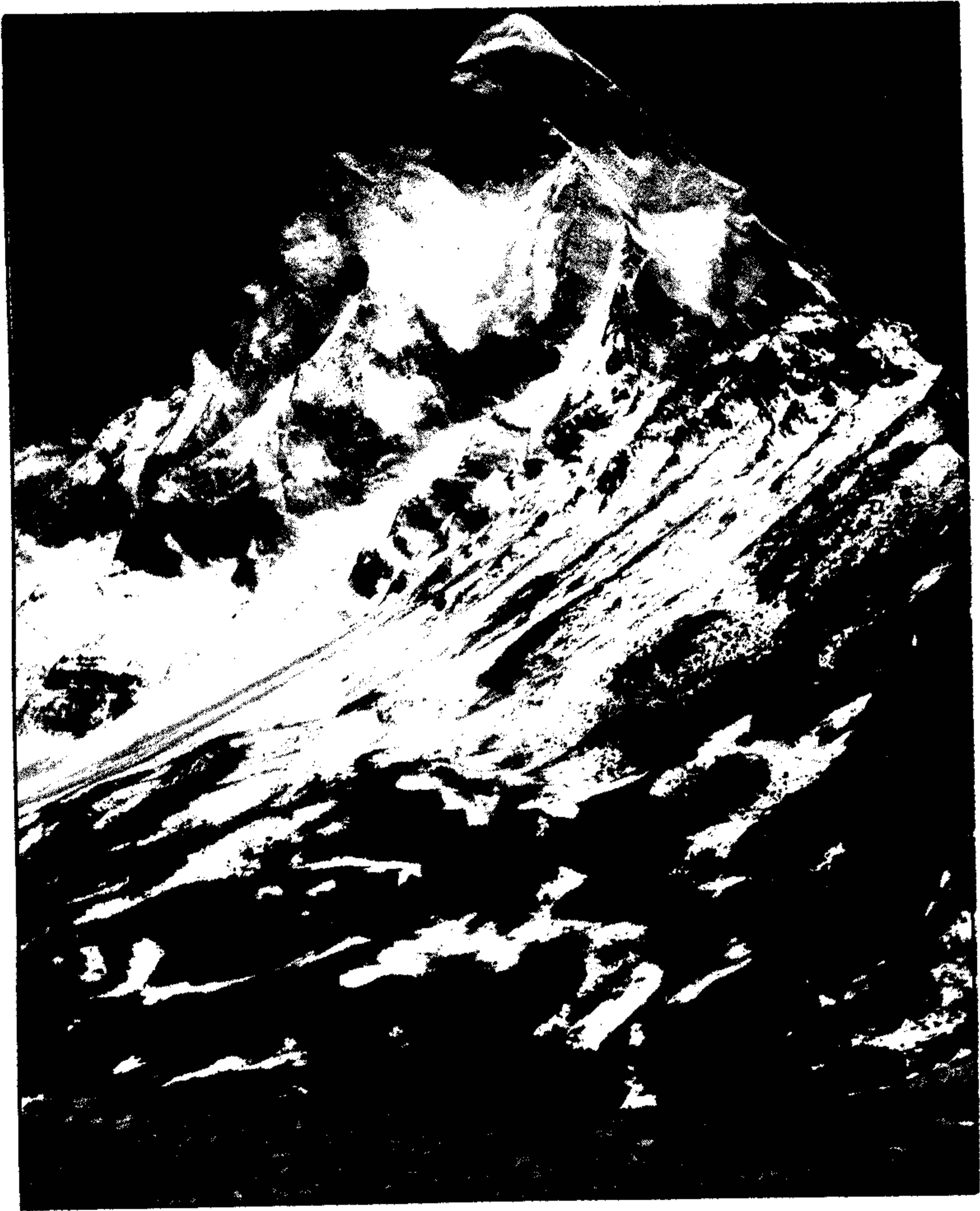


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The Divine Message

In Praise of Jagaddhātrī—The Divine Mother

आधारभूते चाघेये धृतिरूपे धुरन्धरे ।
ध्रुवे ध्रुवपदे धीरे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

O Mother, Thou art the container of all and again the things contained. Thou art the Supporter of all, and the Bearer of the burden of all. Thou art the Eternal Being, the Eternal Abode and Tranquillity embodied. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

जयदे जगदानन्दे जगदेक प्रपूजिते ।
जय सर्वगते दुर्गे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the giver of success, the Bliss of the world, the one object of its adoration. Glory unto Thee. Thou art all-pervading and rescuest men from difficulty. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

तीर्थयज्ञ तपोदान योगसारे जगन्मयि ।
त्वमेव सर्वं सर्वस्थे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the goal of all pilgrimages and sacrifice, penance, charity and spiritual practice. Thou art everything, and Thou dost permeate everything. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

दयारूपे दयादृष्टे दयार्द्रे दुःखमोचिनि ।
सर्वापत्तारिके दुर्गे जगद्धात्रि नमोऽस्तुते ॥

Thou art the embodiment of mercy, Thy very look showers mercy. Thy heart is softened by mercy and Thou art the Dispeller of misery. Thou art the Saviour of all from every harm ; Thou art yet hard to approach. O Thou Protectress of the universe, salutations to Thee.

Jagaddhātrī Stava

Mother—The Source of Vak

THE striking and dominant refrain of Indian philosophy or religion is essentially spiritual. It may, to the superficial mind, appear purely speculative, but as one dives into its deeper dimensions, he discovers the supreme reality, the fountain of spiritual bliss. Everything is explained logically and bears imprint of utmost rationality. Supra-rational knowledge perceived intuitively by the great souls, descends on earth-consciousness through thoughts. These unspoken thoughts find an eloquent expression through the medium of words, but, are never found transgressing the frames of rationality and comprehensibility. All intuitive revelations can be tested on the anvil of experimental investigation. Nothing is taken for granted or believed on hearsay. Each person has to become a living laboratory to try and test these truths and incorporate them into daily life.

The Hindu religion is not a creation of a single mind, nor is it exclusive like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Its flexibility and fluidity have universal sweep and appeal. The sages declare that the direct and intuitive perception of Reality is within the reach of all, if only they have the will to have it. "We have seen it; you can also see it," say the Upaniṣadic Seers. "This experience," writes Dr. Radhakrishnan, "is not confined to any race or climate. Whenever the soul comes to itself, in any land or any racial boundaries, whenever it centres down in its inward deeps, whenever it sensitively responds to the currents of deeper life that surround it, it

finds its true nature and lives joyously, thrillingly, in the life of the spirit."¹

Mind and matter are traced back to the ground of formless consciousness, or eternal quiescence. This impersonal Absolute is looked upon as personal God—Śiva in Śaiva *āgamas* (sacred texts), or as the Divine Mother in *Śākta* literature. Both sects have been immensely popular, and in recent times the worship of Mother has received tremendous impetus and inspiration from Sri Ramakrishna. Two important texts, the *Devī Māhātmyam*, which forms the part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and the *Lalitā Sahasranāma*, which occurs in the second part of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, have been most important for the worshippers of the Devī. Devotees recite every day from either one or the other. The sublime poetry in these texts soars to great heights; the breathtaking vision of manifest and unmanifest aspects of the Goddess leaves one awe-struck. The description of the glory and grandeur of the Mother Divine plunges one into raptures. The Sanskrit words become charged and send a thrill in the heart. For nearly two millenniums these sacred books have been exercising their extraordinary spiritual influence over the hearts of aspirants. The sphere of their charm has leapt over national boundaries and attracted the attention of earnest souls the world over.

What is *Vāk*? *Vāk*, as we generally know it, is speech, the spoken word or language

1. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1947) pp. 47-48.

which people speak in different parts of the world. Most of us think there is only one kind of speech, the uttered, audible gross speech with which we communicate. Has speech, as we know it, only one form? That assumption is erroneous, says the *R̥g Veda* (I. 164.45).

*Catvāri vākparimitā padāni tāni vidu
brāhmaṇā ye manīṣiṇaḥ
Guhā trīṇi nihitā nengayanti
turīyam vāco manuṣyā vadantīti*

“Four are the stages of speech. Brāhmaṇas who are wise know them; three of them are hidden and motionless; only in the fourth stage, the gross speech is spoken by people.” Spoken words are the gross form and behind it are the subtle, and subtler invisible forms. Mystics and yogis in the suprasensuous state comprehend it in its totality. For an ordinary mind, which is solely occupied with the objects of the world and gross sounds of the spoken word, *Vāk* in its totality is almost inconceivable. It is the Universal Mother Herself who resides in all beings as the mysterious Power of *Vāk* (Speech). It is through Her grace that the mystique of *Vāk* is revealed. One who realizes it becomes a *Vāk-siddha*—whatever he utters becomes true, and matter obeys his command.

There are four kinds of speech: *Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. The descent of *Vāk* is from *Parā*—supreme Speech through *Paśyantī*—imperceptible, and *Madhyamā*—not clearly perceptible (intermediate), to the *Vaikharī*—gross speech.

Divine Mother is described in the *Devī Māhātmyam* as *Śabdātmikā*—She is the soul of *Śabda-Brahman*—unmanifested sound. This is further elucidated in the *Lalitā Sahasranāma*. It says: *Parāyai namaḥ* (366)—Salutations to Her who is transcendent word; *Paśyantāi namaḥ* (368)—Salutations to Her who is called *Paśyantī*

(Seeing), as She perceives everything in Herself, without any instrument; *Madhyamāyai namaḥ* (370)—Salutations to Her called *Madhyamā*, which is not clearly perceptible: *Vaikharī rupāyai namaḥ* (371)—Salutations to Her called *Vaikharī*, the spoken speech in the gross form. She, therefore, is addressed as the Source of four-fold speech—*Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. The first three, being very subtle are not easily known; the last, uttered and audible speech, is known to all.

The etymological meaning of the word *Vāk* is “to speak”. It also means both voice and the word uttered by the voice. *Vāk*, therefore, conveys the sense of *śabda* or word: *Parā Vāk* is the transcendent word or the unmanifested sound. This ‘word’ exists intuitively in God as cosmic ideation (*Sr̥ṣṭi-kalpanā*) before the unfoldment of the physical universe or projection. The ‘word’ is the creative power of God, or it is His *Māyāśakti*. This is a postulate recurring in many ancient religions. The Greek word ‘Logos’ means thought, and that which indicates the object of thought is the word. There was in the beginning an undifferentiated state (*Brahman*), and from that rises ‘Logos’ or thought or *Śabda Brahman* which creates this physical universe. Thought is an unmanifest primal mental image which produces the physical image as it is conceived. The ‘word’ or ‘Logos’ used by Hebrews, Greeks, and Christians is the *Māyāśakti* of the Brahman or the Universal Mother. Divine Mother is present potentially in Brahman, and as *śakti* or power, She issues forth Herself from Him.

“*Prajāpatir vai idam āsīt, tasya vāg dvitīya āsīt*”—“In the beginning was Brahman (Formless Consciousness); with Brahman was *Vāk* (word). This supreme power, or *Vāk*, evolves Herself into this manifold universe of animate and inanimate objects. It is She who has become all. There exists,

therefore, nothing outside Her. "The process of creation, preservation and destruction that is going on ceaselessly is due to *Śakti*, the Power of God. "This Primal Power and the Brahman are one and the same,"² said Sri Ramakrishna. He explained in simple terms: "What is beyond speech and mind is born in the flesh, assuming various forms and engaging in various activities."³ To the question why She manifests Herself as this universe, the answer is, it is Her spontaneous desire, and no motive can be attributed to it.

In the beginning there existed nothing except the Cosmic Intelligence, or Undivided Consciousness. This state is called Cosmic Sleep, or the causal State. Consciousness is also called *Parā Vāk* (Supreme Speech). In this state consciousness is not aware of itself. Awakening from its causal state, it becomes aware of itself, i.e. self-awareness is there. In this state of self-awareness it 'sees' or creatively ideates the universe. This 'seeing' is known as the *Paśyantī Vāk*. What the consciousness sees are the impressions carried over from the previous universe, which entered into its causal state on the previous dissolution. After dissolution the universe or gross matter goes back to its causal state.

With the awakening of cosmic consciousness, the subtle impressions too, arise in it. In the *Paśyantī* state there is no actual split in consciousness because it sees itself. In the next stage the consciousness becomes aware not only of itself, but of the subtle impressions that are present in it. It is both subject and object, for it has not yet projected the universe. Though in this state there is subject and object duality, but that is within the consciousness and not without. This is the state of cosmic dream or *Madhyamā Vāk*. In the next stage the impressions carried over in the causal state

from the previous universe become materialized, and the physical universe comes into existence. The division between perceiving subject and perceived object becomes distinct and clear. This is cosmic waking stage, also called *Vaikharī Vāk*. In this wakened state people express themselves in vocal speech. In *Vaikharī* speech, words denote name (*nāma*) of the multiplicity of objects (*rūpa*).

Explaining this ceaseless play of projection and dissolution, or evolution and involution, Swami Vivekananda says :

The beginning was, therefore, intelligence. At the beginning that intelligence becomes involved, and in the end that intelligence gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must, therefore, be the involved intelligence unfolding itself. This universal intelligence is what we call God. Call it by any other name, it is absolutely certain in the beginning there is that infinite cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence gets involved, and it manifests, evolves itself, until it becomes the perfect man, the "Christ-man", the "Buddha-man". Then it goes back to its source.⁴

Cosmic consciousness ideates and out of that creative ideation the universe is projected. There is only consciousness, but through the veil of time, space, causation it appears as physical matter at one end. There is one stream. If one goes upstream one sees the limitless, timeless true nature of it, while the journey downstream shows the manifest physical side. The new findings of modern science have given the resonance to the ancient truth. Elaborating it, Swamiji said,

We now see that all the various forms of cosmic energy, such as matter, thought

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 365.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

4. *Vivekananda, Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol 2, p. 210.

force, intelligence and so forth, are simply the manifestations of that cosmic intelligence, or as we shall call it henceforth, the Supreme Lord.⁵

“Mind and Matter are different vibrations or ripples in the same pond.” Writes Michael Talbot in his book, *Mysticism and New Physics*. *Parāśakti* or *Parā Vāk* is that infinite consciousness.

