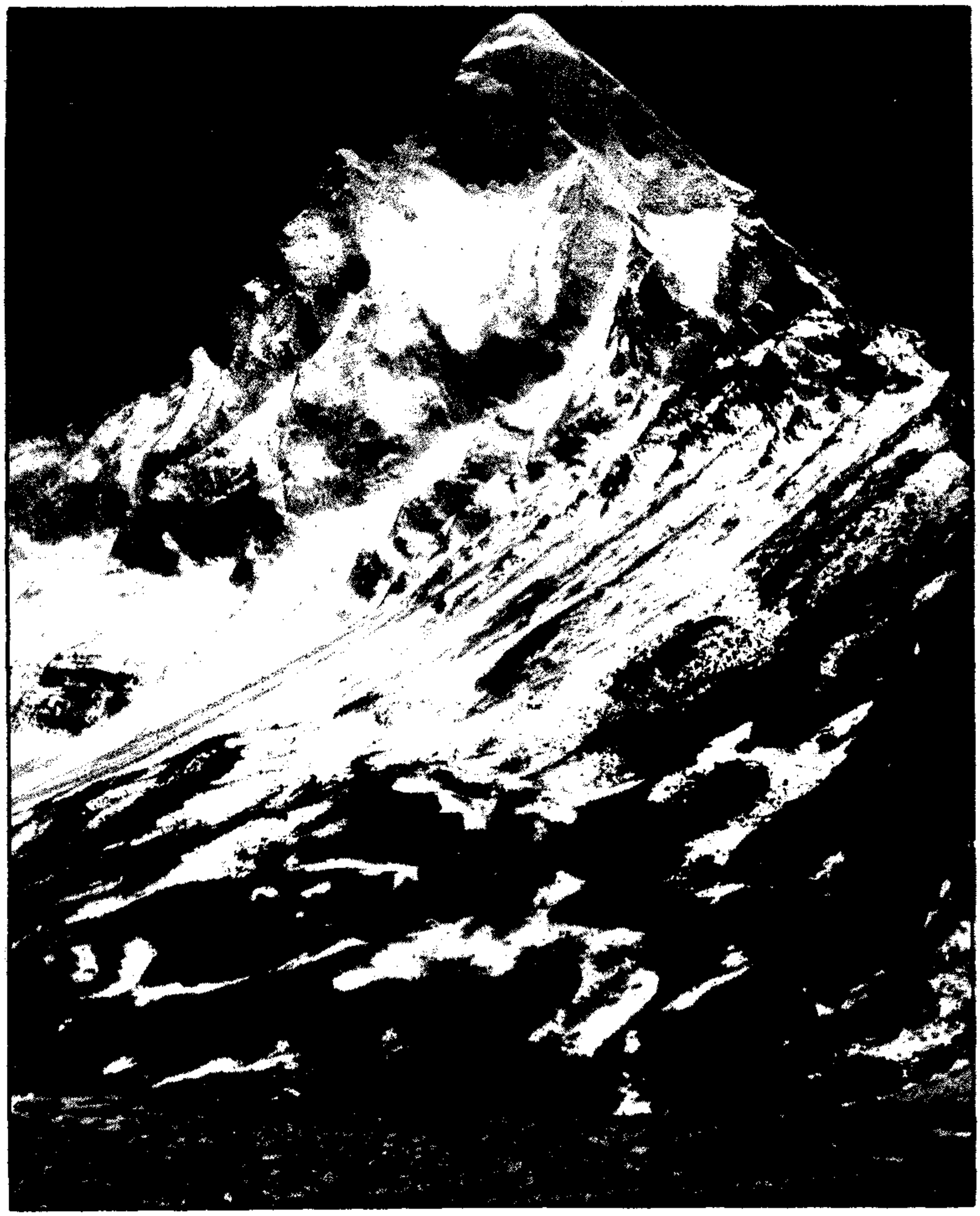
PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत

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

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 96 NOVEMBER 1991 No. 11

The Divine Message

We are always making this mistake in judging others; we are always inclined to think that our little mental universe is all that is; our ethics, our morality, our sense of duty, our sense of utility, are the only things that are worth having. The other day when I was going to Europe, I was passing through Marseilles, where a bull-fight was being held. All the Englishmen in the steamer were mad with excitement, abusing and criticising the whole thing as cruel. When I reached England, I heard of a party of prize-fighters who had been to Paris, and were kicked out unceremoniously by the French, who thought prize-fighting very brutal. When I hear these things in various countries, I begin to understand the marvellous saying of Christ: "Judge not that ye be not judged." The more we learn, the more we find out how ignorant we are, how multiform and multi-sided is this mind of man. ...

The great error in all ethical systems, without exception, has been the failure of teaching the means by which man could refrain from doing evil. All the systems of ethics teach, "Do not steal!" Very good; but why does a man steal? Because all stealing, robbing, and other evil actions, as a rule, have become automatic. The systematic robber, thief, liar, unjust man and woman, are all these in spite of themselves! It is really a tremendous psychological problem. We should look upon man in the most charitable light. It is not so easy to be good. What are you but mere machines until you are free? Should you be proud because you are good? Certainly not. You are good because you cannot help it. Another is bad because he cannot help it. If you were in his position, who knows what you would have been?...

Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified—we do not look at them, do not know them, have forgotten them. But mind you, if the power of evil is in the unconscious, so also is the power of good. We have many things stored in us as in a pocket. We have forgotten them, do not even think of them. ...True psychology would, therefore, try to bring them under the control of the conscious. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself. ...Everyone without exception, everyone of us, can attain to this culmination of Yoga. But it is a terrible task. If a person wants to attain to this truth, he will have to do something more than to listen to lectures and take a few breathing exercises. Everything lies in the preparation. ...

—Swami Vivekananda: CW, II 24-37

EDITORIAL

Prophet of Peace And Unity

A royal child was born in the garden of Lumbini. The child came forth from the womb like a rising sun, bright and perfect. All the worlds were flooded with light. The music of the celestials rang through the air and the angels rejoiced with gladness. The cries of the beasts were hushed; all malevolent beings received loving impulses in the heart and peace reigned on earth.

There was at that time in the grove a *ṛṣi*, leading the life of a hermit. He was Asita, a Brahmana of a dignified mien, famed not only for wisdom and scholarship, but also for his skill in the interpretations of signs. And the King invited him to see the royal child.

The Seer, beholding the prince wept and deeply sighed. And when the king saw the tears of Asita he became alarmed and asked: "Why has sight of my son caused thee grief and pain?" Asita addressed the king, "Banish all anxiety and doubt. The spiritual omens manifested indicated that the child now born will bring deliverance to the whole world. Recollecting now that I am old, on that account I could not hold my tears; for my end is coming on. But this son of thine will rule the world. He is born for the sake of all that lives." The new-born royal infant was Siddhartha.

Another divine child was born in the latter part of the fifteenth century, in a mud-built house. Light flashed. Angels and celestial beings burst into rapturous song. Beasts and birds and trees rejoiced. Blooming flowers danced and heralded the auspicious day. Bliss filled the hearts of people of that small village. Daultan, the Muslim midwife was spellbound to behold the radiant new-born babe. She was much more perplexed when she heard the child laugh. Its laughter resembled that of a grown-up person of wisdom. The extraordinary portents brought great joy to the anxious father. He rushed to the house of the family priest, who was also a skilled astrologer, to know the future of his son. Pandit Hardyal came to cast the horoscope. He listened to an account of the unusual events that foretold the advent of a great soul. He was all agog to see the child. The mother protested exposing the infant to the chillness of the weather, but her solicitious apprehensions were overruled and the child was brought out in swaddling clothes. The instant the Pandit's eyes beheld the luminous face of the child, he paid his homage with folded hands and told the father that his son would forever live under an umbrella of spiritual sovereignty.

He further spoke, "Both Hindus and Muslims will worship him; his name, Nanak, will resound both on the earth and in heaven. The ocean will give him way; so will the earth and skies. He will worship and acknowledge One God and teach others to do so. Every creature he will consider as God's creation. But, O blessed father, this will be my grief, that I may not live to see the glory that will be his. Who knows how long I shall live?"

Like Ṛṣi Asita, Pandit Hardyal was deeply affected by the thought that he would not be able to witness the *līlā* and divine sport of the holy child, destined to be friend and protector of all living beings, and usherer-in of an era of love and light.

Though born in an obscure village, son of

humble parentage, Nanak grew mighty in spiritual stature, conquering the hearts of innumerable people by his purity, equanimity, intense love of God, and limitless compassion for the lowly and the oppressed. Before his divine presence, gentleness, and spiritual wisdom, ego, pride and prejudice of hypocrites evaporated like thin mist. Nor could divisions of caste, class and religious bigotry stand in the presence of his radiant personality. He spoke and acted like one possessed of the power of God. His words were like shafts of light. They illumined the dense fog of nescience in men and revealed the same shining soul of divinity in all beings—One God residing in all hearts. To establish the unity of mankind—one global family, he came. He accomplished the mammoth task smilingly. Mankind has been grateful to this saint, though unfortunately, it forgets him now and then, and the wisdom he imparted, and finds itself in throes of sorrow, grief and turmoil.

The small, inconspicuous village consisted of low-roofed mud houses. The only imposing structure was the mansion of the landlord of the place. Inhabitants were both Hindus and Muslims and an affectionate bond of relationship existed between them. The pastoral scene was dotted with the patches of green wheat and gram fields. A dense forest served as a protective enclosure to the tiny village. All the cattle were taken to the forest for grazing. Like any other place in north India this village also was subject to an extremely rigorous climate—freezing cold winters and hot dusty summers. Spring, though short-lived, was another zestful season. The child Nanak grew healthily and happy in such an environment, and in a home of simplicity and austerity, imbibing the beauty and vigour of nature. His deep meditations in the woods and his transcendental insights found creative expression in poetic outpourings of his heart. His many songs deeply inspired reflected the imagery drawn from boyhood impressions. The lively and affectionate nature of the boy endeared him to all. The well-defined trait of his character was that even at tender age he longed to retire into solitary places and be immersed in deep meditation on God. He would become oblivious of his surroundings. Everyone took notice of the charming qualities of the boy. *Maharban Janamsakhi*, which contains his biography, states:

"A Hindu chancing to pass by would involuntarily exclaim: 'Great is Govinda, the Lord! Such a small child, yet he speaks so auspiciously. His words are as immaculate as he is comely. He is the image of God Himself.'

And if a Muslim saw him, he would remark with equal enthusiasm:

'Wonderful is Thy creation, Merciful Master! How good-looking is the child and how tender is his speech! Talking to him brings one such satisfaction. He is a noble one, blessed of the Almighty Allah.'"

The Hindu family belonging to the Kshatriya caste, from across the River Ravi, near the city of Amritsar, came and settled in the village of Talwandi. A small village forty miles south-west of Lahore, Kalyan Chand and his family came here to live in the domain of the landlord Rai Bular. Kalyan Chand kept the rent records of Rai Bular. In addition, he had his own small landholding to tend along with a few cattle. He and his wife Tripta, though not wealthy, led a contented pious life. In this pious family of humble parents Nanak the spiritual giant was born on April 15, 1469. The little known village later became a holy place of pilgrimage, assuming the new name of Nanakana Sahib.

Nanak from his early age knew the mission and purpose for which he was born. Even in his boyhood, like Sri Ramakrishna, he

would go into ecstasy. His indrawn nature was the cause of anxiety to his parents. Father Kalyan Chand, or Kalu as he was popularly known, had worldly ambitions for his only son. The boy after completion of his education would one day take up his father's place as the *Patawari*—record keeper. He was sent to school to learn Punjabi and Sanskrit. The boy soon mastered the alphabets and reading and writing. At school one day Nanak filled both sides of his slate with a composition he made up. The teacher was astounded to find an acrostic, the verses of which were written to match the letters of the alphabet. It was Nanak's first profound composition in Punjabi, a teaching in verse-form. It is preserved in the *Guru Granth.* The young saint in this poem pondered on the question, "Who is truly learned ?—*He who unravels divine knowledge is the real pandit.*" About the vanity of book-learning, Sri Ramakrishna also said, "That knowledge which purifies the mind and heart alone is true knowledge; all else is only negative knowledge."

Nanak continued to attend school for some time. The teacher's attempts, however, to teach the marvellously gifted boy something about keeping accounts and posting ledgers and striking balances went awry. These were necessary for the young one who would inherit his father's vocation. Nanak left the school abruptly informing the dismayed master that he preferred the study of divine knowledge. He composed a splendid hymn and handed it to his tutor:

Make thy ink by burning worldly
attachment and pounding the ashes
to powder.
Let pure mind be thy paper, make love
thy pen;
And write as thy Guru instructs.
Write thou His name and His praises.
Write that He is without limit,
fathomless.

