence—My Virgin Mother

S. K. CHAKRAVORTY

In the deeps of silence, when the mind is still, the truth has a chance to reveal, Dr. S. K. Chakravorty, Professor at the Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta, seems to say.

Days three hundred fifty and five from now,
O glorious Shiva, I had cried at Thy feet to see Thee aglow.
But this day, as Thou liftest Thy veil, full and whole,
I wonder and wonder why I see in Thee
Only my sweet Mother of Virgin Silence!

The mist is gone, no more is the haze—
Draped Thou art, Mother, in flowing green below,
With the caressing blue as Thy scarf above.
O Silence, my Mother, how benign!
How chaste and bright is Thy brow with sandal snow!

The ceaseless plaintive song of the nameless bird,
From the viewless depth of Thy bosom, O Mother—
Is that Thy lullaby for this frantic child of earth?
Alas! I feel it not, nor follow,
Tho' for ages, I thought, I secretly have pined for it.

Why not?—my loving silent Mother—you ask.
So, this I confess: I couldn't care less;
I am of the world real where boom and bang—
Sonic and super—have sealed my ears,
Thy notes of music are now more than Greek to them.

Hush! Let my Mother speak—
My very dear Virgin Silence quietly sing,
But seems Thy precious virginity now stands sullied—how sad!
Shrill human words and strained laughter, vulgar and profane
All a bleeding affront—my sacred silent Mother.

The wondrous sage of *Savitri* hath spoken:
'When mind is still, then truth gets her chance—
To be heard in the purity of silence.'
The glorious writer of *Heroes and Hero Worship* hath said:
'Silence is as deep as eternity, speech as shallow as time.'

REVIEWS & NOTICES

SAINTS AND MYSTICS: Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004. pp. iv plus 247. Rs. 20/-.

This handy volume presents in a brief compass the lives and teachings of fourteen saints and mystics from different religions and diverse times. Though not a representative collection, it has covered practically all the major religious traditions, like Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Sikhism. The lives of modern spiritual giants like Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Brahmananda (the spiritual 'son' of Sri Ramakrishna), Swami Virajananda (a disciple of Swami Vivekananda) are also given due place in this collection as they rejuvenated ancient Vedic teachings, making them accessible to the modern man entangled within the problems peculiar to the age of strife and stress; and professed that spirituality and practicality can go hand in hand. The life of Gopaler Ma—a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, beautifully presents the parental attitude of *vātsalya* towards Sri Ramakrishna; whereas bridal mysticism is represented by the lives of Goda Devi and Akka Mahadevi.

All the articles are very good, well-written studies giving brief sketches of the saints' lives, their missions and precepts. The authors are learned, prolific writers and include senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The articles originally appeared in the annual number of the monthly *Vedanta Kesari* for 1989, published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. The need for study of the great lives is beautifully emphasized in the Prologue—that they educate, inspire and purify us. To quote from it (page 6): "A saintly life educates us about what spiritual life means, where it leads to, and how it has to be practised." It is very rightly stated that "it is an education that reveals to us both the way and the goal. Their authentic lives anchored in spirit, fill the true seeker with hope, faith and inspiration." (page 8)

In between the lines we feel the spirit of the great saints and could catch a glimpse of their earnest zeal and burning desire to

know the Truth. One gets inner strength from their lives and teachings and becomes convinced that true spirituality and higher states of consciousness are not fancies, but are real possibilities worth striving for.

This neat, handy book must find a place on the shelf of every spiritual seeker, and in the hands of students and youths in their formative period, it will be a perennial source of inspiration. It is a marvellous publication, with fine get-up, printing etc.—true to the tradition of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

*Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh.*

OM, GAYATRI AND SANDHYA: By Swami Mukhyananda. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600-004, 1989. pp. x plus 88. Rs. 10/-.

The *Gayatri* is the most sacred and sublimest of Hindu prayers which has been recited by millions of people, from the very beginning of the Vedic period down to today. It forms a part of the *Saṁdhyā Upāsana* (meditation), the obligatory daily worship by the aspirant. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the "*Saṁdhyā* merges in the *Gāyatrī* and the *Gāyatrī* merges in *OM*." Truly, the mantra incorporates all the ideas of the *OM* symbolism. *OM*, the Pranava, is the briefest and the most comprehensive spiritual symbol. No mantra is complete without the *OM* as its prefix. In the book under review, the profound truths and deep philosophy underlying *OM*, *Gāyatrī* and *Saṁdhyā* are explained lucidly by the author, a learned senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

The book is divided into three parts. *Part I* is devoted to *The Symbolism of OM and the Gayatri Mantra*, where it is shown how the word *OM* signifies the Supreme Infinite Divine Reality, with special references to the four Cosmic Planes on the Macrocosmic level, and their corresponding states at the human level. Within a few pages the revered Swamiji has neatly compressed a lot of useful information about the importance of *OM* and the *Gāyatrī* in the light of various *Upaniṣads*. This pro-

vides the necessary philosophical background underlying the mantra, and could be of immense help to the aspirant for performing ritual with clear understanding and deep faith.