Macrocosm is reflected in microcosm. What is true there is also true here. Individual life, therefore, mirrors the cosmic process. Vivekananda had this highest realization of Truth under the *peepul* tree at Kakrighat near Almora. The fragments of this transcendental experience he jotted down in a notebook:

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the Living Prakriti [Nature]—the objective universe. *Shivā* [i.e. *Kālī*] is embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy. This covering of the one [Soul] by the other [Nature] is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same; and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, in the beginning was the Word *etc.*

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless.⁶

On the microcosmic plane the four-forms of speech are identified with different states of an individual: *Parā* with the state of

Turīya, or impersonal consciousness; *Paśyantī* with deep sleep, or subconscious thought; *Madhyamā* with the dream state, or prior to the rise of the spoken word; and *Vaikharī*, with the waking state. *Turīya* is a non-dual state where only impersonal consciousness exists. Personal identification with body and mind are lost and along with it the existence of the world in *Turīya*, the higher state. From this formless state the mind descends to deep sleep state where the identification with body and mind takes place and thought is held in abeyance. This can be verified from the fact that though one is in deep sleep, whenever he is called by his name he wakes up immediately. When the mind stirs from deep sleep and enters into a dream state, the subject and object split becomes implicit. This state is *Madhyamā*, or the middle stage, because it lies in between sleep and waking. In dream, thought and speech are active but vocal sound is absent. The uttered and audible word manifests itself with full force in the waking state, expressing the thought. The duality between the seer and the seen are complete.

What happens in the macroscopic level, the same process repeats at the individual level. The difference lies in the fact that a person knows only three states—sleep, dream and waking, and has no experience of *Turīya*. In all these three involuntary states the sense that one is a psychosomatic being, with such and such relation to other persons, never vanishes. Through spiritual practice alone one experiences the higher state and frees himself from feeling that he is the pseudo-entity he thinks he is.

Sage Jñāneśwar, in his famous work *Amṛtānubhava*—“Experience of Immortality”, says that mere intellectual understanding that “*I am Brahman*” does not destroy four-forms of speech which are born out of ignorance. *Vāk* is the *Māyā Śakti* of the Divine Mother, which keeps every *jīva* in

5. Ibid. Vol 2, p. 211.

6. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) p. 250.

bondage. The “*I am Brahman*” intellectual knowledge does not release one from *Māyā* because still the pseudo-entity “I” is present, that exists separate from Brahman. Such knowledge based on words, though having its value, is incapable of destroying ignorance. Jñāneśwar therefore says that the ultimate knowledge of Reality comes about by the transcending of both conceptual knowledge and its inter-related opposite, conceptual ignorance. Real enlightenment occurs when conceptualization (the four kinds of speech) in any form, either subtle or gross, ceases. The sage further explains that when the individual gives up the “sense” that he is a limited person, the four kinds of speech which are like ornaments for the four types of consciousness, along with ignorance, get extinguished. He has redeemed himself of the debt of speech (*Vāca-ṛna-parihār*) by surrendering at the Feet of his Guru—the Absolute, writes he.

In the living body the *Parā* resides in the *Mūlādhāra* centre, at the base of the spinal column, in a state of motionlessness (*nispanḍa*). When it rises to the *Svādhiṣṭhana* centre, at the region of navel and upwards, it is joined with the general movement (*Sāmānyaspanḍa*). It is called *Pasyantī*. Again when it rises to the *Anāhata* centre, in the region of the heart, it unites itself with the determinative faculty (*Buddhi*) and becomes *Madhyamā*, with special movement (*Viśeṣaspanḍa*). When the same rises to the *Viśuddha* centre, in the region of the throat and vocal organs, as articulate sound with specific movement (*Spaṣṭatara*), it becomes *Vaikharī*.

In the cosmic evolution, the Divine Mother has four names. They are: *Śāntā* (*Avyaktā*), *Vāmā* (*Karya Bindu*), *Jyeṣṭhā* (*Nāda*), and *Raudrī* (*Bīja*). Or She is also called *Ambikā*,

Iccā, *Jnānā* and *Kriyā*. The evolution of that Supreme Power of the Divine Mother in the living body has four names: *Parā*, *Pasyantī*, *Madhyamā*, and *Vaikharī*. Therefore, the scriptures say when a spiritual aspirant realizes the Universal Mother, residing in the *Kuṇḍalinī* as *Parā Vāk*, he attains liberation. The *Yogakuṇḍali Upaniṣad* says:

That *Vāk* (Speech), which sprouts in *Parā*, gives forth leaves in *Pasyantī*, buds forth in *Madhyamā*, and blossoms in *Vaikharī*. By reversing the above order, sound is absorbed. Whosoever realizes the great Lord of Speech, the formless illuminating Self, is unaffected by any word, be it what it may.

To a question how does speech arise, Ramana Maharshi replied, “First there is abstract knowledge. Out of this arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the original source. If the word can produce an effect, judge for yourself, how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence.”

Mother *Kālī*, naked and dark, adorned with the garland of severed heads, stands in the burning ground on the corpse-like body of Śiva. Tantra texts explain that the string of heads She wears is the garland of fifty letters (*Varṇamālā*) of Sanskrit. She slaughters—that is withdraws—all speech and its objects at the time of the dissolution of the universe. She is the ground from which they shoot forth at the time of creation, and are dissolved into Her infinite consciousness at the time of the Great Withdrawal or Cosmic *Pralaya*. She is beyond thought and speech and yet She is the Matrix of all thought and speech.

Ramakrishna Temple—Its Significance

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA*

God is omnipresent. Yet, temples are built not to please Him, but for the convenience of devotees, to help them feel the living presence of the deity. The temples dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna represent the lofty ideals of the Master, and we must become worthy heirs to his bequethal—graciously counsels Revered Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

We believe in a God who is all-pervading. Nothing can limit His presence. Yet, we build houses for God. How can a house accommodate Him? However big the house may be, it will be too small to contain the presence of the Divine. Such houses of God or temples are built in different parts of India and elsewhere. And people have been offering their hearts' prayers to the Lord in these houses of God for centuries together.

God is everywhere, there is no doubt about that. But, if we go to search for Him everywhere, our minds will run about all around and will not remain concentrated at one point. We require a spot where we can try to collect our scattered minds and direct them towards God. That is why temples are necessary to provide us with such a congenial place. People go to temples with the sole aim of worshipping the Divine in an atmosphere charged with the living presence of God.

What Temples Stand For

A temple is not meant for the sake of God; it is for the convenience of the devotee. A devotee may concentrate his mind at a particular place for offering prayers to God. Every temple is such a place where we can pray to God and sing His glories with love

and devotion. Therefore the idea behind the temple is that the Lord may be worshipped in a concrete form there. In fact, it is built as a holy shrine of God where the devotees go and try to rid themselves of their lower worldly desires.

A temple stands for spiritual culture. It is a symbol in brick and mortar of the Divine form installed therein. Here people develop their spiritual lives and many indeed realize their divine nature also. If holy men live in these temples, they draw inspiration for themselves and also make the place more inspiring for others by their own holy and divine lives. Spirituality must be kept alive in these temples so that they can always remain a source of inspiration for others. Those who are holy make the places of pilgrimage holier by their presence, by their *sāadhanā*. Through the rituals performed in temples, the deity becomes a living presence. This is called the 'awakening of God'. This awakened presence of Divinity answers the earnest prayers of devotees.

Sincere devotees struggle to realize their divine nature in their heart of hearts. But, the Lord is more or less asleep as it were in most of us. Not having felt the joy of the eternal presence of God inside us, we do not feel interested in seeking God inside. Many a time we give up *sāadhanā*. After making some effort we give up and become preoccupied with the joys and sorrows of the world

*Based on a talk given by the Revered Swami at Amaravati on 25 March 1987.

and totally forget the Lord. To avoid this, we should go to temples, sit quietly there and try to cast aside our ego and listen to the message of the heart. We are sure to find that our preoccupations with the joys and sorrows of the world to be nothing in comparison to the eternal joy that is experienced in the presence of God. So, it is the presence of the Divine that is the most important factor and for that very purpose we need temples.

We should, however, remember that a temple is not a commercial place. A commercial place is where people come, offer things to the Lord and priests come forward to act as mediators to God and exploit the devotion of the people for their own gains. That is not the idea of a true temple. Let us beware of such deterioration of the ideal of the temple. The temple is a place where the devotee spends his time in humble prayer, *japa* and meditation. It is not for the manifestation of the ego of some rich man either. It may have been built out of the contribution from both rich and poor. A temple is always a place for devout worship.

Temples of Sri Ramakrishna

We are discussing here the significance of a Ramakrishna temple. Ramakrishna temple is a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. The Ramakrishna temple stands for the ideals that Sri Ramakrishna represented, the ideals that he has shown through his great life and teachings.

Apart from the ideals of renunciation and harmony of religions that Sri Ramakrishna represented, he wanted his disciples to be spiritual giants themselves and to demonstrate the highest goal of life for all. Not only that. He said later on that spirituality must not be for one's own enjoyment alone. One must live the spiritual life so that he may be a source of inspiration to others,

living for others' sake more than for one's own. Even spiritual life should be for the sake of others, as much as possible. Spiritual life should not be a selfish pursuit only for one's own salvation. It is good if one desires his own liberation, but that liberation will be impossible if he does not feel and work for the liberation of others as well. Sri Ramakrishna said that he would be born again and again until he could remove the miseries of humanity. Swami Vivekananda, his worthy disciple, said, "I do not want liberation until and unless every other soul is liberated."¹ This is the great ideal that Sri Ramakrishna bequeathed to his beloved disciple. And this same ideal has been handed down to us. The feeling that life is not for one's own sake alone, but for the sake of the whole world is the ideal that we learn from Sri Ramakrishna. Our life's aim will not be only to gain liberation, but the emancipation of the whole world from ignorance, the cause of bondage.

Sri Ramakrishna is now a 'great magnet'. Everywhere, people are being irresistibly drawn to the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna because Sri Ramakrishna came at a time when people were groping in darkness and needed something to hold on to in this life of misery, discord and painful existence. Sri Ramakrishna came at a time when we were feeling almost frustrated in our attempt at solving the problems of life. It is said in the scriptures that when the power of evil predominates and good forces become subservient to evil forces, God incarnates in human form,² so that He can give another lease of life to the spiritual heritage of the people. It was at such a time of degeneration of the moral and spiritual values that Sri Ramakrishna was born.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 5, p. 137.

2. Cf. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 4:7.

Sri Ramakrishna symbolizes the highest ideal of spirituality that is possible for a human being. A living ideal was necessary and it found fulfilment in Sri Ramakrishna. Such an ideal is very much needed for the world of today. A temple dedicated to him means that the hearts of the devotees who will come to the temple will be dedicated to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. These ideals of Sri Ramakrishna are the perennial source of strength for the people of this age and also for those that will come later on. The temple dedicated to such an ideal shows the concentrated devotion of the devotees who built the temple for him.

What Such Temples Must Be

The temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna should be a place which will inspire the devotees with the ideals to which Sri Ramakrishna dedicated himself. The devotees should feel inspired for living a higher life in the holy presence of Sri Ramakrishna in such a temple. Sri Ramakrishna says that God especially manifests Himself in the hearts of the devotees.³ It is the sincere hearts of the devotees that are behind the building of God's temple. It is through their hearts' desire to have a temple built that will reflect their ideal that these temples come up. It is a matter of great inspiration when all devotees come together and collectively offer their prayers to Sri Ramakrishna. Such an occasion brings a spiritual charge in the atmosphere. It creates the atmosphere of the living presence of Sri Ramakrishna.

We have got temples all over India. Many of them are found to be utterly neglected. Perhaps these temples, though sources of inspiration for some time, were neglected when the spiritual tradition was lost. What is the use of having such dilapidated temples? This is what one has to guard oneself against. The temples dedicated to Sri Rama-

krishna must always remain places full of divine inspiration for all devotees wherever they may come from. They should feel there peace and joy in the holy presence of Sri Ramakrishna. The devotees of Sri Ramakrishna should have this one idea that every-day or as many days as it is possible for them, they should come to the temple and offer their prayers to the Lord either individually or collectively. Let the spirit be growing more and more forceful so that the inspiration will be irresistible. Every stone of the temple should be a source of inspiration for the devotees. That can be achieved only by the joint efforts of all sincere devotees.

Temples become famous because they are able to draw people towards them. And this is possible because of the holy traditions behind them. Here, in the Ramakrishna temple, we should see that people come with the sole idea of raising themselves up spiritually and filling their hearts with spiritual inspiration. Let there be devotees coming here with pious heart, with humility and with the idea of praying here, sit here in meditation and keep the place quiet and peaceful. People should come and sit in the temple and should be careful not to cause any inconvenience to other devotees who come there. Prayers should be offered without disturbing anybody and that is how people who come here can find peace they need, the peace that will draw them together and the peace that is born of love of God, or of an earnest desire for reaching the highest goal of life, namely God-realization. When we have love for God, it will manifest itself through our hearts being open to everybody, healing the miseries of all people, and trying to help them get rid of their evil tendencies. Sri Ramakrishna stood for that ideal.

May Sri Ramakrishna help us reach that ideal ourselves and may he make us fit instruments in his hand to bring about the great regeneration of the world which was the aim of his life.

3. Cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 133.

The Indian Vision Of God as Mother

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

For many ills of our society, the great anodyne is "the pulse of the mother-heart." This all-embracing love, or spiritual nurturing is not exclusively feminine, but is the privilege of all human beings—writes Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

7. Need for the Pulse of the Mother-heart in our Nation Today

I wish we realize this truth a little more in our own country. If any one of our state employees is posted to a far-away village for work, he or she will try to avoid it, will try to bring influence to get the posting cancelled, and if such avoidance is not possible, he or she will remain apathetic and shirk all responsibilities. Many of our Union and State Government employees are of this type. And the nation suffers. What is behind such attitudes and behaviour? No genuine love for the nation or the people, but only contraction into self-love. Millions of our educated people do not think much of what happens to the common people, or to their own society. But if they have that love and humanist concern they will take all such occasions as a challenge to serve their nation and its weaker sections. That will reveal the presence of this *mother-heart* in them even in a small measure. The pulse of that *mother-heart* is lacking in many of our people today. That *mother-heart*, as said earlier, is not confined to the feminine only, but is the prerogative also of the masculine, as much as that of the feminine. Genetic motherhood alone is exclusively a feminine privilege, but spiritual motherhood is the privilege of all humanity.

The *Devī Māhātmyam* gives us this universal dimension of the Divine *mother-heart* pulsing in various forms in the hearts of all

men and women. (V. 14-34) Verse thirty-three sings thus:

*Yā Devī sarva bhūteṣu
māṭṛ rūpeṇa saṁsthitā,
Namastasyai namastasyai
namastasyai namo namaḥ...*

"That *Devī*, who exists in all beings as mother, I salute Her again and again."

A father has the *mother-heart*; a mother has the *mother-heart*. But there is a speciality in its manifestation in women. That *mother-heart* in its universal dimension is the Divine Mother of the Universe. In spite of our annual noisy ritual worship of the Divine Mother, in our society in India, we lack the *mother-heart* in adequate measure. We have mothers, but even they lack that *mother's heart* in great measure. We become narrow; our hearts become contracted, said Swami Vivekananda, and he referred to our practice of untouchability, suppression of our common people, for centuries together, as a result of the lack of that *mother-heart*. There was only the brain, but not the heart. In many of our women the *mother-heart* became limited to mere genetic motherhood, and to the small genetically-related family group, which made our women (more than our men) greater supporters of untouchability, and the suppression of the common people. They manifested many other virtues and graces, but failed to manifest along with our men the spirituality of the *mother-heart*.

Every woman is privileged to become a genetic mother and a spiritual mother, and every man is privileged to become a spiritual mother.

Love and care and service outside one's genetic relationships alone shows the presence of this spiritual *mother-heart* in its true form, ever free and ever expanding. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'I and mine' is *Māyā*; 'Thou and Thine' is *Dayā*, compassion. This *māyā* is the *avidyā māyā*, referred to earlier, and this *Dayā* is the *Vidyā Māyā*. *Avidyā māyā* confines one's love and care to one's own genetically limited family. There is nothing spiritually significant in it; it is found in the animals also. But its absence will be disastrous for the species concerned. The human *mother-heart* can transcend that limitation and embrace in thought and action (according to one's capacity) all those who need and seek love and care; and that expansion of *mother-heart* will take in also all the sub-human species. According to one's capacity, though that capacity may be, and certainly is, limited, one's intention can be and must be wide—even in spite of the individuals grouping themselves into organizations. Swami Vivekananda often spoke of the heart-lessness of our upper classes and wanted us to utilize our worship of the Divine Mother, and all our *bhakti* tradition, to inspire our people with a *mother-heart*, so that we can take in love and care and serve the millions of our country's weaker sections. They belong to us; we belong to them. That great attitude, which inspired us for decades before political independence, has been slowly vanishing since. There is now very little of that pulsing of the *mother-heart* in our nation. We concentrated instead on the development of the brain of the people. And, today, that brain power, without the pulse of the *mother-heart* behind, is doing immense havoc.

As remarked by Prof. William McDougall, of the Harvard University in his *The Character and the Conduct of Life*, which I read over five decades ago, every youth must have ambition; but that ambition must be inspired by an ideal of character. If that ideal is not there, that ambition will make for unscrupulousness; for scruples stand in the way of ambition. Our post-independent India, amply and tragically illustrates the truth of this remark.

8. *The Story of Sāvitrī and Satyavān*

In fact, the whole world is today suffering from this power of brain without qualitative enrichment by the purifying and elevating power of love. Wisdom is the product of harmonizing love and knowledge. Now, we in India worship the Divine Mother as part of our national religious heritage. Yet we do not appreciate the worship in a practical way. It is but a custom and tradition with us; we do not feel the need for imbibing the spirit of it. But in the West, this very concept of God as Mother is appealing to more and more people; they find in it much-needed message for themselves.

If you ask what is the word that they in the West use most in life, in the family and in society, it is the word *love*. It is *love, love, love*. What does it indicate? Psychology will say that when people talk too much about a subject, it only shows that they have no adequate experience of the thing. If you experience a value, you do not talk, need not talk much about it. In the West, there is a real dearth of the experience of love. Bertrand Russell, whom I shall quote fully later, passionately spoke of the need for *love*—'Christian love', as a remedy for the current evils of Western society. Pitirim Sorokin of Harvard University also spoke of the urgent need for a little *altruism* in the human heart. Many other thinkers have expressed similarly.

Addressing the students and staff of a college in Portland, Oregon State, U.S.A., in 1969, during the course of my talk I referred to the need for a little self-discipline in life. Several students stood up and said: "Well Swamiji, we do not believe in all this. We believe only in love!" This was said with all courtesy but there was a firmness and a triumphant note in it. "Oh keep still!" I replied smiling. "What do you know about love?" They all looked around a little puzzled. I continued, "A little nervous titillation and temporary attraction—a sentimental coming together; that is what many of you know about love. That is not true love. It is here today, and tomorrow it goes away. It is not that abiding love which binds two souls together. True love can withstand many tests and trials. Do you desire to know something about such abiding love? I shall tell you a story." They said in chorus: "Yes, do tell us the story, we want to hear it." Then I told them the famous ancient Indian mythically presented real story of Sāvitrī and Satyavān. You would have been surprised to see the tremendous impression it made on the minds and faces of those students! They had never heard such a type of story where even death could not break the bond of love.

Sāvitrī, a beautiful princess, when asked by her father, King Aśvapati, to freely choose her husband, fell in love with Satyavān, who was a refugee youth living in a forest with his blind father, Dyumatsena, who had been defeated in a battle. Sāvitrī's parents resorted to every means to dissuade Sāvitrī, and the sage Nārada also informed her and her father that the young Satyavān was destined to die within a year. Yet Sāvitrī, strong in pure love of soul to soul, whose heart had been captured by that refugee prince, married Satyavān and went with him to live the hard life of exile in the forest. She knew of Nārada's prediction, but one

year passed happily. She sought permission to accompany her husband deep into the forest on the fated day. On that very day Satyavān died with his head on the lap of Sāvitrī. Yama, the god and King of Death arrived to take away Satyavān's soul. Sāvitrī followed Yama and a wonderful dialogue ensued between the two, in the course of which Yama gave Sāvitrī some boons, including that her father-in-law would regain his eyesight and his lost kingdom. When Yama asked Sāvitrī: "Suppose, Sāvitrī, your husband was a sinner and has to go to hell, what will you do?" She replied: "In that case, Sāvitrī goes with the one she loves." Highly pleased, Yama replied: "Blessed are your words, my child, I am pleased to give you any boon other than the soul of your husband." Sāvitrī replied: "May the royal line of my father-in-law be not destroyed; let his kingdom descend to Satyavān's sons." Impressed by the power of Sāvitrī's pure love—a death-conquering love—and her intelligent subtly-framed request, Yama returned to her her husband's soul, saying: "Love has conquered Death; woman never loved like you, and you are the proof that even I, the God of Death, am powerless against the power of the true love that abides."

9. *Love as the Panacea for our Modern Ills*

This story is generally presented as love conquering death and has been a favourite theme of dramas all over India for ages. Many examples are there of men and women with abiding love for their spouses long confined to bed in sickness, or of those cherishing true love not marrying again after their wives' deaths. When such soulful love disappears from life, the heart's hunger for love finds expression in *much talk* of love. Sometimes, when I addressed women's groups in Canada, U.S.A., Holland, West Germany, or Australia, I used to raise this subject of

love in married life and ask in a humourous vein: "How do you sustain married life in your society?" Then I myself would answer: "By saying a thousand 'thank you's' to each other from morning till night!" The wife brings a glass of water to the husband, and he says 'thank you'; the child brings a glass of water to father or mother, evoking a 'thank you' from them. The child may even protest, saying, 'I brought a glass of water for you and you did not thank me!'"

In spite of all these many 'thank-yous', and use of other endearing terms for each other, marriages do not last in many cases. Sometimes it is like supporting a crumbling house with external bamboo poles. Can a toppling house with broken cement joints between the bricks be kept intact by buttressing from outside? There must be some integrating values inside the house—within the husband and wife—to sustain a marriage. And that value is *love*, a soul to soul relation. It is the capacity to enter into the heart of each other. And this comes only from the soul, from a deeper dimension than the sense organs and the intellect; and it is uniquely human; and modern humanity has neglected it—even denied it. That is what impelled psychologist Carl Jung of Zurich to write his book with the title: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

The agnostic thinker, Bertrand Russell, to whom I referred earlier, in the chastened state of mind after the second world war, says in his book, *Impact of Science on Society*, (Unwin Paper backs, 1976, pp. 70-72).

In a good social system, every man (and woman) will be at once a hero, a common man, a cog, to the greatest possible extent, though if he (or she) is any one of these in an exceptional degree, his other two roles may be diminished.

...The Cog Theory, though mechanically feasible, is humanly the most devastating of the three. A cog, we said, should be *useful*. Yes, but useful for what? You cannot say useful for

providing initiative, since the cog-mentality is antithetic to the hero mentality. If you say useful for the happiness of the common man, you subordinate the machine to its effects in human feelings, which is to abandon the cog theory. You can only justify the cog theory by worship of the machine. You must make the machine an end in itself, not a means to what it produces. Human beings then become like slaves of the lamp of the Arabian Nights. It no longer matters what the machine produces, though, on the whole, bombs will be preferred to food, because they require more elaborate mechanisms for their production. In time, men will come to pray to the machine: "Almighty and most merciful Machine, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost screws; we have put in those nuts which we ought not to have put in, and we have left out those nuts which we ought to have put in, and there is no coginess in us"—and so on.

This really won't do. The idolatry of the machine is an abomination. The machine as an object of adoration is the modern form of Satan, and its worship is the modern diabolism.

...Whatever else may be mechanical, values are not, and this is something which no political philosopher must forget.

Again, *ibid.*, (pp 104-105.):

There are certain things that our age needs, and certain things that it should avoid. It needs compassion and a wish that mankind should be happy. ...The things that it must avoid, and that have brought it to the brink of catastrophe, are cruelty, envy, greed, competitiveness, search for irrational subjective certainty, and what the Freudians call the death-wish.

The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it, for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty.

A little love in the heart of human beings can save this otherwise rich modern civilization. Therefore, in the West today, there

is tremendous interest in the concept of God as Mother. Mother represents love. Freud and his psychology had one very bad effect on Western society; it made some women ashamed of their femininity. That sad chapter is now giving place to a sense of feminine self-respect and even self-assertion. A balanced attitude is slowly taking shape. In the meantime, the Freudian impact made more and more mothers lose their mother-heart, children getting deprived of mother-love, with the resulting social distortions. Children, deprived of love, lost also their love for their parents.

That Freudian invasion, along with a ruthless materialism bereft of some of the sterling virtues of its Western expression, are coming to our country also, making many of our so-called educated people into money-making machines bereft of love in the heart, and often leading to wife-burning on the part of the husband, and utter unconcern for the weaker sections of society by both. We can see in it the setting in, in our people, of a condition of soullessness, and the family distortions and social evils flowing from it. Our people also will experience, after advancing a little more on this downward road, a desire to seek their lost soul, and fruitful methods by which to experience true love, and give the same to others.

Vedanta will then become a living and practical philosophy to us and beckon our people to a truer and fuller life, as it is happening now in the West. We shall then appreciate and learn from the great examples of mother-love such as Sarada Devi's, the Holy Mother's (1853-1920)—the spouse of Sri Ramakrishna. The verses about the *Devī* quoted above is not mere mythology. An event of great significance occurred in the life of Sarada Devi and Sri Ramakrishna.

One of the many aspects of the Divine Mother is Her aspect as the embodiment of

all Beauty; She is called *Soḍaṣī*, the youthful virgin, or *Lalitā*, the Beautiful, or *Tripura-sundarī*, the condensed beauty of all the three worlds. As the consummation of his twelve-year-long spiritual experiments and experiences at the Dakshineswar Kālī Temple near Calcutta, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Goddess *Soḍaṣī* on a dark new-moon night of May 1872, with all the prescribed rituals of the Divine Mother's worship. But one thing was unusual, and remarkable; he worshipped the Divine Mother in the person of his wedded wife, Sarada Devi. And at the close of the worship, he offered the fruits of all his spiritual experiments and experiences, including his long-used rosary, at the feet of Sarada Devi; and both entered into deep samādhi till a very late hour of that night. This act of husband worshipping his wedded wife as divine is unprecedented, even in India's long and rich religious history. I was deeply drawn to Holy Mother in 1924 when I was hardly fifteen. I had a loving mother who gave birth to me, but I found a thousand such mothers in the Holy Mother. And during my several lecture tours round the world these forty years, I could witness increasing numbers of Western women and men being drawn to the Holy Mother for the holy and pure *mother-heart* she embodies, a mother-heart which excluded no one, but encompassed in its love Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others—sinners and drunkards, and the people of East and West. No dogmas or creeds stood in its way. Many serious-minded people in the West are consciously in search of this value called love, and they turn back again to Christianity, not for its creeds and dogmas, but in search of this precious value of love in Jesus Christ and the saints.