Sri Ramakrishna also suddenly stopped attending school while he was quite young. It became apparent to his watchful eyes that school existed only to instil worldly-mindedness into its pupils, making them eager to acquire possessions and fame. All such learning seemed to him to be delusory and barren.

Dejected, Kalu was at his wit's end. Still clinging to a slender hope, he sent the spiritually inclined boy to Pandit Brijnath Shastri to learn religious texts. The boy stayed, but only long enough to gain proficiency in Sanskrit and classical lore. He refused to pursue studies further. But he did master Persian and Arabic under the tutelage of Qutb-ud-Din, a Muslim *maulvi* of the village. In his subsequent sublime verses, Nanak then used Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and Sanskrit words profusely, though he preferred, like Buddha, to use the patois for the sake of the common people.

Nanak retired frequently to the nearby forest and lost himself in spiritual practices. There he sought the company of the ascetics and anchorites and discussed with them on matters of esoteric wisdom and different schools of thought. He thus became well-versed, not only with ancient traditions, but also got acquainted with the ideas of contemporary saints and reformers. Regardful of his son's apathy towards secular learning and his unwillingness to take up any vocation for his livelihood, Kalu Chand asked him to tend the cattle. The father, limited by the vision of his little world and its duties, failed to understand the immense depth of his son and his noble mission.

Says the *Janamsakhi*, while out with the cattle one day Nanak fell into deep trance, and the wandering cattle grazed into the cultivated fields of a neighbouring farmer. The enraged man remonstrated, but Nanak said that God would bless the field. The

farmer was not pacified by such an unpractical pious wish, and complained to the village chief. The chief sent his own men to estimate the loss. On their return they reported that they had seen that not one blade of the crop had been trampled or eaten. Their report was found to be true. A shrine now stands in that place and it is known as Kiara Sahib.

Like Buddha, Nanak too was something of a rebel child of existing society. Though obedient and humble in other ways, Nanak defied conventions followed blindly or ignorantly. His parents made elaborate arrangements for his initial ceremony or *upanayana*, in which a boy is taught *Gāyatrī* and gets invested with the sacred thread. But on the festive day Nanak refused the sacred thread or janeu in spite of the wishes and persuasions of his parents and elders. Addressing the priest he spontaneously recited the following verses:

Let compassion be thy cotton!
Spin it into the yarn of contentment.
Give it knots of continence
and the twist of truth.
It will be neither burned nor lost;
Blest is the man, O Nanak,
who goeth with such a thread about his neck!

Kalu Chand had a suspicion that his son was mentally deranged. Mother Tripta also reproached him for his idleness. She advised him to be active and work for his livelihood and stop weaving unpractical songs. She also told him that she was pained to hear that people were calling her son mad. But the admonition did not have the desired impact. Rather Nanak became more unfit for all secular occupation and his notorious idleness became a source of anxiety to his parents. Kalu Chand approached him and told that he required assistance in the cultivation of the land, and Nanak was now of an age to turn his mind to agriculture. Nanak composed a hymn on the occasion:

Make body the field,
The mind the ploughman,
Honest labour the irrigating water.
Sow the seeds of the Lord's name.
Let contentment be the leveller,
And humility the fence—
With deeds of love the seed will germinate.

Nanak told his father that he had sown his own field and the harvest was ready.

When this entreaty also failed to induce his son and draw him out, Kalu thought to engage Nanak in business. He gave him twenty silver rupees to invest profitably in a business and open a shop. When Nanak was sent to buy goods from the market nearby, however, he gave away all the money to holy men and the poor on the way, saying to himself that there could be no truer trade than feeding the hungry mouths and clothing the naked bodies. "One who has established in God sees Him in all beings."[1] Not unnaturally, the father spoke to him in the harshest terms and sent him to Sultanpur where his daughter Nanaki resided with her husband Jairam. Jairam, using his influence with the local Nawab, got Nanak employed as a storekeeper in a granary. At the age of eighteen, Nanak was married to Sulakhni and had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmidas.

Neither marriage nor his service under the Nawab did shake the young sage from his spiritual moorings. He had reached such a high state of God-intoxication that the worldly events of pain and pleasure, fortune and misfortune, did not have any power to touch him. He was in the same state which he described as 'the state of the *Brahma-jñāni*'.

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1. उरिधरै जो अंतरि नामु ।
सरब मै पेखै भगवानु ॥

The brahmajñāni looks upon friend and foe with equal vision,
Like the breeze which blows on the rich and poor alike...
He is the purest of the pure,
Like the water which knows no pollution...
Alike he looks on friends and foes, and is free from pride.[2]

Even in work at Modikhana—stores, Nanak's mind constantly dwelt on God, While weighing out rations he would go into ecstasy, repeating the figure of *tera* or thirteen—which means '*thine*'. "*Thine, Thine, all is Thine, O Lord*," he would rapturously say again and again. He used to keep a small portion of provisions which he received as salary for his own maintenance, and the rest he gave to the poor. He sang, "Saints always act for the welfare of others."[3] Many earnest souls, attracted by his purity, humility and heavenly charm, thronged to the humble home of Nanak. Early hours of the morning and nights were spent in singing the praises of the Lord. The famous Muslim minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and stayed with the Master. He played on the *rebeck*, a stringed instrument, while Nanak sang his soul-stirring *sabads*. During his many years stay at Sultanpur, Nanak had been waiting for the command from the Most High to enter upon his global mission to spread the name of One God, and usher in an era of peace and unity in the world.

That auspicious day arrived. One day as usual Nanak went to the river Bein for his morning ablutions, but did not return home for three days. People thought he had been drowned in the river. But on the third day he did appear. The interval had been an indescribable mystical experience. He had direct vision of God and God commanded His son to set forth on a noble mission. Nanak's heart overflowed with compassion for all beings; it expanded and embraced the whole world. He lost every vestige of his old individuality and became a fit vehicle of infinite consciousness. In that blissful state Nanak recited a prayer which formed the preamble to *The Japji*, an opening text of the *Guru Granth*:

> *There is only One God. He is the Supreme Being. Only His name is true. He is the creator of all life and matter. He was in the beginning, He was in all ages. The true One is, was, O Nanak, and shall forever be.*

He came home and distributed all he had to the poor. When people asked him where he had been and what he had found, he answered: "*Na koi Hindu; na koi Mussalman—There is no Hindu; there is no Mussalman.*" People could not understand the cosmic vision of the Great Soul, for with mind merged in the universal consciousness of God, all such divisions as between man and woman, high and low, Hindu and Muslim ceased to have any meaning. How could he see anything other than the Supreme Spirit?[4] He only knew that beyond *Māyā*, in that stainless pure consciousness—"*So'ham—I am All*", and that from the standpoint of Soul there are no divisions among living beings.[5] His statement, though an inoffensive statement, created a sensation in the town. The Qazi, the expounder of

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2. ब्रह्म गिआनि कै दृसटि समानि ।
जैसे राज रंक कउ लागै तुलि पवान ।।
ब्रह्म गिआनि निरमलु ते निरमला ।
जैसे मैलु न लागै जला ।।
ब्रह्म गिआनि कै मित्र सत्रु समानि ।
ब्रह्म गिआनि कै नाही अभिमान ।।

3. प्रभु कउ सिमरहि से परउपकारी ।

4. किसनो कहिए नानका सभुकिछु आपे आवि ।

5. ततु निरंजनु जोति सबाई सोहं भेदु न
कोई जीउ ।

Muslim law, summoned the saint to the Nawab's presence to have his explanation. The Nawab, however, having realized the greatness of Nanak, showed him due respect.

Time came now for the Muslim afternoon prayer. All arose, including Nanak, and entered the mosque. As the Qazi led in the service, Nanak remained standing, and did not kneel to pray. Infuriated, Qazi complained to the Nawab. Nanak said, "What prayer was I expected to join ? Qazi's prayer was not accepted by God. While he was pretending to pray his mind was constantly occupied with the thought of a newborn foal, which he has loosed in the yard before coming to the mosque. He remembered that there was a well in the enclosure, and his mind was filled with apprehension lest the young animal fall into it." He said to the Nawab, "While you were praying, your mind was thinking of purchasing horses in Kabul." Both admitted the truth of Nanak's words. Then the Qazi asked, "Who then is a true Muslim ?" Nanak recited the following *shabad*:

If compassion be thy mosque,
faith thy prayer mat,
And honest labour thy Quoran...
Let good deeds be thy Kaaba
and Truth thy Prophet,
And thy prayer be for God's grace.

The Nawab so deeply moved by Nanak's grace and wisdom that he fell at his feet. All the assembled Muslims accepted that God spoke through Nanak.

At the age of twenty-seven, in 1496, Guru Nanak left Sultanpur to deliver his message to the strife-torn world. For the next about thirty years as a wandering friar he covered the length and breadth of India, and even abroad healing countless bereaved hearts with spiritual wisdom, now and then exposed the vanity of priests and mullas, and inundated the land with peace, love and kindness. With him went his faithful rebec-player, Mardana. He went about, for some time, in Punjab, winning Hindus and Muslims alike to his view of the unity of man and the glory of God's name. He established missionary centres which he left in the charge of his devout followers, many of whom belonged to the low castes and had practically nothing to call their own. Uncountable were his wondrous deeds of kindness and compassion. Paying his tribute to Nanak, Vivekananda at Lahore said, "Here it was that in later times the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but Mohammedans too."[6]

During his wanderings he came upon a beautiful placid lake in the forests of the Punjab. So captivated was he by the beauty of the spot that for some days he stayed there in meditation. Guru Arjun, Nanak's successor, constructed in 1589 a shrine inside the lake. It is the present famous Golden Temple of Amritsar. From there Nanak reached Saidpur and put up at the poorest house of a low-caste carpenter, Lalo by name, and thus invited the wrath of high class Hindus. There are several instances when Sri Ramakrishna also, guided by the spirit within, snubbed the proud and rich to give his blessings to the humble and poor in spirit.

Malik Bhago, a rich Hindu official of Saidpur, arranged a great feast, and invited all the people of the town, including Guru Nanak. But the Guru refused to attend. Malik sent his footmen to bring Nanak to his presence by force. When they did so, and he arrived at the place, Malik spoke to him, "Today the entire town is feasting here in my house. How is it that you ignored my invitation and eat with a *shudra* ?"

6. Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works* (Calcutta ; Advaita Ashrama) Vol 3, p. 366.

Nanak replied, "In your delicacies is the blood of the poor, while the coarse bread of Lalo, who earns by the sweat of his brow, is sweet like milk." To demonstrate the truth of what he had said, Nanak had the bread brought from Lalo's house. He took a little of it in his right hand, and some of the rich man's food in his left. As he pressed both, milk dropped from Lalo's bread and blood from Malik's food. Lalo became the first emissary of the Sikh faith. At Tulamba town, Nanak transformed a thug-brigand and asked him to distribute his ill-gotten gains to the poor and devote the rest of his life to the prayerful repetition of God's name.

Guru Nanak's wanderings took him to Kurukshetra, Delhi, Vrindavan, Gaya, Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Hardwar. In Hardwar he told orthodox Brahmins that defilement came from within, not from without. He sang a hymn:

The real pariahs are the evil thoughts—
cruelty, slander and wrath.
Let Truth, self-restraint and good acts be
your rites, and your ablutions the
remembrance of His name!

In Prayag he was asked to take a dip in the river to wash away his sins. He said, "By bathing the body in the river? How will that cleanse the heart of its impurity? They are truly pure in whose hearts dwells the Lord." In Gaya, Nanak told the congregation, "What is the use of mechanically taking God's name, austerities, fasting, and worship if there is a thought of selfishness in the heart."[7] On his way back, Nanak halted at Puri. He was invited to attend the *Ārati* in the famous temple of Jagannath. During the service the Guru stood silent and did not participate in the ceremony. When he was asked the reason, he burst into a song of unmatched beauty:

The sky is the salver,
the sun and moon, the lamps.
The luminous stars in the heavens are
the pearls.
The fragrant breeze from the Malaya is
the incense;
The winds are the fans for Thee,
And the vast forests wreaths of flowers
Thy holy offering;
Thus is Thy worship performed!

This song was a favourite of Swamiji's. He used to sing it now and then. According to some, at Puri, Nanak met Sri Chaitanya and these two great souls stayed together for many days.