Part II is entitled *Gayatri Mantra and Saṁdhyā Upāsana*. The true meaning of *Saṁdhyā*, its main features, procedure of the rituals, and preparations for the performance of *Saṁdhyā* are presented in detail with clarity.

Details of Practice of Saṁdhyā Worship constitute *Part III*. For the convenience of those who intend to use the book for the performance of *Saṁdhyā* in the orthodox style, this part gives complete details regarding the mantras to be chanted (with their English translations), and procedures to be adopted.

The book is a useful and elevating contribution for it explains the unique significance and the deep philosophy behind the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and the *Saṁdhyā Upāsana*, as also it serves as a practical manual on the practice of *Saṁdhyā Vādanā*. Essentially it gives a new dimension to the practice of *Gāyatrī*, which, in the hands of Orthodox Brahmins has become a mere formal ritual. This book is a must for all those who are interested in understanding and practising the ancient Vedic ritual of *Saṁdhyā*. Needless to say that, the importance of this Supreme Spiritual practice increases manifold if an aspirant performs the *Upāsana* with contemplation of its meaning and its deep implications.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM AND ITS ETERNAL MESSAGE

(Continued from page 515)

any other emotion except love—this is the *Rasakṛdā*, the Divine Play. Like Rukmiṇī, a devotee has only to briefly indicate his love for Sri Krishna, and He comes rushing to take possession of His devotee.

The human being is an infinitely valuable creation of God. When well tended, he can produce great results, like the gem Syamantaka. But ill-kept, and improperly used, he becomes the plaything of monkeys, and can cause death, destruction and suspicion and a chain of evil action and reaction.

One of the sweetest of stories in the *Bhāgavatam* is that of the *Sudāma Caritam*. Sudama, a pious devotee, has no mind for worldly goods. His mind is planted in God. And yet God takes an exact inventory of all his unspelt needs and fulfils them. Can there

be a better lesson for our anxious minds!

As the tale proceeds into maturity, we see Krishna develop from the infant charmer of the gopis, through stages into the dauntless warrior who effortlessly wrestles Jambavan for twentyeight days and nights till the latter submits to utter fatigue and surrender, and who practised with bow and arrow until with consummate ease finally He destroys Narakāsurā. Sri Krishna serves as the Ambassador of Good, to the abode of Evil, and as a supreme teacher of the philosophy of life to Arjuna and to all humanity. The Lord's words of wisdom and advice in the final portions of the *Bhāgavatam* startle us with their sheer relevance to our present day world. It is indeed futile to try to measure the ocean of His glory with our little intellect.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Place: Belur Math. Time: December 22, 1930.

It was the birthday of the Holy Mother. From early morning Mahapurushji had been calling on the Mother, as though he was a little child dependent on his mother. With folded hands and closed eyes he prayed: "Mother, Mother, O Thou Great Mother, glory to Thee! glory to Thee! Mother, grant us devotion, faith, full faith, knowledge, detachment, love, concentration, and God-absorption. Do good to this organization of the Master; do good to the whole world; grant peace to the world." He sat silent for a while, and then added: "We have no devotion, and so we cannot fully realize the greatness of days like this. Is this an ordinary day? This is the birthday of the Great Mother. It was the Great Mother Herself who took birth on this day for the good of the world and its creatures. It is hard to understand how God plays by accepting human bodies. How can one understand unless He makes one do so out of His grace? How commonplace a life she led! How hidden remained her spiritual stature, as though She were in disguise! How little can we understand her! The Master alone understood her properly. He told me one day, 'The Mother that is in that (Kali) temple, and the mother who lives in the concert tower are the same.' The next one who knew her was Swamiji. Ah, what a deep reverence he had for the Holy Mother! He said that it was because of the blessing of the Holy Mother that he could go to the other shore of the sea and be victorious."

As the monks came in one by one to salute him, he kept on asking most of them, "Did you see the Mother?" The number of devotees was rather great, it being a Sunday. About three thousand devotees, both men and women, had *prasada* at noon. When it was very cloudy in the morning, many had feared that it would rain and mar the celebration. When an old monk expressed some concern on this score, Mahapurushji kept silent for a while and then said: "No, there is no fear. By the Mother's grace, there will be no trouble. She is the maker of good, and she will do good to all."

Gangadhar Maharaj (Swami Akhandananda) came to join the celebration in the afternoon. Mahapurushji was very glad to meet him. A party was singing *Chandikirtana* at the Holy Mother's temple. This was the first performance there of this kind, and Mahapurushji kept on enquiring every now and then how it was progressing. Lastly he said: "The name of our Holy Mother is Sarada (which means Sarasvati, the goddess of learning). The Mother is none other than Sarasvati. It is she who grants illumination out of her grace. Illumination means the knowledge of God. One can have true and firm devotion only when one is vouchsafed this knowledge, and not otherwise. Pure knowledge and pure devotion are the same. And all that comes from the grace of the Mother alone. Knowledge is dispensed at her bidding."

From *'For Seekers of God.'*