So I present these central themes of pure religion before the audiences I address in the West. I tell them: You cannot build a happy married life by the mere external

support of many "thank yous". When real love is present the need for "thank you" becomes reduced to the minimum. "Thank you" are mere words; there is need for feeling behind them. The audience very much appreciate these ideas and express the longing to make changes in that direction. And there was an interesting sequel to this discussion in one of the meetings. At the end of the week-long Vedanta retreat in Oosterbeek, in Holland, there was a farewell session. One of the audience got up to speak, and in hesitation, said: "We are afraid to say 'thank you' to you, Swami, for this week-long intellectual and spiritual service," creating loud laughter among the audience.

10. *Place of Sentiments in Human Life*

This concept of God as Mother is attracting the minds of the people. Why God as Father alone, why not God as Mother? For us in India it is natural. While in the West and in Islamic countries, they call their country fatherland, we call our country motherland—*Mātrbhūmi*. *The Rāmāyaṇa* expresses in one place the idea: *Jananī Janmabhūmiśca Swargādapi garīyasī*—"Mother and motherland are superior even to heaven." What a beautiful concept! In the Prophet Mohammad's teaching also, in the *Koran*, there is this sentiment expressed, that "*heaven lies at the feet of your Mother.*" The capacity for love is also called today the capacity for human communication, heart communicating to heart. I heard the use of this term for the first time used in that sense, from a girl student in America in 1971.

I was sitting in a hall of the Princeton University. An American lady came up to me and said that her daughter wanted to give up her studies and go to India; would I give proper advice to the girl to finish her university studies and then only go to

India? I agreed, and the girl came and sat near me. I asked her: "Why don't you finish the graduation and then go to India?" She replied with much feeling: "It does not help me to communicate with people." "You are right," I said; "present-day education makes one a prisoner of one's individuality, makes one a billiard ball (in the words of Bertrand Russell) which cannot enter into, and communicate, but only collide with another billiard ball. When there is stress on intellect only, but not on feeling also, man becomes reduced to a machine. Father, mother, daughter, son—these relationships are to be based not on logic and utility alone, but also on emotions and sentiments. When these sentiments are taken away, inter-human relations become reduced to nuts and bolts of a machine, as remarked by Bertrand Russell.

I was one day sitting in our office of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta; a number of tourists from France entered the office in an exasperated mood. I received them and they all sat down. The conversation started when they asked: "What is all this worship of cows going on in India, when its human beings are dying of hunger and malnutrition? We consider this illogical." I told them: "I shall tell you about it; please patiently listen. There is meaning in it. India was a beef-eating country, long long ago. In the course of several centuries, a certain sentiment began to be built around the cow. Our babies were first taking mother's milk, followed later by cow's milk; slowly that mother-sentiment became transferred to the cow which, along with calves, was part and parcel of the household. After centuries of such experience, the nation developed a mother-sentiment with respect to the cow. It was not dictated by logic alone—such as the importance of cattle for agriculture, but primarily by sentiment. Human life is enriched by a number of such

sentiments. If a family is starving, all the children themselves will object if it is suggested that they can be fed by killing a cow or a calf. Is it not a sign of high culture ?

Certainly, logical it is not, utilitarian it is not. But if logic and utility alone guide human life, and all sentiment is set aside, serious consequences will follow. Here is one's father and mother. They have become old ; they have become economically a burden. Logically speaking, the best thing is to kill them off ; utility dictates it. But no one will do it yet, though some will dump them off to old age homes. There is still a little sentiment left in the human heart. Similarly, the Hindus have a sentiment for this one animal, the cow. It has been feeding us as babies, like our mother, for a few thousand years, and we have slowly transferred upon it our sentiment associated with our mother." Hearing all this, the tourists jointly said: "Now we understand and appreciate this Hindu custom. Nobody ever presented it this way to us. Thank you!" And they took leave, satisfied.

11. *Spiritual Orientation of the Ultimate Reality*

Indian philosophy teaches humanity not to contract, but to expand the mother-sentiment. The moment you visualize God as Mother, that mother-sentiment goes on percolating into various aspects of human life. It is that expansion of love that is capable of uniting human beings to human beings, and human beings to nature. That is the holistic concept and approach that is appealing to people all over the world more and more. For any human being, man is not an enemy to conquer and exploit ; neither is nature an enemy to conquer and exploit. These are the holistic attitudes fostered by feminine nature, different from the separatist attitudes fostered by masculine

nature, as remarked by Charlene Spretnak in her book on *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, I referred to in the beginning of my lecture. One needs, and uses, one's mother for one's own development, but one does not exploit her. So also is *prakṛti*, Nature, our mother, to be used wisely for our development, but not to be exploited. The spiritual orientation of this idea is the vision of God as Mother. That *Parā Prakṛti*, *Parā Śakti*, *Ādyā Śakti*, is the infinite Mother who nourishes us all through Her nature's bounty. This is a truth to which India has given a spiritual orientation. Whereas modern Western cosmology calls and conceives of the ultimate reality as merely a physical entity—a background material, ancient Indian Vedanta calls it the Impersonal-Personal Brahman, of the nature of Pure Consciousness. Says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.1):

*Brahmavid āpnoti param ; tadeṣābhuktā,
Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma...*

"The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme. That truth is expressed thus: 'Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity'."

Where do you realize this truth ? "In your own Self," says the *Upaniṣad*, (*ibid.*) *Yo veda nihitam guhāyām paramē vyoman...* "who realizes It hidden in the supreme cavity of one's heart."

Because we, and the whole universe, have been projected from that Brahman, have been ensouled by It, and will be absorbed into It eventually, says the same *Upaniṣad* (3.1):

*Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante,
yena jātāni jīvanti,
Yat prayanti abhisamviśanti tat
vijijñāsasva, tat Brahma...*

"From whom all these manifestations have come, in whom they exist after mani-

festation, and unto whom they return and enter into, know That. That is Brahman.”

This is how the Ultimate Reality is presented in Vedanta. It interpenetrates everything in the universe. Being of the nature of pure consciousness, that Reality is not only the *ultimate* Reality, but is also the *intimate* Reality, and is ever present at the depth of our own consciousness; and nature has given us the organic capacity to realize it as well.

The British astro-physicist, Fred Hoyle, had written a book on modern cosmology which I read many years ago, and in which he expressed completely materialistic views about the nature of the universe and its background material; but a few years ago, he wrote another book on the subject, *The Intelligent Universe*, in which he reversed his earlier materialistic world-view. Last year he had visited Hyderabad and I had occasion to hear him and talk to him. He wrote in *The Intelligent Universe* (First American Edition, 1984, page 189):

The picture of the origin of the universe, and of the formation of the galaxies and stars as it has been unfolded in astronomy, is curiously indefinite, like a landscape seen vaguely in a fog. This indefinite unsatisfactory state of affairs contrasts with other parts of astronomy where the picture is bright and clear. A component has evidently been missing from cosmological studies. The origin of the universe, like the solution of the Rubic Cube, requires an intelligence.

His concept of intelligence in the universe is far away from the all-encompassing Brahman of Vedanta; but it is the first step, the right step, in that direction. The steps are halting, mainly because of the fear of modern science being contaminated by the concept of the supernatural, and of the extra-cosmic God, upheld by all Western religions. Indian thought does not believe in the

supernatural, since its concept of Nature, as I have mentioned before, is wide enough to include matter and intelligence, and science, and religion without any mutual conflict. This is revealed a little in another later passage in Fred Hoyle's book, (*ibid.*, page 236):

So, starting from astronomy and biology, with a little physics, we have arrived at religion. What happens if the situation is inverted, and we look at science from the religious point of view? How do the two approaches match up? The answer to this question turns on the form of theology. In contemporary Western teachings, the points of contact are few, essentially because "God" is placed outside the universe and in control of it. By contrast, in many other religions past and present, deities lie very much within the universe. This is the case with god Brahma in modern Hinduism, for example, and it was also true of the gods of the Nordic peoples and Greeks many centuries ago.

Fred Hoyle's knowledge about Hinduism is still elementary; this is revealed from his remark that the "Brahma" concept is of modern Hinduism, whereas that concept has been well developed in the two aspects of its masculine Brahma, the projector of the universe from Himself, and the neuter Brahman, the Impersonal Absolute behind the personal Brahma, a few thousand years ago.

This comprehensiveness of the Vedantic truth of Brahman as the source of the universe has been pointed out by Professor Fritjof Capra in his *Tao of Physics* (pp. 130-31):

The most important characteristic of the Eastern Worldview—one could almost say the essence of it—is the awareness of the unity and mutual inter-relation of all things and events. ...The Eastern traditions constantly refer to this ultimate, indivisible reality which manifests itself in all things, and of which all things are parts. It is called *Brahman* in Hinduism, *Dharmakaya* in Buddhism, *Tao* in Taoism...

12. Conclusion

Vedanta, as we have seen, calls Intelligence *Cit Śakti*. *Cit* is a beautiful word in Sanskrit, meaning consciousness. *Cinmaya Jagat* will be the exact Sanskrit rendering of the title of Fred Hoyle's book, *The Intelligent Universe*. Vedanta also speaks of the universe as the play, *Līlā*, of the Divine Mother. Behind the universe is that mother-heart, whose manifestation, along with all its various good and evil elements, non-violence and violence, can be seen in the cosmos, in the animals, as much as in human beings; and the human being has the power to transcend these limitations. The *Devī Māhātmyam*, therefore, sings (11.6):

*Vidyā samastāḥ tava devī bhedāḥ
Striyāḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu...*

“O Devī, all types of knowledge are Thine own diverse forms; all women also in the world are Thy diverse manifestations.”

We have the concept of the Divine Mother

as *Lakṣmī*, Embodiment of all material welfare, and as *Sarasvatī*, the serene Goddess of *Vidyā*, all knowledge, secular as well as sacred. We do not have the big gulf between secular and sacred, as in the West. It is one continuous pursuit of *vidyā*—*vidyā* secular and *vidyā* higher; both are spiritual and are manifestations of the Divine Mother. *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī*—i.e., knowledge hymn as *Niḥseṣajādyāpahā*—“one who destroys completely all *jādyā*, or inertness or laziness or dullness.”

And so, these are the blessings to humanity from the Divine Mother, in the forms of *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī*—i.e., knowledge scientific and spiritual, and the fruits of knowledge, as material prosperity and social welfare. She is therefore described as *Bhukti-Mukti Pradāyini*—‘Giver of worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom’. And that constitutes the totality of human cravings and satisfactions; and that also proclaims the *māhātmya*, glory, of the *Devī*, the Divine Mother.

The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) one day told...‘She (the Holy Mother) is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge. She has descended by covering up her beauty this time...’ On another occasion he said, ‘She is the communicator of knowledge, she is full of rarest wisdom. Is she of the common run? She is my Sakti (power)’.

The Relevance of Sri Ramakrishna

V. GOPINATHAN

The sayings of Sri Ramakrishna are simple. As regards their profundity and relevance, they are timeless. Professor V. Gopinathan of Kerala centres his discussion on some teachings of the Master.

That the modern world is passing through a vicious stage is an indubitable fact, well known to all thinking people today. It is highly essential to follow the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna to restore human values and adherence to Dharma in these days of chaos and moral decline. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna point to a clear solution and a way out of this complicated tangle. The incarnation of purity, abundantly blessed with prophetic vision, resourcefulness of intellect, love of mankind, and profound wisdom, Sri Ramakrishna was quite conscious of the downward trend of the modern world. That is why he suggested countless remedies and invaluable hints for the solutions of baffling problems confronting mankind. This is easily realized by any devout reader of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, who experiences the sweetness of his utterances or has had occasion to know them vicariously.

“Live in the world; at the same time, hold to God with one of your hands.” This sound advice is, in a nutshell, a clean and clear solution of the perplexing labyrinth of the tangle of life. Though apparently a simple maxim (at least to some people) it is in fact a practicable step to the essence of the Upaniṣads. At the same time, it is an easy step and guideline for all householders. On no occasion did Sri Ramakrishna exhort anyone to flee from life. “Why should you give up the world?” he said. “There is no need of that. You live in the world. Is this world different from God? Think deeply. Look at the mudfish,

uncontaminated by the mud that surrounds it.” In what a superb and simple fashion did Sri Ramakrishna shower his grace on all and sundry! Taking from the pages of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sri Ramakrishna pointed to the noble example of Śrī Rāma, who at one time in his boyhood wanted to become an ascetic. Disinterested in worldly pursuits. Śrī Rāma wanted to become a Sannyasin. Then his guru, Vasiṣṭha, said to him: “Rāma, why should you give up the world? Consider well and deep. Is God outside this world? The whole universe itself is a manifestation of His glory. Therefore, you live in this world. Do your duty, following dharma. Be a good and noble example to the rest of mankind.” This sage counsel of Vasiṣṭha was, in reality, a panacea for all evils that existed and exist in the world for generations. What we should forsake is not the world, but the evils that are in us, like lust, anger and money. This was the essence of Sage Vasiṣṭha’s sagacious counsel. And Sri Rama exemplified it through his unquestioning obedience to his father’s will in his noble life.

Lord Śrī Rāma is an ideal hero, not only for Indian people, but for the whole of humanity, and besides, a noble guide. It is easily discernible in all the deeds of Śrī Rāma. Ripe wisdom is replete in all his actions. Never had Śrī Rāma deviated from the path of righteousness and performance of *Dharma*. Even to reclaim his wife Sita, he did not seek the assistance of Vāli, the wicked brother of Sugrīva. Vāli and Rāvaṇa had committed grievous offences and heinous

crimes. Retribution was necessary in both their cases. And they had to be punished by the hand of Śrī Rāma Himself. The deaths of Vāli and Rāvaṇa were indispensable for establishing victory over *adharmā*.