Walking from village to village, bearing all hardships with a smile and equanimity, the Guru discussed with Sufi, Jain, Buddhist saints and gave his wisdom and also learned from them. He travelled to Sri Lanka, then to Tibet, Ladakh, and Manasarovar. He also went to Mecca, Medina, Baghdad and Afghanistan. In Mecca he said, "In God's court, no one was accepted as Hindu or Mussalman. By our acts we shall be judged." After many years he returned to Punjab. Saidpur was attacked and plundered by Babar in 1520. Nanak was heart-broken to see the devastation and sad plight of the ravaged city. He implored piteously the Lord:

When there was such suffering, killing,
such shrieking in pain,
Didst not Thou, O God, feel pity?...
Thou alone makest and Thou alone
severest!

He was taken prisoner by Babar's army. When Babar learnt the greatness of the Saint, however, he not only released him but paid his homage. The Guru advised Babar, "Deliver just judgements, reverence holy men, forswear wine and gambling. The monarch who indulges in these vices shall,

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7. किआ अपु किआ तपु किआ व्रत पूजा ।
जाकै रिदै भाउ है दूजा ।।

if he survives, bewail his misdeeds. Be merciful to the vanquished, and worship God in spirit and in truth."

At last Nanak settled down at a village, Kartarpur, a place founded by himself. His disciples followed. The days were spent in *kirtan*, preaching, meditation and community work. He tilled the land to provide for himself and his family. He always laid emphasis on true fellowship, equality and ethical conduct. According to Nanak, a seeker was expected to live in the world, engage himself in useful activity, adhering to his moral obligations, and become an active agent in promoting collective well-being of society. *Kirat karni, wand chakna, nam japo*—To earn one's living by honest labour, to share with others the fruit of exertion, and to repeat the name of God, was the quintessence of the Guru's teaching.[8]

Nanak's sublime hymns were to counter the prevailing confusion and moral crises in society of his time. Hindus were burdened with many castes ; so were the Muslims with many sects. Squabbles, intolerance, persecution and hypocrisy vitiated the normal life of society. For Hindus and Muslims, religion consisted only of external observances. Kindness, sympathy and purity, being the true spirit of religion, were nowhere to be seen. Priests and Mullas misled the common people by telling them that the lifeless outward observances were ends in themselves. Observing such a low ebb of spirituality in the country, Nanak commented:

Fools pass for learned ones, sophistry for wisdom,
And everyone seeks for nothing but pelf.

The life work of the Guru was to cleanse such society. He sacrificed himself to this formidable task with every drop of his blood, the sweat of his brow and every ounce of his energy. He protested oppression of every kind, whether it was religious or political. But that protest did not injure or humiliate anyone. His way was full of gentleness, kindness and love. The Guru embodied in himself all the spiritual qualities. Gentleness and humility were the natural traits of his personality. Therefore he used to say: "The lowly among the lowliest am I—the lowliest of all." In our times, Sri Ramakrishna stood as a perfect example of this. Did he not even clean the privy of pariahs with his long locks to humble his caste-pride ? Nanak had no curses on his lips ; his lips pronounced only blessings. He never condemned anyone, but lifted everyone to the realm of the Spirit, to their innate divinity.[9]

Before he laid down his body, on September 7, 1539, his parting *shabad* to the congregation was:

"The affairs of this world are transitory, only of a four-days' existence. ...We must proceed certainly like a guest ; why should we be proud ? Profitable is their advent into the world who have meditated with their whole hearts upon God."

The sacred land on which the Noble One shed his blood to spawn peace, unity and harmony, the same land is now drenched with the blood of innocent people by extremists. Not a word issued from the lips of the Guru, nor even a single act of his, caused the slightest hurt to any being. Taking his name, a few hundred lunatics wield deadly weapons to destroy human life wantonly and loot property—what an unprecedented tragic irony! If they dare look at the serene, loving, and divine face of Nanak, or read a single saying of his, they would be ashamed of their dark deeds, nay, their own destructive lives. O Nanak, the merciful one, restore good sense in these people and stem this carnage!

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8. किरत करो, वंड छको, नाम जपो ।

9. घटि घटि पूरन ब्रह्म प्रगास ।

Developing An Integrated Personality*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

It's important to know life fundamentally for spiritual unfoldment. Then our lives become integrated and wholesome. Uncareful frittering away of life's prècious energies leads to emptiness and sorrow. These are the counsels of the Revered President Maharaj of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in his impromptu discourse.

There is a big grazing land. A cow is feeding there on very good grass. For the moment the cow seems to be happy and contented. But soon afterwards, it likes to have the grass that is near another cow. And that grass is not as good as the first grass it was eating. But it pursues that grass of the other cow and loses the former good grass for nothing! That is how efforts become frustrated.

Our energies are being scattered in all directions. We live without any fixed purpose ; that is just like living the life of an animal. An animal's life is lived in the senses, and every moment its aim changes. Our efforts in life are always being frustrated owing to our negligence about cultivating the sort of integrated personality and character with which we can pursue one abiding aim in life, and for the attainment of which our whole energy will have to be directed.

By 'personality' we mean our individuality and our outlook on life. It is the result of our learning and experiences in our early life ; and it can be judged by how we try to be a part and parcel of the world, and how we behave in the world. An integrated personality will be a personality that will show at every stage of life adherence to one great idea, or supreme ideal, and all other smaller ideas will be subsidiary or subordinate to that supreme one.

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* Based on a talk given at Gwalior on 6th April 1987.

The Need For Integration of Personality

Not all personalities are always integrated. This is because the personality that we develop is not a methodically constructed one. As we think, so we behave ; as is our objective, so do we live our lives! If we reflect over our past, we find that in the stages of childhood, we did not have definite objectives, aims, or training. At one moment we sought something, at another moment something else. A child's mind always wavers like that. It is fickle. It has not developed any sort of stable personality yet. As children, what were we seeking ? Perhaps, some sweet things to eat and some kind words from our elders. That was all. There were no other objectives. But as we grew up, our choices became different, our desires became different and our efforts to arrive at the fulfilment of those desires too became very different. Now, we are not merely satisfied with the desires of a child, wanting only things to eat and toys to play with. We require more lasting things to be with us. We require status in society, we require appreciation from our peers, we want respect from our subordinates, and we want to be above the other members of the group. That is the idea that gradually grows up in our mind, even as we grew up physically. But even with all this development, our personality has not become fully integrated. Our hopes and efforts are often frustrated. This is because we are not trying to concentrate our energies—have not dedicated

our life—to one supreme objective. If we do not retain memory of, or live for the attainment of some higher purpose—some higher goal—our lives become gradually hollow. Our time is spent in different aimless pursuits and we have no proper understanding of their relative importance in relation to the supreme goal of our life.

It is sometimes seen that a man who lived a successful early life feels toward the end of his life that his years have been wasted. The reason is, what he thought to be the objective then, what he thought to be the aim of his life then, now seems merely child's play. When this happens to us, it means we are frittering away the precious time at our disposal. Time runs in an unalterably unilateral direction. It passes away, never to come back. The days of our life as children can be counted on the tips of our fingers. Then comes adulthood, when we are sufficiently grown up and are conscious of responsibilities. If we do not accept those responsibilities and do not try to fulfil them, we shall be counted as wastrels and misfits in society. We must therefore make it clear in our own minds what we want most to attain in life. That conviction should be there, and it should be properly deliberated upon and fixed on a rational basis.

People who live compulsively for one thing only are generally termed 'monomaniacs'. A monomaniac is obsessed with one idea only, and he is not able to behave with others in the way normal people do. Sometimes there is no door open for him through which he can communicate with others. That is, of course, the sign of a disordered personality. The monomaniac is fixated on some single idea that *commands* him and leads him to a collapse, whereas an integrated personality is a sound individual who gradually develops a confident faith in an ideal of life which he is able to strive for with his whole heart and soul. In an integrated personality, ideas become more and more clear and stable as he matures, and he thinks of one supreme end of life as the Goal, and all other things take a secondary place.

Developing An Integrated Personality

Now, how to develop that integrated personality ? Obviously that is a great quest. First of all, we shall have to consider life carefully. We shall have to consider all the different values and ideals in life and their relative importance in relation to each other. That is, some things should occupy only our passing interest. Some other things are more important and we should devote more energy for their fulfilment. And with all these, there should be one great and final objective in our life. We may not be completely clear in the beginning as to what that supreme goal should be, but we must always be thoughtful and have the faith that it will open up to us. Gradually we shall have that clear understanding ripened in us as we grow older and learn how to keep that supreme goal in the foremost place and keep other things in a supportive or subordinate place. Then we can strive for the highest. This is a very important decision which should be made by every person. It is not always that we make correct decisions from the very beginning. Our ideas may change, and our ultimate objective in life may not be clear right now, as was said earlier. But we should have some idea about how to proceed towards the goal.

The highest goal of our life, which should be rational and a real protective factor, should be sought by us in every step of our life. A life without an ideal is like a boat without a helm to direct its course. Without the helm, the boat will drift with the current and will never reach its point. If we are to reach a goal we cannot sit and wait for it to come to us. We shall have to direct our-

selves towards that. So also, a good character and personality has to be properly cultivated so that every moment of our existence may have a worthwhile result and purpose. A decision should be made by us, that we should not waste our time, but direct all our energies towards the attainment of life's goals. A man who can concentrate his energies from his very childhood and who has grown an integrated life and personality, is verily a lucky man. But then, unfortunately, all of us have not been so lucky.

The Four-fold Ideal

In ancient India, four ideals or objectives of life were clearly mentioned and discussed. They are: *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa* —religion, objects of enjoyment, desires, and liberation from all desires. These four have not all equal importance. According to the outlook in ancient times, *dharma* is the means for the attainment of all good things, here and hereafter.[1] The path that leads to supreme realization in the end is the path of *dharma.* If *dharma* is followed, the others —*artha* and *kāma,* lead one to *mokṣa. Dharma* also signifies our duties towards others—towards the people with whom we live. So far as being individuals is concerned, we are in a society and we live with others. There must be some sort of relationship between ourselves and our environment —a bond with the people with whom we live. We cannot live in this world in isolation. Our lives are always connected with the lives of those who are around us, and therefore we must always have a particular relation with them. What should be our attitude towards others? Those who are weak should have our protection; those who are elder should have our respect; and service should be rendered by us to those who need it. The more we can give to others without reserve, the more we shall have the blessing of an integrated personality.

Artha and *kāma* are goals for a man seeking enjoyment. A man who is greedy and full of selfish desires (*kāma*) will want a world which will provide sufficient pleasures. But even such a man must seek enjoyment through *dharma* if he wants satisfaction. At last, the final goal is *mokṣa,* which means liberation from all desires, all ignorance, all limitations.

These different objectives in life, though all have a place, and all are important, sometimes seem to us to be conflicting and cause us to be bewildered. But a person who has no such conflict, who has carefully considered the whole life and the highest overriding important objective, need not have any bewilderment. Though life may be long, he will keep in his inmost corner the thing of greatest value and not allow smaller pursuits to overshadow that one. He will be persistent in striving for the highest goal. That is certainly a better utilization of one's personality.

The Way To The Highest

Our ancient *ṛṣis* saw the ideal life divided into four successive stages or periods. First, the period of early life and *brahmacarya.* It is the preparatory and formative period when the young person attends his studies and practises restraint of the senses and purity. In the early days this period was completed by about the twenty-fifth year. The next twenty-five years were devoted to living the life of the ideal householder (*gārhasthya*). Marrying and raising his children, the householder lived a life of restraint and fulfilled his duties in such a way as to prepare himself for the higher pursuits of the next stage. He entered the

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1. यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः ।

—*Kaṇāda*

third period, *vānaprastha*, the life of retirement and seclusion. There comes a time in every life when one should retire from the busy life of worldly concerns and devote oneself to the higher values, namely, the attainment of God, or liberation from ignorance. So, one will have to gradually train oneself to be dissociated from earlier lower pursuits.[2] The householder's pursuits are quite different from those of a *vānaprasthi*. The latter has to keep himself away from the old habits and old environment and live apart to some extent from society to try to attain inner illumination. Last of all he becomes prepared for *sannyāsa*, the ultimate stage of life when everything is renounced for the sake of realizing the abiding principle, which is eternal peace, eternal happiness, eternal joy, and more importantly, eternal knowledge and eternal existence.

We all want to be immortal. Perhaps we do not know that we cannot be immortal physically. We are trying to lengthen our lifespan more and more. We are never ready to forego the limited pleasures of the physical existence. So, we try to live as long a life as possible. But it has never been given to man to have eternal life in the senses, in the physical body. Whatever is an assemblage of different component parts must one day disintegrate ; it will have to come to an end necessarily. There is no escape from that. But there is a state which is abiding, and will never come to an end, and that is the state that we want ourselves to be in. But we can have only that kind of immortality which is spiritual. It is not physical. It is the immortality of the undying Self within, our true personality. It is not limited to the body, it is not bound to the senses, it is not merely a stage of existence. It is Existence Itself—*Sat-cit-ānanda*. We are all pursuing It—that perfect fulfilment, either knowingly or unknowingly. Our motive really is that, though we are often unaware of the true meaning of it.