What are we to understand from the above? Negligence, or avoidance of one's duty, is surely not *Dharma*. It is not our duty to work for work's sake, but our duty is to see that our *Karma* is performed for the sake of upholding *Dharma*. It is this fundamental principle that Sri Ramakrishna reiterated in all his sayings. "Perform all your duties in the world. At the same time, keep the remembrance of God firmly planted in your mind. Let all your Karma be an offering to God. Follow the main maxim of the *Bhagavad Gītā*." How true!

Like the maid servant in the rich man's mansion, who finishes her work quickly and remembers to feed her dear child at home, like a woman anxious to meet her paramour,—we should always have such great passion for God. The main current of our heart should be directed towards God in the midst of all our actions. There is no influence of *Māyā*, or taint of sin, in such actions prompted by God. This is so since the path directed by Him will always be infallible. Swami Vivekananda, too, chose the right path in his life mission at the expense of his family. He considered his holy mission more important than his duty to his family. One's duty to the world at large is greater than one's duty to narrow family ties. It was Sri Ramakrishna's practical counsel that helped Vivekananda to take a firm decision in this regard. "Yes, go to the temple of Kālī and pray to Her. Goddess Kālī will surely grant your prayer." So said Sri Ramakrishna to his doubting disciple, Narendra. But Narendra couldn't bring himself to pray for worldly things while in the presence of the great Goddess Kālī.

So, what is our duty, in similar circumstances? Nothing else but to tread along the path shown by God by surrendering everything at His feet. There may be thunderbolts, rains and the roar of ferocious animals all around, but we needn't be afraid. We shall see the clear and peaceful path of light shone by God for our guidance. We have only to make our hearts pure for the indwelling of His pure spirit.

This simple path of action, which is accessible to an individual, is equally accessible to society, to a nation, and to the world at large. This important (and no doubt, the most important of all the counsels of Sri Ramakrishna) meant for the worldly people—the performance of one's duty without attachment, and in complete surrender to God—is undoubtedly a good guideline for the modern world. We should never be concerned with our selfish vested interests, desires for conquest and cravings for flattery and recognition. What is required is the performance of one's duty, or *Dharma*, which will make one worthy in the sight of God. Never should lethargy or cowardice deter us into despondency or shyness in action. We should never deviate from the right path of truthful action, even when there is a lot of suffering and sacrifice involved. As Robert Browning sang in one of his famous poems, "Not on what the vulgar mass call 'work' should sentence pass", but the noble examples of self-sacrificing heroes are to act as our guides.

In this age when fights over trifles and internal dissensions are the order of the day, if only the message of Sri Ramakrishna is carried to every nook and corner of the modern world! Surely, there would rise the glorious chance of resurrecting an ideally beautiful world, free from malice and enmity,

(Continued on page 425)

Common Sense About Meditation

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

In recent times the word meditation and its practices have acquired many accretions—often misleading. Dr. Lewis, Professor Emerita of California State University, Fresno, U.S.A., elucidates the real meaning, purpose and the goal of meditation. She offers helpful suggestions for practice, too.

To counteract the tension, anxiety, and frustration that affect nearly everyone today, more and more people are seeking refuge in meditation. Some meditate to avoid being overwhelmed by such afflictions as alcoholism, drug addiction, and cancer. Others meditate to build their self-esteem or to develop attitudes which will enable them to get along better with others and succeed in their careers. Meditation techniques are as numerous and various as the difficulties we are trying to overcome. Cancer patients, for instance, sometimes meditate by visualizing their immune cells attacking and destroying their malignant cells.¹ People in stressful situations often seek peace and quiet by meditating on such tranquil aspects of nature as the deep silence of a primeval forest or the unruffled calm of a windless ocean. The majority of these popular meditations have some therapeutic value, and few, if any, are harmful.

We have become so engrossed in creating new meditations to meet various exigencies, thus making meditation a quasi-science of our own,² that we tend to forget or simply

1. See *The Bottom Line* (New York: Broadroom Reports, 1991), January 15, 1991, p. 14.

2. The following meditation exercise by Dr. Ira Progoff is one of these new creations:

Try to duplicate the twilight state between sleeping and waking. By working in that intermediate state of consciousness, you can reach consciousness levels that are difficult to contact any other way.

Meditation Exercise. Sit quietly in a comfort-

able position. Relax. Close your eyes. Follow your breathing until you feel a great calm. On your mental screen picture a deep well. Enter the well and go deeper and deeper. At the bottom of the well is a river. The waters are muddy but they begin to clear.

Examine the images that appear, then allow yourself to become a bit more alert and jot those images down. Then return to the twilight state. Keep moving back and forth jotting down the images.

Ask yourself: Do the images suggest anything?
The Bottom Line, August 30, 1990, pp. 11-12.

meditated in order to do so. His courage was a by-product of his meditation. If he had confined his goal to coping with life's problems, he might have achieved a little success, but he would have continued to be plagued by fears and frustrations. An arrow that is aimed low cannot fly very high.

If he were alive today, the sage could explain that he had achieved this serenity because he had based his meditative practices on the assumption of the divinity of man.³ He might suggest that the contemporary meditator emulate the miner who has just learned from a competent geologist that there is in all probability a rich vein of gold in the ground beneath his feet. If he had been panning for gold in a shallow creek, the miner would immediately drop the pan, seize a shovel, and begin to dig. Similarly, the meditator who has learned on reliable authority that there is a core of divinity within him should abandon his more superficial meditative practices and adopt others better suited to penetrating his own depths.

Before making his first attempts at meditation, an aspirant would benefit from consulting Patañjali, the acknowledged Indian authority on concentration and meditation. In his yoga aphorisms Patañjali states that proper meditation cannot occur without the cessation of all mental activity. But he did not mean that one should try to make the mind a blank by annihilating the thought waves one after the other as they rise into consciousness. He knew that, since the mind, like nature, abhors a vacuum, another thought will immediately spring up to take the place of one that has been routed. He, therefore, recommended that instead of making a futile effort to empty the mind

3. See Aldous Huxley, "The Minimum Working Hypothesis," in *Vedanta for the Western World*, ed. Christopher Isherwood (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 173.

forcibly, the meditator should try to engage it in "an unbroken flow of thought toward an object of concentration."⁴ If the meditator were to concentrate steadily on any one object, the thought waves would have to stop; there would be no room for them in his mind. Swami Vivekananda once concentrated so effectively on a black dot that his mind was stilled and he caught "glimpses of supersensuous truth."⁵

Swami Vivekananda was able to concentrate on such an uninteresting object as a black dot because his pure mind presented no opposition to his extraordinary willpower; but we are different. For most people, whose minds are in a constant state of flux, the best object for concentration is one to which they are naturally inclined. Sri Ramakrishna told a parable to illustrate how concentration upon a beloved object, in this case, a pet buffalo, can be turned into meditation.

A disciple once came to a teacher to learn how to meditate on God. The teacher gave him instructions, but the disciple soon returned and said that he could not carry them out; every time he tried to meditate, he found himself thinking about his pet buffalo. "Well then," said the teacher, "you meditate on that buffalo you're so fond of." The disciple shut himself up in a room and began to concentrate on the buffalo. After some days, the teacher knocked at his door and the disciple answered: "Sir, I am sorry I can't come out to greet you. The door is too small. My horns will be in the way." Then the teacher smiled and said: "Splendid! you have become identified with the object of your concentration. Now fix that concentration upon God and you will succeed."⁶

4. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 173.

5. Swami Vivekananda, *Meditation and its Methods*, ed. Swami Chetanananda (Vedanta Press: Hollywood, 1978), p. 64.

6. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, pp. 83-84.

Since it is easier to concentrate on an object that one loves than on an affectively neutral object like a black dot, the spiritually earnest aspirant will meditate most successfully on that aspect of divinity which embodies his dearest aspirations. As he progresses in meditation, his love for it will grow and it will become a powerful force attracting him to itself. But since each meditator is unique personally and spiritually, no one aspect of divinity is universally suitable for meditation. Everyone has his own ideal. Few beginners, however, have had sufficient experience to know their spiritual goals, veiled as they usually are in the mist of an unclarified longing. It is therefore wise for the groping aspirant to seek the assistance of an advanced sage, who can discern his inner tendencies and guide him accordingly. No genuine sage will attempt to force him arbitrarily into some preconceived mould that may not be right for him. The aspirant must take care, however, that the guide he chooses is not motivated by cravings for money, fame, or sense-gratification. Genuine sages are rare, and if the aspirant does not find one, he is better off with no teacher at all. But he need not worry. It has been said, and often proven true, that the teacher will come when the student is ready.

The prospective meditator will find that tradition has provided him with a wealth of time-tested meditations from which to choose the one that is best for him. He could, for instance, think of himself as a fish swimming joyfully in an ocean of divine bliss or a bird soaring ecstatically in a heaven of effulgent light. Beautiful as they are, however, such impersonal meditations are appropriate for only a few people. Because divinity more easily becomes living and real for them when they see it embodied in beings like themselves, most aspirants prefer to meditate on some great sage or divine incarnation. But since the novice has not seen and does not

really know his chosen ideal, he begins with a vague, often stereotyped, notion of it. So meditation bores him at first and he unconsciously tries to escape from it by planning his day, composing his grocery list, or dreaming the hour away.

"Why can't I meditate?" the discouraged aspirant asks after a few months or, possibly, years. When he sits for meditation his thoughts run riot forcing the object of concentration out of his mind. His very best efforts prove futile.

Perhaps he would not be so disappointed by his inability to concentrate if he realized that he is asking too much of himself. He would not expect to learn to play the violin like an old maestro without many years of practice, yet he expects mastery of the still more demanding art of meditation within a brief period of time.⁷ He should not be discouraged. A few words from Swami Prabhavananda will put his efforts in better perspective. "It has been said," the swami writes, "that if the mind can flow uninterruptedly toward the same object for twelve seconds, this may be called concentration. If the mind can continue in that concentration for twelve times twelve seconds (i.e. two minutes and twenty seconds) that may be called meditation."⁸ It would be ridiculous for the average meditator to ask himself to concentrate uninterruptedly for two minutes and twenty seconds. Perfection in meditation is achieved simultaneously with moral and ethical perfection. It is the culmination of all spiritual practices, and its development can reasonably take several life-times. Although the struggling aspirant cannot hold his straying mind steady for more than a moment or two, he is probably more success-

7. Mastery of the violin requires a special aptitude not everyone has, but this is not true of meditation.

8. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (How to Know God)*, p. 179.

ful than he believes himself to be. He makes a little progress toward concentration and meditation each time he brings his mind back to his chosen ideal.

The aspirant will better understand his inability to concentrate if he remembers that the hour of meditation is part of a continuum which includes his entire life. He does not suddenly change and become a new person when he sits down to meditate. His mind then is the same mind, filled with the same thoughts that it is at other times. During meditation these thoughts continue their habitual activity of forcing their way one by one to the focal point of his consciousness in rapid, unending succession.

Patañjali and other experts on meditation therefore stress the importance of practising certain disciplines throughout the day in order to calm the mind for meditation. In his yoga aphorisms, Patañjali lists eight steps in the meditative process. The first two steps, which he considers essential preliminaries to meditation, are "yama," "the observance of the five virtues," and "niyama," the "five rules of conduct." The five virtues are 1) refraining from injury to others, (2) truthfulness in dealing with others and in assessing one's own motives, (3) refraining from taking anything that belongs to another, whether it is tangible property or the credit for an achievement, (4) sexual control, and (5) the non-acceptance of substantial gifts if one is capable of economic independence. The rules of conduct are (1) mental and physical cleanliness, (2) contentment: the avoidance of excessive ambition and acquisitiveness; the cheerful acceptance, not of oppressive conditions that one can change without injury to others, but of conditions that either do not need to be changed or cannot be changed, (3) austerity: the abstention from over-indulgence and the cultivation of self-control without the excesses of self-torture sometimes mistakenly

associated with austerity, (4) the study of the wisdom of the sages and the scriptures with the purpose of integrating it into one's life, and (5) self-surrender to divine inspiration whether it is seen as coming from a personal God, a guru, or one's own higher Self.

Although he considers "yama" and "niyama" to be essential preliminaries to meditation, Patañjali does not intend to imply that the meditator must master all of these virtues and rules of conduct before he begins *trying* to meditate. What he does mean is that the meditator will have to master them before he *succeeds* in meditating, that is, in holding his mind on his ideal for approximately two minutes and twenty seconds. If a person who had never previously attempted to meditate were to observe "yama" and "niyama" flawlessly, he would be able to concentrate uninterruptedly the first time he sat for meditation. On the other hand, a person who regularly sat for meditation but did not struggle to improve himself, would find that his attempts to meditate were fruitless.

Since thoughts of the divine ideal counteract the evil tendencies that interfere with the practice of "yama" and "niyama," it is important for the struggling aspirant to endeavour to maintain recollectedness while going about his daily affairs. Every moment spent thinking of the ideal will not only dispel spiritually harmful thoughts but it will be a positive aid to concentration during meditation. (As a matter of fact any thought of the ideal could be considered a moment of meditation.) Now the objection may be raised that we cannot think of other things while we are doing our work, but a little self-analysis will show us that we think of many irrelevant things while we are working. Then why not think of God? Sri Ramakrishna taught that an aspirant should try to think of his chosen ideal in the way that a para-

mour thinks of her sweetheart. No matter where she is or what she is doing she cannot get him out of her mind.

The aspirant will inevitably protest that he does not feel the attraction of love for his chosen ideal that the paramour feels for her sweetheart. That may be true, but this love can be developed by means of appropriate disciplines. One of the best of these disciplines is the repetition of the divine name, for it draws the aspirant to the ideal. In this way he slowly comes to know the ideal and, knowing it, to love it. The company of holy men and women is also very helpful. Since their lives are transparent to the divinity within, association with them will enable the aspirant to experience something of the divine quality of consciousness which the ideal shares with them. When he cannot have the company of the holy, he can bring them to mind by reading their biographies and by placing photographs of them in his home.