This is a conviction and faith that a person should learn from the early stages of his life, this faith in the spiritual goal of life. The sooner it is developed, the better ; and the more we concentrate our energies on that, the more do we advance nearer the Goal we shall one day be. That is why we stress the importance and predominance of one ultimate goal over the temporary ones.

To attain this perfect integration in life, this state of eternal existence, knowledge and bliss, we shall have to give up our selfishness. For selfishness is the main disintegrating factor in life.

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2. ब्रह्मचर्यं परिसमाप्य गृही भवेत्, गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेत्, वनी भूत्वा प्रव्रजेत् । यदि वेतरथा ब्रह्मचर्यादेव प्रव्रजेत् गृहाद् वा वनाद् वा ।

Jabālopaniṣad, verse 4

It is much better to work, keeping the mind fixed, without letting it wander about. The mind creates trouble whenever it is let loose.

—*Holy Mother*

The Ramakrishna Mission—What It Stands For*

SWAMI GAHANANANDA

Friends,

I have been asked to speak about the Ramakrishna Mission. I would like to speak mainly about what the Ramakrishna Mission stands for, that is, about its ideals.

But, before taking up that subject I wish to clear up two points. One is about the word "Mission". In the Christian religion the word "Mission" means an organization which sends missionaries to foreign countries to convert people to their faith. The Ramakrishna Mission is not a "Mission" of this type. Because our aim is not to convert people to any particular religion. In our case "Mission" simply means "organized social service done in a spirit of worship of the Divine-in-all beings", that is all.

As you can see from my dress, I am a monk. Swami Jyotirupananda also is a monk like me, though he is dressed like you. We belong to a monastic order known as the Ramakrishna Math or Order. It consists exclusively of monks only. The Ramakrishna Mission is an association in which some of our monks and some lay people work in cooperation to render social service. Though the Ramakrishna Mission has lay people, mostly married citizens, as its members, its administration is controlled entirely by the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. The distinction between the Order and the Mission is not widely known. So the word Ramakrishna Mission is popularly used to mean both. I would like to give you an idea of the activities of these two institutions.

The Headquarters of both the Ramakrishna Order and the Ramakrishna Mission are at a place known as Belur Math in Calcutta. The two organizations have together 154 branch centres, roughly half each. Of these, 34 centres are outside India. It is not only the Mission that is rendering social service. Some of the Ramakrishna Order's branch centres also undertake social service. The Order and the Mission together own 14 hospitals with more than 2,000 beds, and 81 out-patient dispensaries. Apart from these, we have what are called mobile dispensaries. A mobile dispensary is a well-equipped van which carries doctors and medical supplies to rural areas. We have 22 of them in different parts of India.

We are also active in the educational field. We run colleges, schools of different types, polytechnics, rural and agricultural institutes, orphanages, a blind boys' academy and so on—320 institutions in all. Apart from these, we also operate hundreds of non-formal education centres such as night schools etc. for very poor people in cities and villages.

We have special projects for the uplift of tribals. There are also cultural centres for children and adolescents. In India natural calamities like floods, cyclones, drought etc occur almost every year, and for these we organize massive relief and rehabilitation operations. We have a permanent department for this.

These are all physical or material forms of service. But our primary objective is the spiritual elevation of mankind. Even our physical service we do as a spiritual discipline. Everything we do is a spiritual discipline or yoga for us.

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* Edited version of a talk given in Leningrad on 14-8-91 by Swami Gahanananda, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

We cannot render service properly unless we make ourselves fit for it. As I told you, we belong to a monastic Order. Including the novices, we are about 1,300 strong, and the number is steadily increasing. We lead a disciplined life wedded to the vows of chastity and poverty. We follow a strict daily routine which includes prayer, meditation, congregational singing, studies and, of course, service. In each centre our monks and novices live like one large family. Unselfish love is the cord that unites us. It is because of this community support that we are able to render so much of social service so efficiently and effectively.

Well, I have been using the word "we" all along to mean the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. But apart from the monks, we have a large community of lay devotees. The lay devotees help and support the monks in various ways. Of course, this is something familiar to you. For you know that every church is supported by a community of lay people. But the lay devotees who are followers of Ramakrishna differ from the others in one important respect: they belong to all religions and faiths. We have not only Hindus of various denominations but also Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Parsees, and followers of tribal cults as our lay devotees.

Then there are quite a number of independent Ashramas or retreat centres which do not belong to the Ramakrishna Mission. There may be not less than 500 of them in India. So you see, the Ramakrishna Mission is only one stream in a vast movement known as the Ramakrishna Movement. What is common to all the streams of this Movement is the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna.

And this Ramakrishna Movement is spreading. It is spreading not because we go about converting people to our faith. No, we don't do that. We do not even open new centres at our initiative. As a rule, new centres are opened by local people; later on, they ask for affiliation to the Ramakrishna Mission. Each branch of the Ramakrishna Mission is financially independent and depends on local support. So then, if the Ramakrishna Movement is spreading, it is because its inner dynamic is derived from the universal significance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna. Who is this Sri Ramakrishna?

Sri Ramakrishna was born in 1836 in a poor priestly family in a remote village 110 kilometres to the north-west of Calcutta. His father had been a wealthy man, but because he refused to bear false witness on behalf of the powerful landlord of his village, he had been deprived of all his properties and had to migrate to another village where a friend offered him a small piece of land. Ramakrishna inherited this devotion to truth from his father. He had only rudiments of formal education. At the age of nineteen, proverty forced Ramakrishna to become a priest in the temple of the Divine Mother known as Kālī. But very soon he was seized with the desire to know whether God really existed and, if so, whether God could be realized through different paths. In Hinduism itself there are several spiritual paths, each belonging to a particular sect. Ramakrishna followed all these paths one by one. Then he tried the paths of Islam and Christianity. It needs tremendous effort for ordinary people to attain success in even a single path. But Ramakrishna, through sheer intensity of aspiration, realized the goal of each path in a very short time. He discovered that all these paths ultimately led to the experience of the same ultimate Reality known as Brahman, God and so on. From the results of these experiments Sri Ramakrishna formulated the principle of Harmony of Religions for which he is famous.

The principle of Harmony of Religions is based on four concepts developed by Sri Ramakrishna. These concepts are: first, direct realization of God is the essence of every religion; whereas temples, churches, rituals etc. are only secondary details. Second concept: all religions lead ultimately to the same goal. Third concept: though the goal is the same, the means are different; each religion or sect represents a unique path; and so there is no need to change one's religion. Fourth concept: these unique paths are not mutually contradictory but complementary. Every religion has some good points. A wise man accepts the good points of every religion and thus enriches himself. It is only ignorant people who quarrel and fight in the name of religion. This principle of the Harmony of Religions is one of the foundational principles of the Ramakrishna Movement.

Sri Ramakrishna also taught that God realization is the only way to attain supreme peace and fulfilment in life. And he openly declared that God realization was possible for all people, irrespective of caste, creed or race.

For the sake of higher spiritual realization, lower pleasures and material possessions are to be sacrificed. Sri Ramakrishna did not, however, advocate too much austerity. He favoured moderation. He did not live a mendicant life like the majority of Indian monks of his day. Rather, he lived the simple life of an average Indian, maintaining absolute purity of character. Sri Ramakrishna did not like the negative idea that man is a born sinner. He stressed the positive aspect of life such as faith, strength, etc.

Sri Ramakrishna had a cheerful disposition. His face always radiated joy—this is what almost everyone who saw him has reported. He had a keen sense of humour. He never encouraged brooding over the past or depression of mind. These traits of the Master also characterize community life in Ramakrishna Mission centres. Anyone who visits our centres cannot fail to notice the atmosphere of cheerfulness, joy and humour there.

Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda were both highly talented musicians. And music has always been a prominent aspect of our community life.

Sri Ramakrishna saw God in all people—even in wicked men and fallen women. He had a deep compassion for suffering humanity. This made him work incessantly for the welfare of people. Especially during the last few years of his life he had to meet and talk to a large number of people for hours with very little rest.

The universal significance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna became known to the world at large mainly through the efforts of his foremost disciple, Swami Vivekananda. His original name was Narendra. It was as a rational-minded 18-year-old college student, eager to know the ultimate Truth, that he first met Sri Ramakrishna. He practised spiritual disciplines under Sri Ramakrishna's guidance and attained the highest level of spiritual realization. After the Master's passing away, he organized the young disciples into a monastic brotherhood known as the Ramakrishna Math.

He spent a few years wandering all over India. In 1893, when he was barely 30 years old, he set sail for the United States of America to represent Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions. After four years of preaching work he returned to India. Earlier, during his wanderings in India he had been deeply moved at the appalling poverty and ignorance of the poor Indian masses. It was mainly for their uplift

that he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. Swami Vivekananda passed away in 1902 a few months before his 40th birthday.

Vivekananda's contributions to the Ramakrishna Movement and monastic life in general are many. Here I wish to mention only three. The first is social commitment. Before Vivekananda came on the scene, the poor masses of India had been treated as social outcastes with none to support them. All the social and religious reformers of that period and earlier years were concerned only with the upper castes and classes of people. Swami Vivekananda was the first religious leader in India to become a spokesman for the downtrodden people of India. He was also the first leader in modern India to develop a practical means for the uplift of the poor masses. He saw that the renunciation and freedom from social obligation of the monks qualified them as ideal social workers, and that through them an immense amount of social service could be done. But, in order to motivate people, a religious philosophy was necessary, and Vivekananda found it in the Vedantic doctrine of the potential divinity of man. He converted Sri Ramakrishna's experience of seeing God in all people into the doctrine that service to man is the best form of worship of God. This has ever since remained the basic work ethic of the Ramakrishna Movement.

Another aspect of Swami Vivekananda's influence upon Ramakrishna Mission may be seen in its modern and progressive outlook. The buildings including temples are designed in the modern way with all modern amenities. Ramakrishna Mission monks work as doctors, teachers and engineers, keep audited accounts, read newspapers to be in touch with current events, use modern vehicles for travel, and use English as the link-language. The modernization has been effected mainly for the preservation of ancient insights and values through adaptation.

Another aspect of Ramakrishna Mission monks' life which Swami Vivekananda introduced is the development of intellectual life. Our monks are encouraged to acquire knowledge of both eastern and western philosophies, world religions, scriptures and similar subjects. All our centres conduct religious classes and discourses regularly. We have a Seminary to train novices at our Headquarters. We publish a number of journals in English and in local languages. Publication and distribution of books is a major activity in some of the branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission.

This account of the Ramakrishna Movement will be incomplete if I don't mention the important part played in it by Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, known popularly as the Holy Mother. Like Sri Ramakrishna, she too lived an absolutely chaste and holy life which was outwardly not different from the life of a simple village woman. But behind the veil of shyness and humility she remained a storehouse of wisdom and spiritual power. She acted as the Guru or spiritual guide to hundreds of people. But her most important trait was spiritual motherhood. She was the embodiment of universal motherhood. She looked upon everyone from the untouchable sweeper and robber to the much respected senior monks as her children. That was the only relation she ever had with the world. Her great mother love acted as a strong binding force during the early years of the Ramakrishna Movement. Even now it is this force that is holding together the Ramakrishna Movement with all its racial, religious, cultural and linguistic diversities. Her last message, in the form of her advice given to a woman a few days before her death, is enough to give you an

(*Continued on page* 462)

The Waste Lands That Enrich Our Lives

SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

The author of this thoughtful paper has been for many years the spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in Geneva, Switzerland.

Introduction:

Words are *cheverel*, goat-skin gloves; we can turn them inside out and make double usage. "Wasting" is one such word. In popular use, to waste is to spend recklessly and lavishly and without purpose, energy or wealth, and to end up in bankruptcy and ruin. A deeper look will reveal a nobler dimension of the term 'waste'. Wasting is spending lavishly and generously but with a purpose aiming at the increase of the faculty or wealth spent—the wealth of knowledge when spent increases enormously. In this context, 'Wasting' is enriching: "*Vyaye kṛte vardhate eva nityam vidyā dhanam.*"

In this paper, we shall study four aspects or stages of God's generous spending to bring into existence the phenomenal world with all its habitants, and Man, the Crown of creation. The source and sustainer of all energy and wealth, the Providence Supreme spent Himself for the world to be. This generosity is detailed in the Vedantic cosmology. "*Ātmanaḥ ākāśas sambhūtaḥ.*" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 1.i) From this self, verily ether arose. ...

The second aspect is man's purposeful spending and Nature's filling up the void if his spending ends up in the loss of that faculty. This vital collaboration of Nature, God's handmaid, is well illustrated in the life of the poet, John Milton. He lost his eyesight in the middle of his life. In Milton's *Ode To Blindness* he says that the loss was more than compensated by the opening of his Soul's eye.

The third stage is pre-eminently God's generous gift to Man, that of *Bhukti* and *Mukti*. Mukti is posed by the Divine as a sequel to Bhukti.

The fourth is the gift of the 'ground', the land on which humankind practises the art of wasteful but purposeful spending to discover and enrich itself. This is the *Kṣetra*, the field of the 13th Chapter of the Gita. The *Kṣetra* is the inner space of the Integral Man. *This wasteland at first sight is arid, because un-owned and uncultivated.* We have to 'own' our field and cultivate it. Then only we can reap. Owning is not possessing. To own a capital or a ground, one must know its worth, cultivate it and make it fertile and yielding. Then the ground belongs to him. There is belonging and involvement. A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna said, "My Master has given me a big capital. True, but I have to make it my *own*".

* * *

In the beginning was Action;
There rolled out welcome's red carpet
For Becoming.
Vast space—Ākāśa
and Time, the moving space
of Eternity,
And finally the human person.
Well made,—*Sukṛtam*!

Wisdom from waste:

In the beginning was *Action*. We prefer to speak of the beginning in this way, than "In the beginning was Sat", or "In the beginning was the Word." (*Bible*)

The Supreme who is Will-Action willed and the world with all its habitants came into existence. The Source and Sustainer of all energy and wealth spent Himself, Wasted Himself generously and lavishly. Like a flower that wastes its sweetness in the desert air, the Supreme spreads His Ananda. "If *Ānaṇda* were not in the air, who would have breathed or lived ?" (*T. Upaniṣad*, II.7.i) This is the first phase of God's generosity.

In the second stage God inspires Man to follow His example to waste generously. In case the spending ends up in a loss or ruin, Mother Nature looks to it that the void is filled up. Witness for instance how nature, God's hand-maid, built and filled up when the poet John Milton lost his eyesight and became blind. In *Ode To Blindness* he says that his inner vision—the Soul's eye took its place. His soul became more bent towards his Maker.

> When I consider how my light is spent
> E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
> And that one Talent, which is death to hide,
> Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
> To serve therewith my Maker, and present. ...

We have highlighted two aspects of the generosity of the Divine, spending generously and filling up the void.

Now comes the third phase of God's generosity—Providence, after profusely providing mankind with the means of Bhukti, poses Mukti as the crowning act of His generosity. "*Bhukti-mukti pradāyakam, bhukti-mukti dasīlam*"—so runs the refrain of the *Phalaśrūti*. These two are not posed as alternatives. Mukti is the imperative sequel. Bhukti is freedom in the senses, Mukti is freedom from the senses, Bhukti is enjoyment with objects, Mukti is joy without them. The Supreme has a cardinal message in posing Mukti as the sequel. Are we slaves or masters of Bhukti ? If the latter, then freedom takes to its wings and soars high, whereas in slavery to Bhukti, freedom's wings are clipped. *Both are here and now*.

The Mukti climate, like omnipresence, covers all seasons—winter and summer, and all persons—sinners and saints.

Fragments from the Shipwreck:

In the evening years of one's life, it is natural to look back over the past, wanting to assess the overall Capital with the losses and gains. All will agree that life is a battle, may be on land or on sea. On the sea of life, all have to brave the wild storms and avoid hidden rocks. Many shipwrecks, some partial, some total, no deaths. Only survivals. A privileged few among them collect the fragments. The 'fragments' are not pieces of wood from the broken ship, but Dharmic fragments, fragments of virtue, practised which, ever float and never sink. It is only with these fragments that the boat, the 'body' of the next birth can be built. Collecting and *re*-collecting the 'fragments' is highly rewarding for a departing Soul. Even a fragment of a virtue saves us from great fear (*Gītā* II.40). During the final years, the greatest fear is the fear of death. Armed with the dharmic fragments as also with the certainty that "the Lord's, the Ocean of Love's"—compassion is standing with outstretched hands to accept him, the devotee welcomes death with a smile. That was the case of Chelaparamban Namboothiri, a contemporary of Mepathur Narayana Bhattathiri, of Guruvayoor (Kerala) glory. Chelaparamban chanted a verse enumerating the persons for whom the release was immediate, or after a week (Parikṣit), or six months (Dhruva). "With what remains of my life I propitiate you, O Lord," he said,

and prostrated in the *Maṇḍapam* (courtyard) before the Lord of Guruvayoor. He did not get up.

Waste Land—Virgin Land:

The fourth and last phase of God's generosity is the creation of the 'Field'—the *Kṣetra*—the inner space of the integral Man, constituting *Manas, Buddhi, Ahaṁkāra* and *Bhūta-s*, the elements which make up one's being. This is the 'Waste Land'—why not—'Virgin Land', for man to cultivate. Along with the gift of the field came the know-how of cultivation. The knowledge of the 'knower of the field' of the *Gītā*. Before we close this section let us fix in our minds the two seminal ideas: 1. Wasting is spending generously and lavishly with a purpose: The void created by this spending is filled up immediately by Nature's law of economy; 2. Wasteland is the ground in Man, at first arid, but later rich as man cultivates it and owns it as part of his own self, even as a thinker owns his thought, or, as *Brahman owns and integrates Māyā to Itself*.

Discovery of Wasteland:

In an attempt to give meaning to life, one looks within and finds a wide chasm yawning in oneself—the distance that separates 'what one is' and 'what one wants to be', between what one is now and the ideal which is not yet accomplished. A scrutiny reveals that the ideal is in oneself, not outside, and one is projecting it all the time. The road to the ideal is paved with opposites, impure and pure, *adharma* and *dharma*, and so on. The opposites create contradiction, 'I can, and I cannot'. Contradiction breeds tension and tension gives energy. The pull between the opposites must be maintained because the pull widens the field of consciousness. Opting for one of the opposites eases the tension, but the prize of tension, *viz*, the transcendence of opposites, is lost. By maintaining the tension, englobing the opposites and transcending them becomes possible. It is the superconscious that makes transcendence possible. This function of the superconscious is shut out when we think that the conscious level with its tensions and creativity is enough. Accepting the working of the superconscious brings in the dawn of the wisdom of the *Overself*. This wisdom englobes the opposites and transcends them in a unifying experience.

"Give up all the dichotomies of the relative existence. Giving them up, give up *that* by which you abandoned both." This is the unity unifying-consciousness of which the *Upaniṣad* speaks. "What delusion, what sorrow is there for the one who has this *Ekatvabhāva*" (*Īśa Upaniṣad*, 7). On the wasteland, the Supreme has sown the million dualities. Man is invited to own this ground by getting involved—to cultivate it and reap Unity, the Sameness, the *Sarvātma-bhāva*.

Waste Land—Eliot Fashion

"The world is a fiction
And is made up of contradiction
Do what you will."

These lines are not from Eliot, but serve us well as a guiding light to understand the enigmatic poem of Eliot.

He begins in great form by the *"Burial of the Dead"*. "April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory and desire, stirring dull roots with spring rain." True, roots of memory are dull without the rain of desire.

April being spring is not the cruellest month. None can breed lilacs (beautiful spring flowers) out of dead land! Open contradictions!

Contradictions, product of opposing impressions and conflicting ideals are the

very stuff of life, raw material of intelligent living. The more the number of contradictions, the higher the quality of life. "If I were a tree among the trees, I would have neither conflicts nor contradictions." But often contradictions go unnoticed in life. Comes a moral crisis and we begin to search for the meaning of life, and the role of contradiction. Eliot wants to draw our attention to the role of contradiction by affirming something which openly contradicts our experience.

"*Breeding lilacs out of dead land.*"

This said, he shows how to transcend contradictions.

Nothing really dies ; death is a change of form. Nothing is really born. This is the ultimate Truth. To live this truth is to go beyond words and thought, is to transcend thought. Transcending thought is to englobe the opposites and to englobe the opposites we must see the opposites at the same time, in a flash. Going beyond thought is possible in silence only. It seems impossible to go beyond thought because we rarely practise silence in the way we should. The silent mind is God's gift, *is God.* Eliot knew it and lived it—

> *"I could not speak and my eyes failed,*
> *I was neither living nor dead and I knew*
> *nothing, looking into the 'HEART OF*
> *LIGHT', 'THE SILENCE'."*

Those who know this silence and live it do not die, because God is in their heart. Those who do not know it, are 'ANGELS UNAWARES'. They too, do not die. So, then there is no dead and no burial. But on the relative plane, there is death and burial—on the transcendental level, no death, no burial. Eliot starts off with a sublime contradiction.

A firm believer in the unitary principle governing the world, Eliot kept for himself the dualism and the play of the opposites, like night and day, fall and rise. These opposites are not simple external events, but events happening in the inner space, the time of the poet and of everyone. For the poet, they are parts of a whole and do not contradict. The creative imagination of the poet englobes the opposites and provokes transcendence. The poet is a master of the transcending act and Eliot is at his best in his poem "*Waste Land*".

Life at first sight is a waste land—arid and barren, but inviting us to 'own it' and cultivate it. When cultivated, it yields rich harvest. The harvest is *here and now.*

The harvest is the unitary and unifying vision of the opposites. Fall and rise, death and birth, are seen not as successive, but as simultaneous. This is the vision of the Totality, here and now. The fragments are *Datta, Damyata,* and *Dayadhvam*—giving, self-control and compassion (*Br. Upaniṣad,* V.2.i). In reality they are not fragments, but 'wholes'— *...svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.* (*Gītā,* II. 40).

Eliot had a glimpse of this Totality in a flash as is evident in the last stanza of his poem, "*Waste Land*":

> *I sat upon the shore*
> *Fishing, with the arid plain behind me*
> *Shall I at least set my lands in order ?*
> *London bridge is falling down, falling*
> *down, falling down.*

* * *

These fragments I have shored against my ruins—*Damyata, datta, dayadhvam, Sāntiḥ*! *Sāntih*! *Sāntiḥ*! London bridge falling is an event in the inner space of Eliot ; so too the collecting of the 'fragments' of his shipwreck (*ruins,* in his own words), and the highlighting of the summit of Transcendence by three *Sāntiḥ*-s (peace benedictions) to match with the three falling London Bridges.

The waste land and sarvamukti:

Incarnations and the other messengers of the Most High have promised that they would come again and again to help until the last man is liberated. The queue of humanity is unending. Adding to this assuring voice is the voice of modern Rantidevas, declaring: "I want neither kingdom, nor heaven, nor even the cessation of my births. All that I desire is to assuage the suffering of humanity."

These voices roll up and down the corridor of Time, waking up those who are sleepy or sleeping, also those who are gossiping. In the unending queue of humanity, the last are the immortal Rantidevas, repeating to all those who come up in the line, "Move on, after you, brother ; I wait."

Those who wait for others to pass on are already liberated. The 'Wasteland' is always present, so too is liberation.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION—WHAT IT STANDS FOR

(*Continued from page* 457)

idea of the vastness of her vision. "My daughter", she said, "if you want peace of mind, do not look at the faults of others... Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger. The whole world is yours."

These three great personalities—Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda—represent all that is best in the Ramakrishna Movement. You can see their pictures everywhere in our centres. For us they are not mere symbols but living realities. And they do not belong to the Ramakrishna Movement alone ; they belong to the whole humanity. May their noble lives and liberating message be a source of inspiration to all mankind. Thank you.

Hindu Ideal Of Service

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

In his scholarly essay, Dr. Kapoor writes that seva or service is an important spiritual attitude, even a way of life to the devout Hindus. Loving service to humanity takes one nearer to God. The author, who has written a number of books and articles, is a teacher of History at the Lyllapur Khalsa College, Jalandhar City, Punjab.

One can serve with the heart, not with the head. The heart alone, when tuned with humanity at large, can feel the throbs of another heart in the manner of natural empathy. The head more or less is a calculating organ which thinks in terms of profit and loss, though when well directed can concretize sentiments of pity into acts of philanthropy.

Service is love in action, love that does not demand anything in return, but is ever-giving. Love is a matter of profound tender feelings, of intensely warm sentiments, and of refined sensibilities and attitudes. When it flows spontaneously, it is transmuted into service, its quality being determined by the temperament of the persons moved to feel for others.