Because meditation itself is part of the mental continuum, all efforts to concentrate on the ideal during meditation will make it easier for the aspirant to maintain recollection at other times. All attempts to meditate will help to purify his heart, and all attempts to purify his heart will facilitate his meditation. Thus, a gracious circle can be developed with all thoughts and actions working toward the one end.

Patience is of the essence in the meditative process. A meditator should never discontinue his meditation merely because it seems dry and boring. Of course he will not become perfect and have the ultimate vision immediately, but, as he goes along, persistence will bring rewards in proportion to his sincerity and steadfastness. We read in the lives of saints and sages that they were blessed with profound spiritual experiences long before they reached their final goal. Each of these experiences strengthened their conviction and inspired them to intensify their efforts. Even a few minutes of steady concentration on the ideal can bring a spiritual awakening that will take a form dear to the meditator. He may, for instance, feel the presence of his ideal and be blessed with its vision. Or he may experience the ineffable sweetness that Brother Lawrence called "the presence of God." On the other hand, an aspirant may make considerable progress before anything definite occurs; then, when he is least expecting it, a veritable reservoir of spiritual consciousness will flood into him. Periods of spiritual dryness commonly alternate with periods of fruition. Being unable to assess his own spiritual attainments, an aspirant may feel unsuccessful and depressed at the very moment when he is making significant progress. Although he cannot foresee it, a spiritual break-through will inevitably occur if he persists. There is no failure in spiritual life.

THE RELEVANCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

(Continued from page 420)

thwarting all obstacles in the path of perfection. If only all the heads of states and power-loving dictators of the world took heed of the good gems of advice scattered in plenty for the welfare and uplift of mankind by Sri Ramakrishna, certainly, a

harmonious world based on love of mankind would become a reality on this earth in this century itself! May Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa bless us all for such redemption of the human race!

Intellect And Soul

MADHAVAN NAIR

Intellect is an instrument of the soul. Through it the soul, or Atman is able to perceive and enjoy the world. These are two distinct spiritual entities which survive the death of the physical body—explains the author who is a former judge in the Kerala High Court.

Everyone knows intellect, but not the Soul. In fact, if one knows the real nature of intellect, he is very near to understanding the nature of Soul. So we will first examine our knowledge of Intellect.

Intellect is that by which we recognise sensations, recall memories, decide actions, conceive thoughts, etc. But men differ about its identity. Some identify the intellect with the brain itself, and some say it is only a faculty or functional capacity of the brain. So, when they hear that intellect recalls memories, they understand that the brain reviews past experiences. On the other hand, some regard intellect as an intelligent incorporeal agent independent of the brain. They say that intellect receives sensations and transmits its decisions for action to the physical organs, through the brain. The former conceive intellect as part of the brain and therefore of the physical body. The latter conceive it as a subtle or non-material entity, quite distinct from the physical body, but which controls the body. This is close to the view of our ancient sages. Recent researches by certain American scientists have affirmed the latter view convincingly.

Dr. Ian Stevenson MD, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, conducted research and collected evidence on reincarnation in many countries, including Canada, the U.S., Brazil, England, France, Italy, Greece, and others of the Near and Far East, and Africa. He observed primarily children between the ages

of three and five who spontaneously began remembering and talking about their prior lives. Before 1977 he had a collection of above sixteen hundred cases of such remembrance by young children. Such children spoke of their homes, occupations, relatives and other things of the prior life, which were in many cases in far off places, with which the young children had no chance of becoming acquainted in their present life. Their statements of verifiable facts were subjected to elaborate investigations by Dr. Stevenson and others, often with the assistance of local doctors or professors, and were found correct. Details of the investigations conducted by Dr. Stevenson are described in his books, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, and *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*. The remembrance of prior lives by some children proves that the memories and the intellect of prior lives continue in them into their present lives. If intellect is a part, or a faculty of, the brain, the intellect of a prior life should have perished with the destruction of the brain at death in the prior body. Its survival to the present life proves that intellect is not a part of the brain or of the physical body. It is a lasting element, independent of the brain and the physical body.

Indian philosophy reckons intellect as a constituent part of the subtle body (*Sūkṣmaśarīra*) that covers the soul. As intellect performs many functions in our system—it knows, thinks, decides, directs, and so on—

it is mentioned as “an agent” with vast powers. It remains active in the body throughout life; yet no scientist can detect it, even through the most powerful microscope. Scientists have detected light spreading from stars that are millions of light-years away from the earth. One light-year is the distance that light travels in one year at its normal speed of three lakh kilometers per second, but none could detect the existence of the intellect, except by knowing the work it turns. If intellect contained matter, scientists would have detected it somehow, but they could not.

Intellect is invisible and undetectable because it is a non-material element—subtle element in Sāṅkhya Philosophy. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, (verse 22) says that the intellect, the ego, the mind, and fifteen other subtle elements (internal and external organs) arise from Primal Nature (*Prakṛti*); and thereafter the fundamental particles of matter came into existence, in combinations of five, of those subtle physical elements called *tanmātras*. So all the elements, like the intellect, the mind, and the ego, arise before matter comes into existence. They are subtle and beyond the domain of matter.

When we have understood the existence of intellect as a subtle element performing wonderful operations in our system, it becomes easy for us to comprehend the existence of other subtle elements as well in our system. Soul is another spiritual element that dwells within us. It manifests consciousness throughout the body, and animates the body.

Soul, or Atman, is defined in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (4:3:7): “That which manifests consciousness in the organs”—that infinite entity (*Puruṣa*) that is identified with the intellect and is in the midst of the organs. *Aitareya Upaniṣad* (3:1) defines soul as “that by which one sees things, hears

sounds, smells scents, articulates speech, and distinguishes taste and distaste.” The common man calls it life or *jīva*; the learned man calls it soul or *Ātman*. It is the vital principle in every living being.

Death is the departure of the soul from the physical body. We know that a dying man may see things, hear talk, feel touch; and suddenly his physical body becomes inert like a log of wood. That momentary interval is too short for the occurrence of any material changes in the organs; but all the organs that displayed powers of sight, hearing, feeling, smelling, etc. lost their powers. It could not be physical damage that comes to all the organs simultaneously. It is the withdrawal of consciousness that manifests throughout the body. It is the disappearance of consciousness from the physical body. The vital principle, or consciousness, which was radiating throughout the body, has left the body.

Recently certain American doctors investigated so-called death-experiences of patients who died (were clinically declared dead) due to accident during operation, or after childbirth, or due to suffocation, but were soon revived by the application of resuscitating procedures. They recorded that such patients on reviving, remembered their experiences between the ‘death’ and revival. The patients spoke of having gone out of the body after dying, and floating in the atmosphere for some time, and then re-entering the body to revive it. It shows that death is the exit of the vital principle from the body, and revival is its re-entry into the body. It indicates that the vital principle, which we call life or soul, is a distinct being, independent of the body. The details of death-experiences, narrated by the revived patients, show that the disembodied souls could pass through thick walls, closed doors, ceilings, and metal plates, without the least difficulty. Gauḍapāda, in his commentary on the

Sāṅkhya Kārikā (verse 40), observed that the soul with its subtle body can pass through mountains and the like (*parvatādiṣu*), without any obstruction. It agrees with the narrations of the patients to their doctors. Dr. Ian Stevenson's researches showed that the souls which left the physical body, and did not re-enter it, take rebirth to live another life. Like intellect, the soul is unobservable and undetectable. It is a subtle or spiritual element and an agent of supreme powers. The recollections of revived patients and reborn persons, mentioned above, show that intellect remains with the soul when it goes out of the body.

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says that the soul is covered by five *kośās*, or sheaths. It names the innermost sheath as the sheath of bliss (*Ānandamayakośa*). In deep sleep the soul does not know the pains of the body. It is as if the soul is effectively covered by a sheath that screens off grief or physical pain. The soul resides at peace with itself, in extreme joy. The attributes of the blissful sheath are pleasure and the rest. During profound sleep, this sheath has its fullest play. It also appears when some object

agreeable to oneself presents itself. (See *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* of Śrī Saṅkarācārya, verses 207, 208) In other words, the bliss-sheath is only an occasional sheath. Excepting it, the sheath nearest to the soul is the sheath of the intellect. It enwraps the soul fully, and constantly, throughout the soul's existence. It is called the *Vijñānamayakośā* (sheath of intellect) in the Upaniṣads.

As intellect envelops the soul completely, the soul can get perceptions of worldly objects, or experience their sensations, only through the intellect, at times other than while in deep sleep. So, a soul, enamoured of worldly enjoyments, clings to the intellect to share its experiences. It clings so intimately that it is said to identify itself with the intellect that envelops it. Because of such identification, the common man thinks that the soul and the intellect are one and non-different. But in reality they are distinct subtle elements dwelling in the body. When a person thinks of a vicious act, invariably he feels a mild protest or censure from within his interior. The thought of vicious act is by the intellect, and the protest is by the soul in him.

The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain Absolute Freedom.

—Swami Vivekananda

Tyagaraja—The Saint-Musician

KAMALA S. JAYA RAO

(Continued from the previous issue)

Knowledge

The anxiety and sense of helplessness which a devotee suffers due to separation from the Deity vanish when the knowledge dawns in him that his inner self and God are not different. This realization does not come through mere scholarship. Sri Ramakrishna compared a mere scholar, without devotion to God, to a vulture which, though flying high in the sky, always has its gaze fixed on lowly, rotten things on earth. Tyāgarāja sang likewise—

However learned and great he may be,
he who does not meditate on the path
that leads to Śrīkānta will remain a slave
of the senses.

He takes to violence, covets another's
wealth and wife, slanders and utters lies.

Here, Tyāgarāja plays a pun on the word 'Śrīkānta', which is an epithet of Viṣṇu, the consort of Lakṣmī. He whose heart is not set on the Lord, Śrīkānta, will covet *Srī* (wealth) and *Kāntā* (woman). Tyāgarāja therefore prays for that Knowledge which dawns only in the pure mind—

O Garuḍa-gamana (Viṣṇu)! Will you
not bless me with Jñāna? My mind
has been purified by the chanting of Thy
Name. O Perfect One (*Paripūrṇa*)! O
Immaculate One (*Niṣkalanka*)! Thou
art the Bestower of infinite bliss
(*Niravadhi-sukha-dāyaka*)! Give me that
Knowledge by which I can realize that
I am *Jivātma*, and *Paramātma*, too—that
I am the fourteen worlds, the celestial
beings and the Sages!

When a devotee, a lover of God, prays for Knowledge, he runs into a dilemma; should he become eternally united with the Lord, or should he maintain some separation?—should he 'become sugar' or should he taste and enjoy it? To Tyāgarāja, this appears to be a no-win situation—

O Thou who are without beginning,
middle or end, *Adi-madhyānta-rahita*!
Which path should I follow, pray tell!
If I take the path that leads to realization
that I am one with Thee, then You
may berate me as a burden that cannot be
shaken off.

On the other hand, if I call upon Thee
as Protector of Thy Servants (*Dāsa-
varada*), You may chide me as a dualist!

It is obvious that Tyāgarāja was vexed with the disputes between the various schools of knowledge. In unambiguous terms he protests that he is above all these. He knows that God can be the Personal as well as the Impersonal; the Lord is immanent in the whole universe. He has become the twenty-four cosmic principles, and He manifests Himself very clearly in great devotees—

Is dualism (*Dvaita*) conducive to Bliss,
or is non-dualism (*Advaita*)?

O Thou, Pure Consciousness, Universal
Witness, explain this to me in detail.

Thou, who sport in the five elements, in
the Trinity, and in the hearts of the
devotees, tell me which is more conducive
to Bliss!

Tyāgarāja had the realization that Pure
Love and Pure Knowledge are the same.

The important thing is to follow sincerely any path. *Bhakti-mārga*, or the dualistic path, can also lead to Beatitude, but, though considered the easiest of all the paths to God, even that path demands dispassion—

Can devotion to Rāma be won easily by those who take repeated births and consider this worldly life as the ideal?

Only those who understand that wife, sons, relatives, houses and gold are impermanent can attain to it.

Only those who seek holy men and serve them, hear and realize that Hari alone is All, and meditate on Him, can attain it. Only those blessed souls whose worship is not pompous (*rājasik*) and who repeat the excellent mantra, which is constantly on Tyāgarāja's tongue, can attain to it.

Glory of the Name

Tyāgarāja's path was the path of devotion. With authority born of experience, he praised the glory of the divine name. To him there was no greater happiness than to chant the Lord's names, the means by which one realizes one's own true nature—

Is there a bliss greater than dancing and singing in the ecstasy of joy, praying for communion with Him?

Chanting Śrī Hari's name, forgetting the body and sense-organs, and becoming united with Him (*So'ham*) is sufficient! O Lord! To realize at the time of *Japa* that Thou art the whole universe—a fact admitted by all good souls—is there greater bliss than this?

In this song, as well as in the following one, the Saint declares that chanting the holy name (*Japam*) is a help to meditation. Constant remembrance of the mantra brings one the realization that the whole universe and everything in it is nothing but God. The Name takes form and fills the heart.

The *Name* and the *Named* are not different but are one and the same—

For one who has taken human birth, chanting *Rāma-nāma* is the only bliss. It gives joy even to the *rāja-yogis*!

By listening to *Rāma-nāma*, Rāma's form fills the heart, which overflows with love for Him.

Chant it the way desireless Tyāgarāja chants it!

'Tyāga-rāja, Lord of Renouncers', is also an epithet of Lord Śiva, who burnt all desires to ashes. The Saint teaches, like Sri Ramakrishna, that "*having attained this rare human birth, the supreme need is to develop love for the Lotus Feet of God.*" We can do this easily by chanting the Name, desiring nothing else. However, mere mechanical repetition will not do; one must constantly reflect on the deeper significance—

O Mind! Chanting the Name, meditate on Rāma and try to fathom the glory of His *Līlā*!