Service in Hinduism is not merely a matter of charity or philanthropy in an individual or organized form ; it is rather a way of life, an attitude towards the phenomenal existence, a step towards the realization of the Supreme, and above all, a means to fulfil one's *dharma*. In its material sense, it stems from *karuṇā* (compassion), an inherent trait of the tender-hearted souls ; it is best performed through *śraddhā* (trust or faith) and *tyāga* (renunciation), and often culminates in some form of *dāna* (giving), viz. time, money, knowledge, physical help and the like. In its transcendental sense, it is the pathway to truth, to God, as every virtuous deed of the *sādhaka* (devotee) turns out to be an act of *arcanā* (worship) ; it is like offering an oblation to humanity on the *karmakṣetra*, or field of the world.

Service may be done at the mental (*mānasic*), material (*bhautic*) or spiritual (*ādhyātmic*) levels, both in the *sthāvara* (*unmoving*) and *jaṅgama* (moving) existence, depending upon the exigency of circumstances. Those who adopt this path are normally led to do so by one or more factors : such as their prophets' lauding the nobility inherent in philanthropic acts ; their sects' or communities' upholding the tradition of virtuous deeds, and so it must be continued ; or the hope that service will win them adherents from other faiths, bring name and fame, annihilate the impact of unholy *karma* (actions), ensure for them a place in heaven or prosperity in the next birth, and so on. In all these cases, service becomes conditioned or compulsive, as also a means to gaining something in return. It does not stem from the very being of the man, and hence cannot be described as *sāttvic*, or of the purest type, in which the doer is completely detached from his actions. When service aims at realizing some material goal or gain, in this or the next world, it takes *rājasic* overtones ; but when it is rendered to boost the ego at the cost of others, it becomes *tāmasic*.

Service may be rendered daily (*nitya*) by making offerings to the poor, the sick, the

downtrodden or others deserving help. It may be performed occasionally for the expiation of sins (*naimittika*), for some particular gain, viz. wealth or a male child (*kāmya*), for the fulfilment of higher spiritual motives (*ādhyātmic*), for the acquisition of super powers in the course of *mantra siddhi*, or the accomplishment of a spell (*ādhidaivic*), or without any pre-conceived objective in mind (*vimala*).

The belief that the Hindu sacred texts are concerned more with metaphysical subtleties than with the well-being of man in this world is not based on facts. *Sevā*, *paropakāra* or *lokopakāra*, the terms commonly used to connote altruistic attitudes, form a cardinal principle of Hindu ethics, its allied aspects being *dayā* (mercy), *maitṛ* (comradeship), *dāna* (alms-giving), *ātithya* (hospitality towards guests and strangers), *priyavaditā* (sweet speech), *alobha* (freedom from greed), and the will to suffer for others. Service to mankind is regarded as a holy deed, while inflicting harm on others has been dubbed as sin (*paropakāraḥ punyāya pāpāya parapīḍanam*). Bhartṛhari says in his *Nitiśataka* (verse 73) that the human body is adorned, not by anointing with sandalwood paste (*candana lepa*), but by helping others. It has been suggested that while giving service one must not make any distinction between one's foe or friend. "What excellence is there," says a hymn, "if one is full of human kindness towards one who is a benefactor, or one free from rivalry? He is the foremost among the good, whose mind is compassionate towards one who is inimical and has done harm impetuously."[1] True service transcends the barriers of caste, creed, colour, sex or nationality, and does not seek anything in return. "The best person is he," says another hymn, "who helps others without any expectations, the middling one returns the help he has received, the low one does not even do that but becomes an enemy for the very help he has received."[2] But, even in the last case, a *sthitaprajña* (one who is equipoised in mind) does not deviate from performing noble acts.

The path of service is the path of virtue. The *Ṛgveda* containing the earliest sacred hymns known to mankind makes this prayer: "May we always serve humanity without demanding the price of our service. May we ever be benevolent, kind, self-sacrificing, detached and adjusting. May we surrender all and serve humanity like the sun and the moon."[3] Obviously, the emphasis is on selfless service. In Chapter X (117.1-8), the *Ṛgveda* goes on to extol the sentiments of compassion and admonishes the rich to help the poor in a number of ways. It says, for example, "Providence has not, surely, ordained death only for the hungry and ill fed, for death in various forms does make short work even of such as have enough to eat. It is also certain that the wealth of him, who (out of his resources) helps the needy, does not get exhausted, whereas he who does not succour the poor has none to console him in times of trouble."[4] And again: "He who does not feed either a respectable guest or a poor friend in distress, but eats all alone, has only sin to his credit."[5] The categories of people which deserve to be served are: the indigent (*ādhra*), victims of penury (*rafita*), the emaciated (*kṛṣa*), the itinerant holy men going from door to door for alms

1. Ludwik Sternbach, *Mahā-Subhāṣita Samgraha* Editor S. Bhaskaran Nair, Vol. IV (Hoshiarpur: VVRI, 1980) p. 1768.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1765.

3. *svasti panthāmanūcarema suryyācandramasaviva punardadatāghnatājanata sangamemahi. Ṛgveda*, V. 51.15.

4. *na vā u devāh kṣudhamidvadham dadurutasitāmupa gacanti mṛtyavah, uto rayih pṛṇato nopadasyatyuta pṛṇanmarḍitaram na vindate. Ṛgveda*, X. 117.1.

5. *nāryamaṇam puṣyati no sakhāyam kevalagho bhavati kevalādī. Ṛgveda*, X. 117.6.

(*gṛhu*), friends in need (*aryaman*) or members of the same society (*sacābhu sakhā*). It is implied that a person should not be judged by the wealth he commands, but by the help he provides to the needy and the distressed. (*Ṛg.* X. 117.1-4, 8)

Life in its primitive form prospers by garbbing, but in its civilized form, it enriches itself by giving. "Collect by hundreds of hands and distribute by thousands" (*śata hasta samnara sahasrahasta sam-kir*), says the *Atharvaveda* (III. 24.5), which further admonishes (VIII. 1.7) not to neglect living beings (*jīvebhyopramadāḥ*). The Hindu sacred texts extol the virtues of giving, as giving helps the seeker to realize the Supreme in His creation. The *Śikṣā-vallī* of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 11.3) says in this context that charity should be "given with faith, should not be given without faith, should be given in plenty, should be given with modesty, should be given with fear, should be given with sympathy." (*śraddhayā deyam, aśraddhayā adeyam, śriyā deyam, hriyā deyam, bhiyā deyam saṁvidā deyam.*)

Even though the propensity to give or serve is a natural quality of the soul which takes shape in the crucible of past lives as a result of noble *saṁskāras* (impressions), it can be cultivated in the present life too. "May thy heart be full of generosity, kindness and love. May it flow to the downtrodden and make them happy," says the *Sāmaveda* (hymn 55). It further requires human beings to lead their lives on the ideals of *yajña*, or the spirit of sacrifice. (hymn 56) The entire Vedic literature alludes to the concept of the welfare of mankind through love, goodwill and mutual help. The *Yajurveda* (XII. 54) exhorts: "Heal up the wounds of thy fellow pilgrims, and infuse the spirit of perfect harmony in their hearts." Another verse (*Yajurveda* IV. 13) enjoins that the human body ought to become an unfailing instrument for performing beneficial deeds.[6]

These ennobling ideas, concretized by the *Dharmaśāstras*, the *Ethics*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Smṛtis* influenced many Indian faiths, from the grossly idolatrous to the most subtle, and percolated through the writings of Bhakti and Sufi reformers in medieval times forming, as it were, the antithesis and fulfilment of the Vedic injunctions. Of them all, the ideal of *sevā* propounded by the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and made tangible by the devout Sikh congregation in *gurudwārās* is worthy of emulation both because of its efficacy in dissolving the individual ego, and its universal applicability in life. The socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century India, viz. the Brahmo Samāj, the Ārya Samāj and the Rāmakrishna Mission, also made a significant attempt to revive the Vedic ideals of service and sacrifice.[7]

The metaphysical roots of service lie in the fact that even though all living beings exist as independent units, each forms a part of the universal whole. Hence, if one part is diseased or distressed, it is bound to affect other parts. He who looks upon other beings as he would look upon himself (*ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu*), is a true *jñāni*, i.e., one who has attained to divine knowledge. Instead of giving egocentric responses to the social milieu, he develops a universal approach to the problems of life. He understands that selflessness, not selfishness, is the basis of human existence, and that avarice is opposed to the divine purpose. Whom to

6. The translation of hymns is based on Pandit Satyakam Vidyalankar, *The Holy Vedas* (Delhi: International Veda Trust, 1983) pp. 222,255.

7. For a critical study of this aspect, see Satish K. Kapoor, *Religious* Trends in Renaissant India: Revivalism, Reformation and Syncretism in Wazir Singh (Editor) *Religious Pluralism and Co-existence* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1986) pp. 77-89.

abhor and from whom to grab, if the unity of the Self in all is realized. Says the *Īśāvasyopaniṣad*: "The wise man who perceives all beings as not distinct from his own Self at all, and his own Self as the Self of every being—he does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone."[8]

Different forms of existence are like waves on the ocean of universal consciousness, and are bound to differ in terms of their size, shape, habits, character, etc. though, in essence, they are the same. It is this aspect of unity in diversity which forms the quintessence of the Vedic philosophy, and it is as much applicable to the realm of metaphysics as it is to society. "Behave with others as you would with yourself. ...With the eyes of a friend, let us regard one another," says the *Yajurveda*. (XL. 6; XXXVI. 18) Love all creatures, is both a moral obligation and a way to unfolding the divine aspects of man's being. It tantamounts to following the path of the good (*śreya*) and relinquishing the path of the pleasant (*preya*), as borne out by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. (I. 2).

The ideal of service finds an eloquent exposition in the *Bhagavadgītā* where the concept of *lokasaṁgraha*, denoting the well-being and solidarity of the world, becomes the praxis of moral and religious life of human beings who are required to enter onto the path of *jñāna*, *bhakti* or *karma*, as per their mental disposition, for the realization of the Supreme. He alone can attain to the beatitude of the Lord, who rejoices in the good of all beings (*sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ*), says the scripture. (V. 25) The *jñāni* serves humanity because he discerns his Self in all beings ; the *bhakta* because love becomes his innate nature, and the *karmin* because he is enjoined to do virtuous acts. The three positive performances (*vidhi sādhanā*) mentioned in the *Bhagavadgītā* (XVIII. 5) are *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapa*. Among the fourteen kinds of *yajñas* enumerated in the scripture at different places, *dravya yajña* (IV. 28) performed by giving material substances to the deserving, is of much significance. Service to humanity is deemed as one of the five daily supreme sacrifices, called the *pañcamahāyajña*—others being sacrifice to the *ṛṣis*, *devas*, *pitṛs*, and to the animal kingdom. *The Bhagavadgītā* (IX. 27) extols charity if it is offered in the name and on behalf of the Almighty. It is said to consist of the offerings of *abhaya* (shelter to the fearful or desolate), of *vidyā* (knowledge), and of *artha* (religious endowments, etc.). *Tapasyā* incorporates such ethical ideals as purity, control over senses, non-injury, service to others and honesty.

In the course of his spiritual journey, the *sādhaka* is expected to first dedicate the fruits of his actions (*karma-phala-arpaṇa*) to the Lord, then the action itself (*karma-arpaṇa*), and finally renounce even *mokṣa* (*karma-phala-tyāga*). After having realized that each work contributing to the welfare of mankind is God's primary work, he performs it as an act of worship, with much greater zeal.

One of the distinguishing aspects of the concept of service is that it is rooted in *dharma*, the core of ethics. Etymologically, *dharma* means that which sustains or binds the society. Whatever leads to the welfare (*abhyudaya*) of mankind is *dharma*, and whatever adds to its miseries is *adharma*. In the *Rāmacaritamānasa* (*Uttara Kāṇḍa*, 62.1), Gosvāmi Tulsīdās describes *parahita* (doing good to others) as the greatest of all dharmas (*parahita sarisa dharma nahin bhāī*). From *dharma* ensues truth and righteousness, the principles which uphold the entire creation. "If we transgress it, it will slay

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8. *yas tu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmany evānupasyati sarvabhūteṣu cātmānam tato na vijugupsate.* *Īsāvāsyopaniṣad*, verse 6.

us. If we protect it, it will protect us," says the *Manusmṛti*. (VIII. 15) The Indian concept of *dharma*, as explained in the Hindu texts, is much wider than the Western concept of religion, which literally implies "that which binds the soul to God". *Dharma* means this, and much more. "It binds the embodied being in bonds of *karma* to past and future births, in bonds of veneration to the forefathers, in bonds of love to the present society, in bonds of protective blessings to the future generations, and in bonds of adoration to God."[9]

In a strictly religious sense, *dharma* is classified as *siddha* (self-existent), *sādhya* (to be accomplished as an end), and *sādhana* (to be adopted as a means to that end). *Sevā-dharma*, or the obligation to serve, falls in the last category. The *Nītiśataka* (verse 59) says that even *yogis* cannot fathom the depths of it. (*sevādharmaḥ paramagahano yogināmapyagamyaḥ.*) It is, therefore, not surprising that of the four *puruṣārthās*, or aims of human existence, as mentioned in the Hindu scriptures, *dharma* gets precedence over the other three, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* (attainment of material prowess, progeny, and supreme realization).

In its social aspect, *dharma* is classified as *sāmānya dharma* and *svadharma*. The former refers to the general laws for all men, and the latter to the personal laws enjoined by the scriptures for different *varṇas* and *āśramas*, or age-groups. *Sāmānya dharma*, with its emphasis on the cultivation of postive moral virtues prepares the ground for the latter. These virtues have been described in the *Purāṇas*, the Vedic *Kalpasūtras* and other sacred works. Compassion towards all creatures is the first of the eight virtues of the soul, as enumerated by the sage Gautama in his *Dharmasūtra* (VIII. 20-22), others being, forbearance, freedom from envy, purity, avoidance of undue exertion, right conduct, freedom from avarice, and absence of greed. The quality of sharing one's comforts with other people (*samvibhāgaḥ*) is ordained for all the four *āśramas*, namely *brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa* in the *Āpastambha Dharmasūtra*. (I. 8,23,4-6) As per the rules of good conduct, the head of a family is required to offer food to his guests, old and sick people, females under his protection, and others, before he takes his meal. He may starve himself, his wife, or his son, but not his servant. He is also asked not to eat anything without having cut off a portion therefrom as a *bali* (gift-offering).[10] The hospitality of Hindus extends beyond the world of humans, and encompasses in its fold even worms, insects, birds and animals, who, as the *Skanda Purāṇa* (III. 2.64), says, depend for their subsistence on the charities of a householder.

Social organism is composed of mutually dependent parts, each one of which is unique in its own way, as it helps to maintain and preserve the vital processes. The stability of the total structure will thus depend as much on the right division of functions among its constituent units, as on the harmony between them all. Realizing this, the ancient Hindu seers and law-givers evolved the concept of *svadharma* for different *varṇas* (castes) in terms of their *guṇa* (quality), *karma* (action), and *svabhāva* (temperament), and transformed all types of work into some kind of service to society.

In metaphysical terms, *svadharma* is classified as *pravṛtti dharma* (pertaining to

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9. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, "Dharma: The Ascending Stairway Unto God" in *The Kalyan Kalpataru* (*Dharma Tattva Number*), Vol, IV, no. I (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1938) p. 64.

10. For an excellent study of this aspect, see Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1959) pp. 450-63.

worldly life and pleasures) and *nivṛtti dharma* (pertaining to freedom from worldly cravings). But in common parlance, its ramifications are many and varied. Take, for example, the *dharma* of a pupil—his duty (*chatram sīlamasya*) is to be always at his teacher's service (*gurukaryeṣvavahitāḥ*), and to protect him like an umbrella.[11]

The *dharma* of a woman is to serve her husband in a dedicated manner (*patī-sevā*); of the householder is to serve his guests, and of the grown-up children to look after their aged parents and other elderly persons (*vṛddha-sevā*); of the ruler to look after his people (*prajā-sevā*), and of the people, in turn, to work for the prosperity of their motherland (*rāṣṭra-sevā*); and so on. But the supreme *dharma* is that which incorporates the service of all living beings, taking them as part of one global family.

The concept of service is often conceived in material terms. But this kind of service can be performed only by those who are resourceful. Is, then, service the exclusive domain of the affluent who will, according to the theory of *karma*, reap the benefits of their philanthropic acts in their next birth, and possibly acquire a position of eminence as a result thereof ? Perhaps no. The Hindu tradition has it that even a smile, a kind gesture, a compliment, an inspiring word, or just the will to help in accordance with one's resources, can be commendable acts of service.

Service must become an attitude of life, if it is to be purposeful. Offering a glass of water to a thirsty traveller, providing room to an old or pregnant woman in a crowded bus or train, showing the path to someone lost, or cheering up another who is in a state of depression—these and other acts have a much higher social value and religious merit than the publicized philanthropic deeds which are often tainted with some selfish interest. Sporadic help rendered by religious or cultural institutions can mitigate the sufferings of people, only to some extent. Hence, each individual must be an institution of service in himself. Swami Vivekananda said, one should do good to others because that is the only condition of life—"thereby you expand beyond your little self; you live and grow".[12] Let service flow from our very being, as fragrance comes out of a flower. Let love be the overriding principle of our lives, as all existence is just "our own self magnified".

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11. V. S. Aggarwala, *India As Known to Paṇini: A Study of the Cultural Material in the Ashtādhyayi* (Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1953) p. 280.

12. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1969) p. 474.

One must live carefully. Every action produces its results. It is not good to use harsh words towards others or be responsible for their suffering....The purpose of one's life is fulfilled only when one is able to give joy to another.

—*Sri Sarada Devi*

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita

MAMATA RAY

What ideas and forces helped to transform Miss Noble into a great woman and illustrious friend and servant of India, Prof. Mamata Ray vividly portrays. The author is a lecturer in the Department of Economics and Politics at Viswa Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

Swami Vivekananda's presence in London in 1895-96 marked the beginning of the great change that was to come over Margaret Noble's life, ultimately to transform her into one of India's illustrious servants in the modern era. And though the Swami departed from England for India in December of 1896, he continued to occupy an important place in Margaret's life by way of the ideas he had given her and by his many letters to her. In this article we shall note how Swamiji encouraged Margaret always to give expression to the high truths of Vedanta, ultimately giving his blessings to her future work in India, mainly the uplift and education of Indian women.

Margaret eventually accepted completely her Guru's ideas on practical religion and philosophy. She was to write volumes in praise of awakened Hinduism preached by the great Swami. "Here," (she thus wrote in "*Our Master and His Message*")—

> ...is the crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.[1]

There is much we can learn from the close perusal of the letters between the Guru and the Disciple. We shall see a few of them, noting particularly how in their correspondence, Vivekananda continued to guide and inspire his devoted spiritual daughter from India.

I

"In the West, the Swami revealed himself to us," writes Sister Nivedita, "as a religious teacher only....renunciation, the thirst after freedom, the breaking of bondage, the fire of purity, the joy of the witness, the mergence of the personal in the impersonal, these and these alone, had been the themes[2] of his discourses in the West which showed him as an apostle of the inner life. Yet, in another fundamental orientation of his character he seemed to be more than anything *a worker for India*. In a simpler mind, these two roles—the Yogin and contemplative, and the leonine worker, would have come into conflict with each other. In Swami Vivekananda, however, there was no clash. The practical religion that Swamiji preached was that of work and self-sacrifice combined with contemplation.

For what end ? It was work without any personal gain that was wanted—for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many. The Sanskrit, "*Bahujana hitāya,*

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

2. See "The Master as I Saw Him" in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) Vol. I, p. 38.

bahujana sukhāya"—for the good and happiness of the many, became the slogan of his life's mission. Vivekananda's was a new philosophy of a new age in India, and appeared to be something of a break from the old traditional shunning of the world, reclusiveness and absorption in exclusive meditation. As the leader of the new order of monks founded by his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, he gave a new orientation to spiritual practice, wherein monks would strive for personal *Mukti* (freedom) by working for the freedom of the whole world. They would no more pass their lives in aloofness, but help society upwards. They would educate and enlighten the ignorant, nurse the sick, feed the poor and come to the aid of people when struck by famine, plague and other calamities.

To one who preached divinity of the soul of man, this concern for people was not an inconsistency. Swamiji taught:

The ordinary sannyasin gives up the world, goes out and thinks of God. The real sannyasin lives in the world, but is not of it. Those who deny themselves, live in the forest, and chew the cud of unsatisfied desires are not true renouncers. Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action and reach the Centre. If you have found the Centre, you cannot be moved.[3]

The broader aspect of Swamiji's urging of service to God in man was to open his followers' eyes as to the Centre—to the God within. He wanted to awaken consciousness to the inner divinity of man and to help this he taught others to work in the fashion of the *Gita*, doing duties towards men as unselfish service to God. Unselfish spirit in work constituted for Swami Vivekananda the essence of the *religion of work* (Karma Yoga) that he preached and stood for.

As Swamiji sought to serve humanity through the religion of work, so he also sought to uplift his country by the same means. His lasting regret was that his country was steeped in *tamoguṇa*, inertia and passivity accruing from centuries of foreign domination, and this was the basic reason for her downfall in history over the ages. Determined to deliver his country from indolence, lethargy and inactivity, Swamiji went to the West, attracted many sincere souls like Margaret Noble and awakened the whole Indian nation to the need for action, and self-help. His task was to set India on her feet. As Sister Nivedita said, to take Swami Vivekananda as a mere teacher of popular religion is to miss a great significance of his life and work. He was truly a patriot-saint of India and spent his life as "a worker at foundations".[4] She wrote:

There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed....he was a born lover; and queen of his adoration was his motherland.[5]

Elsewhere, Nivedita writes: "His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an over-flow of mystic passion by her very name."[5a]

Swami Vivekananda was indeed both a patriot and a prophet, one of the greatest of

3. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VI, p. 84.

4. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. I, p. 45.

5. *Ibid.*

5a. See "The National Significance of the Swami Vivekananda's Life and Work" in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. I. p. 375.

all time. He combined the two roles so beautifully that, far from being in conflict with each other, they formed a composite whole in him. As such he could say: "...for my own part, I will be incarnated two hundred times if that is necessary, to do this *work amongst my people* that I have undertaken."[6] (emphasis added)

Probably it is no exaggeration to say that Swamiji gave a new orientation to modern Hinduism so that his work of raising India's masses could be accomplished more earnestly.[6a] It is, however, plain to the observer that ignoring the historical and national significance of Swami Vivekanada's great emphasis on *work as religion*, we shall miss the essence of much that he stood for, and certainly shall miss as well the significance of the re-orientation that he gave to the life of Miss Margaret Noble.

II

"I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me," Swamiji said to Margaret Noble during a conversation with her in London in 1896.[7] But, as a constructive man of religion as well as a patriot, Swamiji was not the one to let her come to India until he was convinced that she was really ready for the mission that was waiting for her. What kind of readiness, or so to say, transformation, did the Master expect of his Disciple ? First, the aspiring disciple must always guard against 'a great fault of the 'Western character'....'against' (as Sister Nivedita wrote later in *The Master as I Saw Him*)...against making any attempt to force upon others that which we had merely found to be good for ourselves."[8] Secondly, the intending disciple must eschew in herself that seemingly in-born *insularity of attitude* in the English character. Swamiji had detected such attitude in Margaret during her association with him in 1895-96. The disciple kept speaking to him of the necessity of making London more and more fair (without mention of the price some other cities of the world had to pay to make London what it was). When Swamiji retorted by saying, "And you have *blasted* other cities, to make this city of yours beautiful!"[9] She at once realized her own insular viewpoint. Yes, there was always another point of view! That "one's conceptions of the world should be drawn up inclusive of the viewpoints of foreign peoples"[10] was a lesson that Margaret Noble learnt very well from her Master. So tellingly, in fact, that in the subsequent Indian years she would try her utmost (and at times ferociously at that) to teach the same lesson to others of her own race, who as islanders were more *exclusive* than *inclusive* in their attitude to other people, especially people whom they got to rule and subjugate.

Thirdly, Margaret had to learn not to be patronising in her attitude to the people she was to serve. "Remember," Swamiji used to say to her, "if you love India at all, you must love her *as she is*, not as you might wish her to become."[11] Margaret's

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6. These words were spoken to Margaret Noble and others in a gathering at the house of Henrietta Muller in London one evening in November 1896 ; *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 36.

6a. This was not in conflict at all with his work for humanity as a whole. He only wanted to put the more immediate emphasis on that part of humanity—his people—which needed such service the most.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

10. *Ibid.*,

11. Having quoted Swamiji to this effect, Nivedita observes, "And it was this great firmness of his standing like a rock for what actually was, that did more than any other single fact, perhaps, to open the eyes of those aliens who loved him to the beauty and strength of that ancient poem—

attitude was to become not only one of 'selfless giving', but also one of the feeling that in giving anything to the world, she was really giving the thing to herself. A selfless satisfaction within her own heart would be the only reward she would expect for her service. She must be, that is to say, a true renouncer.[12] Finally, Margaret had to realize that however intense her love and devotion might be for her Guru, the service to which she was to be called was not that of the Master himself, but of his country, and of Truth itself.

Reviewing the letters of 1897, Swami Vivekananda to Margaret Noble, we get a clear idea of what the Master expected of the Disciple, and how much hard work Margaret must have had to face overcoming her deficiencies. The Swami's letters reveal to the nature of the work and experiences the Disciple was soon to meet with.