Ramā [different spelling] is a synonym for 'beautiful women'. If you dwell on that, you will have to fight lust and passion. Rāma [on the other hand] is an epithet of the Supreme Lord, which puts an end to life's ills.

Arka is the name of a plant. How will it still the monkey-like (restless) mind? But *Arka* is also the epithet of the Sun, which dispels the darkness of perverse reasoning (*kutarka*). *Aja* is a synonym for the goat. How can it satisfy your desires? But *Aja* is also Brahma (the Birthless), uttering which you shall gain victory!

Chanting the divine name and knowing its significance is worship enough. Such a devotee passes the stage of external worship and rituals—

O Mind! That human life is blessed in

which the Lord is enshrined on a golden throne within (*mānasa kanaka pīṭha*), and worshipped with excellent names like 'Śiva' and 'Rāma'.

Place Him, who revels in the sport of the Universe (*sakala-tīlā-vinoda*), the *Paramātman*, in the dias bedecked with gems called musical notes, and worship the Feet of Śrī Rāma, the One who adorns Tyāgarāja's heart with the flowers of His many names (*nāma-kusuma*).

Beauty of the Form

Tyāgarāja becomes ecstatic describing and praising the Form—

No gods can equal Thee!

To compare is like a wick-lamp to a torch, a stream to a river, the stars to the moon, or a lake to the sea!

He pleads with Śrī Rāma to show His most beautiful form—

Raghuvīra, Bestower of Boons, form and towering like Mount Meru! Do Thou come, and let me behold Thee!

Do Thou reveal Thy graceful gait, Thy body shining like a water-laden cloud with grandeur!

Rāma is portrayed with characteristics of unsurpassed beauty, grace and valour. He is the glory of the Solar Dynasty (*Dinamaṇi varṁśa tilaka*), the rising Moon on the ocean of the Solar Dynasty. His body shines like a water-laden cloud (*nīla vārivāha kānti*) and is resplendent like an emerald (*marakatha maṇi varṇa*). His face, charming and beautiful (*kamaṇīya ānana*) excels the beauty of the full moon (*mukhajīta soma*). His lips are pinkish-red (*arunābha adhara*), his sparkling teeth (*suruchira dantāvali*) resemble slender jasmine petals (*kunda radana*). He is lotus-eyed (*nalina locana*). Dressed in golden-hued silk cloth (*kanakamaya cela*), wearing a gold crown and large ear-pendants,

he always carries his bow and arrows. He is soft-spoken (*mṛdu bhāṣaṇa*).

Tyāgarāja's Rāma is never alone. Sītā is always at his side and he is surrounded by his loving and devout brothers, the great devotee. Ānjaneya, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Śabarī, and others who received His protection and blessings.

As he reflected on the beautiful form of Rāma, the Saint was overcome by *Vātsalya bhāva* and he desired to decorate the Lord with his own hands—reminding us of mother Yaśodā—

O Lord, I shall adorn Thee with flowers and gain the admiration of Indira, Brahmā and others.

I shall put shining golden anklets with bells on Your feet, Wrap You in excellent, gold-laced silk cloth, adorn Your hair with Parijāta flowers, and then I shall kiss Your beautiful face...

If a devotee but takes one step towards God, He will come ten steps towards the devotee. He keeps His word and comes to Tyāgarāja, walking all the way (from where, one wonders though!)—

Lord of my life (*Prāṇanātha*)! Have You come walking all the way to bless me? Knowing the unexpressed yearning of my heart (that the sole aim of my life is to see Your Lotus-eyed Face) have you come walking all the way?

Nādopāsana

Thus pleading, cajoling, praising His attributes; in surrender and prayer through songs of sublime poetry and excellence, Tyāgarāja had repeated visions of the Lord and became a *Jīvanmukta*, one liberated in life. Music to him, was not a mere mode of worship, much less an art to be cultivated;

it was Divinity Itself. He was a *Nādupāsaka*, a worshipper of *Nāda-Brahman*. Hence, like all musicians of old he practised the art with rare dedication and devotion, keeping body, mind and speech always pure with a concentrated mind. He therefore felt that salvation was easy for one who possessed musical knowledge—

Can anyone but a *Jīvanmukta* attain salvation (*Mokṣa*)? Can one who does not possess true devotion and knowledge of music, attain salvation?

The vital air (*Prāṇa*) comes into contact with the Energy (*Anala*) within, and the *Prāṇava Nāda* is produced, which diversifies into the seven key notes (*sapta-svara*).

Music was the very life of Tyāgarāja. Like Śrī Chaitanya, who invited people to enjoy the 'delicious broth of *magur* fish' and the 'embrace of Mother Earth', the Saint too, felt that there was no greater enticement than music and no woman more beautiful than the seven notes of the musical scale—

Drink the nectar of music (*rāga sudhā rasam*) and delight in it, O Mind!

It will give you the fruits of *yāga*, *yoga*, *tyāga* and *bhoga*. Tyāgarāja knows that those who have knowledge of *Nāda*, *Omkāra*, and *Svara*, which are the nature of *Sadāśiva*, become *Jīvanmuktas*!

O Mind! Adore the beautiful damsels called the seven key notes, who shine through the navel, heart, throat, tongue and nose—who shine in the *Rīg* and *Sāma Vedas*, in the core of the *Gāyatrī*, and in the minds of gods, holy men and Tyāgarāja!

Tyāgarāja depicted the technique of proper singing, wherein sound rises from the depths of one's heart and body—a technique by which the ancient *Rṣis* chanted the *Vedas* and the *Gāyatrī*, so that the chanting reverberated like the sound of *Omkāra*. It is

only by such discipline that the gods are pleased. The gods themselves attained glory through this technique.

Saint Tyāgarāja worshipped the Form of God as Śrī Rāma, and the Formless through *Nādupāsana*. The culmination of his spiritual practice was reached when *Nāda* presented Itself to him as Rāma, his Chosen Deity. It was the culminating point of devotion where the aspirant realized that the same Ultimate Reality is "the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless."

The divine musician made no distinction thus between the means and the end. Music was his way of worship, his communication, and communion with the Divine, and it was Divinity Itself. The Saint worshipped where there exists no more difference between the Worshipped and the Worshipper—for what else was music to Tyāgarāja, than his very soul, arising from the depths of his being, and emanating forth as song? It is this that placed the Master and his music far above any other that India has produced. And it is for this that the musicians of the Caranatic School, even today, are judged by how well they render Tyāgarāja's *kīrtanas*. Intuitively and unconsciously, the audience requires that the musician's heart and soul should mingle with the sublime poetry and high philosophy of the *kīrtana* Master.

Congregational Music

Tyāgarāja created compositions suited for choral singing in religious congregations as well. He adopted a way of life known as '*Uncha Vṛitti*', where the devotee goes alone or in group, singing through the streets and towns, accepting for his sustenance only what he receives as alms.

The holy Saint performed special worship of Śrī Rāma on *Ekādaśī* days. It is said

(Continued on page 435)

The Eternal Truth

DR. ALEXANDER CHANDANPALLY

Oh! fantasy that fans the fire of *mundane* desires and
the friend that befriended my reflection,
after he came out of the Noble womb.

Kept him shackled by the chain you made him forge,
to enjoy the sensory sentient pleasures,
forgetting the *Ananda*—Eternal Bliss.

Deluded in his company, laboured hard to mine gold
forgetting the inexhaustible *Mine* of mine
to build a home spun with sand,
refusing the unspun house of *Sat* and *Chit*.

When the desire to amass gold swelled,
confronted and confused by constant despair,
he showed god externally,
forgetting the *God* of gods,
enthroned in the *Mind* of minds—*Mahat*.

Oh! fancy! strong is your wailing power!—*Maya*!!

The deluded reflection—*Aham*,
waddled through many swaddled wombs,
gratified the *panchendriyas*, bound and chained
while *I* stayed mute as a witness.

Once, the stupefied stupe, stooped on my stoop,
stood still as a sheep
gazing at my stupendousness,
and picked up enough courage,
to consult me in confidence,
befriending 'Discrimination' and
leaving the swaddled bundles—*Vasana-s*,
cut the chain by Dispassion.

Awakened, caught a glimpse of the truth—*Neti, Neti*,
left his deluder forever
to tread on razor's edge,
along the narrow path,
with pointed attention,
to reach his home—the Source.
The TRUTH Eternal—*Tat-tvam-asi*,
filled with *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Unpublished Letters

*From Swami Abhedananda**

January 26th 1912

Vedanta Ashrama
West Cornwall,
Conn.

Dear Mr. Cobb,

I am very sorry to hear all that you have said in your letter of the 10th instant duly received.

“Heaven helps those who help themselves.” There is one Supreme Power above all the forces of the Astral Plane. Believe in Him and pray to Him for strength & help. You must learn to look at failure and success alike & work earnestly without seeking the result. Even when you fail, you must go on trying again & again holding the thought of success in your mind & when you do not get exactly what you want. Make another effort with a cheerful heart and having faith in that Supreme Will which is the Dispenser of all results. Read my “Philosophy of Work” published by the Vedanta Society at 135 West 80th Street, New York. That will help you much in your present state of mind.

With best wishes

Very sincerely yours,
Swami Abhedananda

* * *

From Alasinga Perumal to Josephine MacLeod

Pachaiyappa's College
Madras
March 23, 1904

My dear and beloved Sister,

I don't know how to thank you for your

*We are grateful to the Swami-in-charge, Vedanta Society, New York for making this letter available for publication in this journal.

very kind letter from Rome. If there is one American adorer of Swamiji more than others that has been constantly before my mind's eye it is yourself and it is no exaggeration to say that mail after mail has passed away with a resolve to write to you but without accomplishing the same. There was evidently a fatality about it. A letter of yours containing your American and Paris addresses I carefully put in my almirah and made useless searches to find it out till two days prior to the receipt of your letter. I tumbled upon it in searching for another paper. The discovery of your old letter and the receipt of your last letter are rather strikingly coincident. Hence the fatality I spoke of. In the meantime I asked Sister Nivedita for your address several times and she never gave it to me.

What you say regarding our beloved “Prophet” chokes up my throat and reminds me of a heart that beats synchronously with mine thousands of miles away in that old centre of the warrior-civilisation. In my meditative mood I often think and feel He is with us but more often conclude He has left us too soon. When and where are we to meet him again is a problem which I don't in the least expect to solve before my end comes. His life of activity has produced in me only a life of inactivity. After two years of good sleep I am awake again a little but and going about with dear Swami Ramakrishnananda for the last fortnight begging from house to house in Triplicane and thus have collected about Rs. 500. Some half a dozen of us have set apart our mornings for this purpose. How long this enthusiasm will last remains to be seen. About Rs. 1000 was subscribed for more than a year ago. Thus we stand in the matter of the Vivekananda Memorial. Though I have long known that

we are not likely to meet again, I still indulge in the fond hope that you may be given work to do and the required health to see it in a fair way of accomplishment. Swami Ramakrishnananda is still in the Castle (Kernan). What is to become of the latter it is impossible to say just now. In a few months more we will be in a better position to judge of its future. Swami R— will in all probability write to you by the next mail. You know, dear sister, that domestically I have never been happy. The bother is perhaps less now as I have got quite

familiar with it. Being a little bit of a madcap I may write to you trash at times and I am sure you will with your usual good nature overlook the same. As a dear sister loving a common father the impression you have left in mind is indelible and can never be effaced. It gives me therefore very great pleasure to learn that your health is better and let me hope that it will be given to us to meet again.

Ever yours with fraternal regards,
Alasinga

TYAGARAJA—THE SAINT-MUSICIAN

(Continued from page 432)

that after Swami Brahmananda witnessed the intense spiritual atmosphere of *Rāmanāma* singing in the South, that he introduced the observance of *Ekādaśī* days in all of the centres of the Ramakrishna Math. Certainly this tradition has a hoary past.

The *kīrtanas* of Tyāgarāja which are available to us today (numbering about eight hundred) also include songs written for two operas—the *Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayamu* and the *Nauka Charitramu*. Music

in India, even in the not too distant past, was a great source of power and inspiration by which the common people learned philosophy, mythology and *dharma*, and were helped to travel on the spiritual path. Today, when music is associated with din and noise, when musicians perform to please human audiences alone, and not the gods, it is essential that we understand how true religious feeling in the past, permeated every art form and every common act of the people.

REVIEWS & NOTICES

1. QUEST FOR INSPIRATION &
2. QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE, both compiled by SRI O.P. GHAI. Published by The Institute for Personal Development, 1-10 Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110-016, 1990. 112 pages Rs. 75.00 & 154 pages, Rs. 100.00 respectively.

Quest for Inspiration is an anthology of verse and prose by some famous and some less widely known authors. The material is aimed at providing inspiration to persons seeking higher values in life. One has to consciously strive for a better life, and as Swami Vivekananda says (p. 97), "...Never mind failures; they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life. ...Hold to the ideal... and if you fail...make the attempt once more." Passages such as these presented in the book can help only those in low spirits, but bring added joy to those in good cheer. There is no problem in life that cannot be solved, for as St. Francis of Assisi says (p. 100), every problem already has a solution in existence, as every mathematical problem had already a solution before man solved it. The thing is to seek the solution, and the inspiration for it can come through the beautiful verses and passage provided here.

The solution to life's problems can be arrived at through prayer too. The second book under review, *Quest for Excellence*, is a collection of sayings on God, faith, and prayers. Faith in an Eternal Principle and prayer have sustained many men and women in their struggle to achieve excellence in life. Unfortunately, modern man has neither the time nor the inclination for this, and Carl Jung (p. 46) believed that many of his patients fell ill because they had lost "...that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers."

When Mahatma Gandhi (p. 15) defines prayer as a longing of the soul, he is only reiterating the view of all spiritual seekers. However, ordinary aspirants wish to place before God their grievances and their desires—although they may not always go well with Thomas Webb, who prayed

(p. 137) for "a good digestion and also something to digest"!

Modern man's problem is he does not know whom to pray to. As George Macdonald says (p. 65): "How often we look upon God as our last and feeblest resource! We go to him because we have nowhere else to go." The book under review helps us in formulating our own prayers, and the readers may, along with the anonymous author (p. 147), thank the Heavenly Father (or Mother) for the privilege of prayer, that is perhaps granted to mankind alone.

Books such as these need to be in one's personal collection. Unfortunately, the prices are a bit prohibitive. But the compiler needs to be congratulated for his painstaking effort in sifting and searching through a very large number of books to bring out these two anthologies.

Dr. Kamala Jaya Rao

1. COSMIC ECUMENISM VIA HINDU-BUDDHIST CATHOLICISM (An autobiography of an Indian Dominican Monk) by Anthony Elenjittam (Alias, Bhikshu Isabodhananda) Aquinas Publications, Sadhana Hall, Mount Mary, Bandra, Bombay 400-050.

2. THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY OF PATANJALI, by Anthony Elenjittam, Aquinas Publications, Sadhana Hall, Mount Mary, Bandra, Bombay 400-050.

The first and the second books under review are by the same author, Anthony Elenjittam (Alias, Bhikshu Isabodhananda). The first is an autobiography and the second is a translation of *Patanjali Sūtras* with interpretation. The nature of the interpretation will be revealed if we read the first book, the autobiography of the author. So we have reviewed the first book first and then the second in light of the former.

The very name of the first book, *Cosmic Ecumenism*, suggests that the author claims to be a universal man having respect and

adoration for the different religions, systems of philosophy and cultures of the world. He was a child of Kerala Catholic Church. Later on he went to Cambridge where he wrote a thesis on the theme, 'Dharmadvaitam or the Non-duality of Religions'. After completing his thesis he went to London where he worked in factories and workshops. He also worked as a journalist in Fleet Street, London.

Returning to India, he worked at the Brahma Samaj, Calcutta as the Editor of *The Indian Messenger* and as the Joint Editor of *The Eastern Express Daily*. He went to Noakhali to work with Mahatma Gandhi in his Peace Mission. He had been with the Ramakrishna Mission for a few years. Then he developed his intimacy with the Mahabodhi Society. He became the Director of the Ramchoddar Lotvala Trust for Eastern Philosophy in Bombay. Both in Calcutta and in Bombay he was engaged in youth movements and rural activities. He started collecting street children under shady trees, and thus began the history of the Welfare Society for Destitute Children. He alternated between Europe and India, creating meditation centres and helping the European youth in their spiritual problems, and in India continuing to work for the economically and socially underprivileged children. He has written many books in English and Italian, preaching one world, one humanity, and one world citizenship ideal. He has always been a champion for world peace.

A man of chequered career, wide studies and deep understanding, Anthony Elenjimitam could realize that Truth is one, religion is one, man is one, and human beings speak of differences and quarrel with each other due to ignorance. This is his Cosmic Ecumenism. This he develops in his autobiography which contains 18 chapters. Anthony was a Hindu to the Hindus, a Buddhist to the Buddhists, a Catholic to the Catholics, an Anglican to the Anglicans, a Jain to the Jains, a Mahayanist to the Mahayanists, a Theravadin to the Theravadins, and became 'all to all men'. He claims to be 'a free citizen in the Kingdom of God'. He is for 'a wedding between

Thomas Aquinas and Shankaracharya, between what is best in the Latin culture and in Sanskrit-Pali spirituality, a fusion, a wedding and union between the broad Christian-Greco-Roman culture with the Hindu-Buddhist world, and within such a catholic outlook as to incorporate and integrate the findings of modern science and technology and the spiritual traditions of all other religions and philosophical traditions of the whole of mankind which is our true home, our homeland, and our divine mansion under the Sun.

Cosmic Ecumenism is really a brilliant book which widens our outlook, broadens our understanding and deepens our comprehension. The book deserves wide circulation for better human relationships in religion, philosophy and culture as a whole.

The second book, *The Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, by Anthony Elenjimitam, exhibits his cosmic ecumenism which has been discussed in the first book.

Though the *Yoga Sūtras* are written by Patañjali, still his intentions we cannot read without the annotation of Vyāsa, which is known as the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*. The reviewer has reasons to believe that Anthony has not followed this annotation in his book. The author himself says: "I have taken the original Sanskrit aphorisms of Patañjali, the supreme master and authority in Yoga, and have added their transliteration in Roman script to help those who cannot read Devanagiri script." Then is given a literal translation of each Sanskrit aphorism, putting within brackets the implied words or meanings with a view to making the meaning of each aphorism clearer. Vyāsa is not mentioned anywhere.

The book includes three chapters—(1) Introduction to the Yoga Philosophy, (2) Brahmacharya in the Yoga Philosophy, and (3) *Yoga Aphorisms of Patañjali*.

In the 'Introduction to Yoga Philosophy', the author observes: "Sāṅkhya has basically remained faithful to the teachings of Kapila as enshrined in his *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*." Kapila actually wrote the *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* which are

the basis of Sāṅkhya Philosophy. Īśvara Kṛṣṇa, and not Kapila, composed the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, which is an important text. The author writes: "This seeing God, realizing God, is Darshan in Indian philosophy, be it Yoga, Vedānta or Mīmāṃsā." But the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā Philosophy is primarily atheistic and Advaita Vedānta considers the God of religion (in the dualistic concept) as within the realm of Māyā, *anitya* from the transcendental standpoint.

On pages 16-18, the author discusses Yoga Philosophy. There he speaks of 'Jñāna-yoga', 'Karma-yoga', 'Bhakti-yoga' and 'Haṭha-yoga' and concludes that 'Rāja-yoga' of Patañjali represents the integral Yoga wherein the intellectual, devotional and the bodily, the Jñānayoga, Bhakti-yoga, and Haṭha-yoga are wonderfully synthesized... In Indian tradition, Rāja-yoga is considered different from Bhakti-yoga and Haṭha-yoga.

In the second chapter (page 44) the author observes: "...the real superman of Frederick Nietzsch and Sri Aurobindo is the one who has transcanalised his sexual instinct to the highest." One will be shocked to find this reference to Sri Aurobindo. Nietzsch's superman is 'a blond beast' and Aurobindo's is a perfect spiritual being. Moreover, Nietzsch never believed in *brahmacharya* as we find it in Yoga Philosophy.

The author writes '*anukamba*' (page 86) which should be '*anukampa*'. In page 196, he says: "Discrimination ... in both Vedānta and Yoga is always between the Real and the unreal, the Puruṣa, and Prakṛti." According to the author (page 62), the scriptures or *āgamas* are irrational and the philosopher-saints like Shankara saved them through rational interpretation. Shankara himself, we know, would not admit this.

In conformity with the cosmic ecumenism of the author, sometimes he brings in the Sufis, the Zen Buddhists, Jesus, St. John, the Lamas of Tibet, Leo Tolstoy, Aldous Huxley, Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Krishna, Socrates, Plato, St. Augustine and others to make his points. His wide reading, catholic approach

and own understanding will give a reader an opportunity for thinking afresh.

But the author is more interested in living than in thinking. He observes: "Yoga Aphorisms have helped the present author immensely. I do hope that this new translation and commentary with an introduction to Yoga Philosophy will help fellow-tramps in many countries and in many religions to find the anchorage in the port of Peace, Bliss and Power, after being tossed about to and fro, or even lost, shipwrecked in this stormy sea of ignorance and sin." For the fulfilment of his hope the book requires wide circulation.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty

MEDITATIONS, by A. R. NATARAJAN. Published by The Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, 40/41 2nd Cross, Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore 560-003. 107 pages; Rs. 15.00.

The rich contents of this elegantly bound and printed book are going to leave their fragrance for a long time. It is not a book to be read hurriedly and forgotten after a few hours. Sri A. R. Natarajan, seeker himself, has put his soul and heart in explaining abstruse matters in simple language and through examples drawn from day-to-day life. Sri Ramana made spiritual life look so simple; and drove home the truth that Self-realization is within the reach of everyone. In fact, it is simple; but it is our discursive thought that weaves scholastic cobwebs round it. The requisites for the life of the spirit are a little earnestness, determination and patience. The mind, which is a beehive of disorderly thoughts has to be patiently coaxed and trained, and by long efforts made to come to grips with itself. The task has been made all the more arduous because of our long habit of shaky resolution and attachment to unhelpful wrong thinking. The reverse process, quelling the thoughts, says the author, in the beginning appears to be difficult, but a little taste of the stillness and joy that springs from small successes produce their own momentum.

Twenty-four quotations from the teachings of Sri Ramana have been carefully selected,

keeping in view the common problems of a cross-section of persons. The author has elucidated on these quotes in simple language and with the felicity born of his own years of sadhana. A few examples can be cited here to show the gamut of topics he discusses which have direct bearing on our life in the world: "The Resting of the Mind"; "What have you come here for?"; "Who is the Meditator?"; "Everything is Worship."; "What is Life?"; "Should one Pray?"; "Dreams"; "How Free are We?" and "Thoughts and Happiness".

The first question an aspirant asks is, "How to take the first step on the path of self-enquiry?" Or, "Who am I?" Sri Natarajan's answer to this question is: "Reflecting upon the light so thrown by Ramana on the mind, one finds that the mind can be said to consist of two kinds of thoughts—the individual 'I-thought', and 'other thoughts'. The 'I-thought', the sense of individuality, reflects the consciousness or intelligence. ...The first step would be to manage the separation of the conscious 'I-thought' from the other thoughts. This is achieved when the mind's attention is not paid to other thoughts." (p. 5) The author further rings a note of caution: that freeing the mind only from unwanted thoughts, while clinging to pleasant thoughts, is not possible. This so-called 'pleasant' is also the product of ignorance. Sri Natarajan has dwelt in detail throughout his book on the practice of 'separating I-thought from other thoughts'. This is meditation. Therefore, Maharshi sums up: "Remain as the meditator." (There is no need to cogitate *about* meditation; dive into it!)

Throwing light on Grace and effort, Sri Natarajan rightly remarks: "It is only through effort, through meditation, through self-enquiry, that one awakens to the flow of grace." Hence Ramana says that grace is vouchsafed only to those who put in the necessary effort—grace is active for them. (p. 32) Doing nothing, but crying oneself hoarse for the Guru's grace has little significance in spiritual life.

Between active life in the world and the active life of devotion—no such artificial division is sustainable, says the author. Ramana has shown that doing the allotted duties that have come to us, either by karmic cause, or by other—with faith (*śraddhā*)—is devotion. Here is the best example: One evening while Ramana was coming down the hill, a sweeper was also coming that way and wanted to show obeisance by making prostration. Ramana said: "Doing your job diligently is prostration." (p. 55) Work and meditation are not contradictory, but complementary. Diligence presupposes an orderly mind and such mind is fit for meditation. Leading throughout the day an unorganized life, and trying for quiet meditation, are not compatible.

The author voices the pertinent question that a seeker is apt to ask—"How to ascertain that one is progressing on the spiritual path? and What is the yardstick to measure it?" Maharshi answers that the following are the signs: "In peace of mind, in power to deal with troubles, in power all round—always unconscious power." (p. 69) Another question often raised is: "Is everything predetermined? Haven't we any free will to change inexorable destiny?" According to Ramana, destiny concerns only the body. Sri Natarajan observes wisely: "Let the body experience its allotted destiny, but it is up to each one to be unaffected mentally by it, by exercising free will and untying the bond of attachment. (p. 85) Happiness is natural to all human beings. The obstacle to it is a plethora of discursive thoughts. The author quotes, appropriately the teaching of the sage. "Ramana says that while by habit we believe that it is natural to think, the opposite is the truth. Silence is natural and thinking is not." (p. 97).

The slender volume abounds with many other sage counsels and insightful observations. Many will find the book not only useful for dispelling their genuine doubts, but also for providing an additional fillip to their efforts.

S.M.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

On being presented with some new calendars, Sri Ramana Maharshi said: "You bring a new calendar to help me remember the days, when I often have serious doubts as to what year it is. Time is all one to me.

I said to Maharshi that a certain appointment I had was a waste of time. He smiled: "There is no time, how can you waste it?"

Q. Does distance have any effect on guru's grace ?

A. Time and space are within us.

Time is only an idea. There is only the Reality. Whatever you think of it, it looks like that. If you call it time, it is time. If you call it existence, it is existence, and some after calling it time divide it into days, months and years. The Reality cannot be new. It must exist even now ; and it does exist. There is in that state, no present, nor past, nor future. It is beyond time. It is ever there.

Q. Does the Realised Sage see the world ?

A. Yes. But his outlook differs. Cinema pictures move, but go and hold them. What do you hold ? Only the screen. Let the pictures disappear. What remains over ? The screen again. So also here. Even when world appears the Jñāni sees it only as a manifestation of the Self.

Q. From where do these objects arise ?

A. Just wherefrom you arise. The subject

comprehends the object also. That one aspect is an all-comprehensive aspect. See yourself first ; and then see the objects. What is not in you, cannot appear outside.

Q. Are the stones etc. destined to be as they are always ?

A. Who sees stones ? They are perceived by your mind. So they are in your mind. Whose mind is it ? The questioner must find himself. If the Self be found, this question would not arise. The Self is more intimate than objects. Find the subject and the objects will take care of themselves. The objects are seen by different persons, according to their outlook, and theories are evolved. But who is the seer, the recogniser of these theories ? It is you. Find your Self. Then there is an end of these vagaries of the mind.

Q. What are the first steps to spiritual practice ?

A. In the beginning, one has to be told that he is not the body, because he thinks that he is the body only, whereas he is the body and all else. The body is only a part. Let him know it firmly. He must first discern *Chit* from *Jada* and be the *Chit* only. Later let him realise that *Jada* is none else than *Chit*. This is discrimination. The initial viveka must persist to the end. Its fructification is Mokṣa.

Conscious Immortality,
Conversations with Ramana Maharshi,
By Paul Brunton