During his stay in London, Swami Vivekananda had established a Vedanta Centre. Just on the eve of his departure for India in late December 1896 he got Swami Abhedananda who would take charge of the London work now that he was leaving. In preparation, as it were, for the kind of work she would be called upon to do in India, Margaret Noble engaged herself in collaborating with Swami Abhedananda and assisting him in the Vedanta Centre, and she had also herself started a Vedanta Circle in Wimbledon. The work of these two Centres kept her in constant touch with Swamiji, who wrote regularly and often about the work in India. The Ramakrishna Math, the Organization of monks, and the Ramakrishna Mission were just being established at this time and there was great news to tell. Margaret, in turn provided Swamiji with the current news of the two Centres in England. In a letter dated 5th May 1897 Swamiji wrote:

The work [of the Math and the Mission in India] has been started anyhow. A rickety old little house has been rented for six or seven shillings, where about twenty-four young men are being trained.[13]

A month and a half later Swamiji wrote to Margaret giving her more information about the conditions in which the Calcutta Centre was operating:

I have started work in the fashion in which I myself was trained—that is to say, under the trees, and keeping body and soul together anyhow. The plan has also changed a little. I have sent some of my boys to work in the famine districts. It has acted like a miracle. I find, as I always thought, that it is through the heart, and that alone, that the world can be reached. The present plan is, therefore, to train up numbers of young men (from the highest classes, not the lowest. For the latter I shall have to wait a little), and the first attack will be made by sending a number of them over a district. When these sappers and miners of religion have cleared the way, there will then be time enough to put in theory and philosophy.[14]

In about a fortnight's time Swamiji again wrote in the following terms:

Just now I am very busy with the famine, and except for training a number of young men for future work, have not been able to put more energy into the teaching work.

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the common life to the common Indian people." See *Ibid.*, pp. 373-74.

12. "Burning renunciation," Margaret Noble wrote later as Nivedita, "was chief of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him." *Ibid.*, p. 370.

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VIII, p. 399.

14. Letter of 20th June, 1897. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 406.

The "feeding work" is absorbing all my energy and means. Although we can work only on a very small scale as yet, the effect is marvellous. For the first time since the days of Buddha, Brahmin boys are found nursing by the bed-side of cholera-stricken pariahs.

In India, lectures and teaching cannot do any good. What we want is Dynamic Religion. And that, "God willing", as the Mohammedans say, I am determined to show.[15]

It can be discerned from these letters that Swamiji's intention was not merely to convey information about the work being done by the Calcutta Centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, but to interest and inspire Margaret too. In demonstrating the practical steps being taken in the name of revived Hinduism, he was teaching that the work must be done, even if "there come tremendous thwarting blows"[16]...even when there are no shelters and the ways are full of difficulties[17]...that the work must be done... "keeping body and soul together anyhow." He was informing the Disciple that "it is through the heart, and that alone, that the world can be reached" and that service has to be rendered to the needy irrespective of caste, colour and creed...that India needed "Dynamic Religion" of the kind that removes great difficulties, and that his disciples must train themselves to this same end.

IV

Margaret Noble learned a lot from Swami's letters, and the more she saw the more she felt she too should play a part. Her appreciation of the Master's work and his total commitment deepened her own resolves. One thing she saw was that the work in education, the task of training young men, the giving of relief in time of famine (euphemistically called by Swamiji "the feeding work"), the nursing and health and sanitation care in the cities, would require a lot of money. She knew that the money the Master had collected lecturing in America and England, even with the generous contributions of his close English and American disciples, was little compared to the magnitude of the work he had set himself to do. Having learned also that Swamiji could not expect much help from India as people had so little to giveup, she took the initiative on her own to invite and collect subscriptions for and on behalf of the Ramakrishna Mission. Miss Noble's appeal in the London newspapers appeared in the following lines:

> A religious order, unique of its kind, grouping together Christians, Mohammedans, and Hindus, has created a phenomenon of charity which is without equal since the days of Buddha. Give generously. Ten thousand human beings have been saved from famine in a month. A handful of rice can snatch a man from death. Our aid is necessary.[18]

In 1897, apart from collecting funds, Margaret Noble was acting as a bridge between the Math Brotherhood in India and the Vedanta Centres in England. In one of her first reports of "Vedanta in the West", which appeared in *The Brahmavadin*, the magazine started by Swamiji's disciples in Madras, she gave a moving account of how Swamiji transformed the lives of many of his English and American followers. Quoting this report at some length enables one to gather from it the great transformation that Margaret Noble herself was undergoing by the Swami's influence:

> To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us had been conscious

15. *Ibid.*, p. 407, Letter of 4th July, 1897.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 399, Letter of 5th May, 1897.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 406, Letter of 20th June, 1897.
18. Quoted in Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985) p. 61.

for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality in our Faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. "The peoples that walked in darkness have seen a great light." So that, if it had done no more, merely by the enlargement of our religious culture, this system of thought would have been of incalculable benefit to us. But it has done much more.

To one, the very conception of a religion which preached universal tolerance—which held that *we proceed from truth to truth, and not from error to truth*—was enough...To another...it was the Swami's "*I am God*" that came as something always known, only never said before...Yet again it was the Unity of Man that was the touch needed to rationalise all the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage, and we know it.[19]

We will refer to two other reports published in *The Brahmavadin* in October and November 1897 which indicate the transformation underway in the Disciple. These reveal her passionate admiration for the work of the Master as well as her longing to extend the influence of the Swami throughout England and America. To quote from the October Report:

> The Ramakrishna Mission is an idea that appeals to us particularly, not only for the honour of the Saint after whom it is named,—and whom many of us in England have learned to love, but also because its aims and methods are congenial to our own. This and the Alambazar Famine Relief are a splendid vindication of the spiritual life from the charge of passivity so often preferred against it by the materialistic West.
>
> In protestant countries we have long lost the tradition of career which shall express to the uttermost the striving after selflessness....This the Brotherhood of the Math has done, and some of us hope to extend the organisation—which is in our eyes cooperation—in the *form of a society ramifying through England and America* (emphasis added), and endeavouring to realise the maxim of our socialist friends—From each according to his means, to all according to their needs.[20]

The November Report expressed similar sentiments and aspirations:

> It may be hoped that eventually the English centres will do their share towards sending out those secular and spiritual educators who shall carry on Hindu work on Hindu lines as some slight acknowledgement of the great benefits conferred on themselves by the awakening missionary zeal of India.[21]

V

Swami Vivekananda showed more and more appreciation of his gifted disciple for the good work she was doing in England. It is found in letter after letter that he wrote in 1897. As early as 5th May he wrote:

Such love and faith and devotion and appreciation like yours, dear Miss Noble, repays a hundred times over any amount of labour one undergoes in this life. May all blessings be yours.[22]

He wrote on 20th June 1897:

Let me tell you plainly. Every word you write I value, and every letter is welcome a hundred times. Write whenever you have a mind and opportunity, and whatever you like, knowing that nothing will be misinterpreted, nothing unappreciated.[23]

He was even more explicit in his appreciation in the letter of 4th July, 1897:

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19. See *The Brahmavadin*, September 15, 1897. Also reproduced in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. II, pp. 389-90.

20. See the reproduction of the report in *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. II, p. 392.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. p. 400.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 405-06.

I have entire faith in your ability and sympathy. I already owe you an immense debt, and you are laying me everyday under infinite obligations. My only consolation is that it is for the good of others. ...I appreciate you every day more and more from a distance.[24] (emphasis added)

Despite his kind words, when Swamiji wrote to Margaret on 23 July that "...you can do more work for us from England than by coming home"[25] she was almost heart-broken. The more she worked for India and the more she tried to mould herself to expectations, the more intense became her desire to come to India. She had already set her heart on it and therefore when the longed for summons did not come she felt very very disappointed indeed.

Determined, however, not to allow disappointments to overtake her, Margaret now wrote to Swamiji the following: "...Tell me frankly and candidly whether I shall be of use in India. I want to go. *I want India to teach me how to fulfil myself.*"[26] (emphasis added)

Before assenting to Margaret's coming, Swami Vivekananda must have been waiting for this time to arrive. Margaret was near the end of a long preparation—almost two years. She now was saying at long last that she wanted to come...not to patronize the poor Indians (as was the attitude of most missionaries of the time), but to learn from India how to fulfil herself. The last bit of missionary egoism that might have been in her was now extinguished and her time was at hand. Thinking of the leap she was about to take to see things with her own eyes, Swamiji candidly wrote on 29th July:

Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for the Indians, women specially.

India cannot yet produce great women,[27] *she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, Celtic blood, made you just the woman wanted.*[28]

Having now responded in a new tone to the Disciple's long cherished desire, Swamiji felt incumbent to advise her to ponder carefully over many difficulties she would have to face in making a new life in a foreign land. He listed them—first, she was likely to encounter the hostility of Indians as well as of Europeans. Whereas the caste-conscious and prejudiced among Indians were likely to give her a wide berth and even dislike her, the Europeans too, in general, were likely to look upon her as a 'crank' and watch her movements with suspicion. Second, the absense of all the European comforts and the blazing hot climate would likely seem a torture to one like herself, not being accustomed to those realities. Then he added, that if in spite of all the difficulties, she was determined to come to India, she was "welcome, a hundred times welcome". Swamiji assured her that he would stand by her in all difficulties, even if she gave up her struggle to be "free" in India. "The tusks of the elephant come out," he said, "but never go back; so are the words of a man never retracted. I promise you that."[29]

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24. *Ibid.*, pp. 407-08.
25. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 510.
26. Quoted in Lizelle Reymond, p. 61.

27. Swamiji considered Srimati Sarala Ghosal, Editor, *Bharati*, to be extremely talented and exhorted her in a letter dated 24th April, 1897 to go to England to preach Vedanta so that money raised in the West thereby could be used to open centres for women in India. "*If someone like you goes, England will be stirred, not to speak of America,*" *wrote Swamiji.* Swamiji's appeal, however, went in vain. *See The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. IV, pp. 481-87.
28. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 511.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 512.

There was, however, some more waiting before Margaret finally could take leave of England. She received two more letters from Swamiji in the meantime. In his letter of 1st October[30] he stressed to Margaret that even though her first attraction for the work for India developed out of her deep devotion to the Guru, she must be absolutely impersonal about him, and in her objectives and work for the country. There must not be any *expectation* of any *return*, either from the Guru or from the people. "Intense love and yet no bondage with it" was one of the central themes of the Vedanta, and Margaret should allow herself to be motivated only to that effect. The letter of 3rd November—the last Margaret would receive in England from Swamiji—carried a message from the Guru which was of utmost comfort. No other could have been more reassuring to one who was about to cross the threshold of a new life—"In case of trouble I will stand by you. You will have the whole of it if I find a piece of bread in India—you may rest assured of that."[31]

VI

Margaret Noble's mind was already made up. It was now further fortified by Swamiji's assurances. The only obligation at home was in her absence to provide support for her family. She was, after all the main earning member in the family consisting of her mother, two sisters and brother, and it was natural that she should feel the necessity to provide somehow for them before giving herself to a completely different kind of life in a distant land. The means ready at her hand was her school in London. This she handed over to her younger sister, May. Having done so she now sought the final permission and blessings of her mother to give up everything. Mother already knew that Margaret was to follow a higher destiny. She remembered her husband's last wish before his death, he expressed that Margaret should be allowed to spread her wings, that she should be allowed to go when God called her. Such was Mary Noble, the mother of Margaret, that after some difficult moments emotionally, she gave her consent to the new life that Margaret was about to begin.

The final departure from England took place on a wet day in January 1898. Margaret was leaving behind an old life and *advancing towards freedom* in a new life of selfless giving to a foreign people. It would be a life of intense renunciation, love for Truth, and fulfilment which knew no bondage.

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 428-29.
31. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 434.

Good thoughts and good works cause less differentiation, therefore they indirectly lead to freedom.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

REVIEWS & NOTICES

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, Vol. I; Published by the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramakrishna Avenue, Patna 800-004; paperbound Souvenir; 86 pages; Rs. 10/- plus 2/- for postage.

Everyone is aware that by complacency—taking for granted the valuable things of life—those things decline, decay and are finally lost to us.

It is so with religious values and spiritual practice. Hence, the need always to carry on publishing, preaching and practising those values we want to keep alive. *Religions of the World, Part I*, is a fresh reminder of the beauty and importance of our religious heritage. In the low-priced, carefully arranged Part I of this very nice *Souvenir*, one gets short and pithy briefs on thirteen aspects of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh religion. "Hindu Rituals", "Ways of the Tantras", a summary of the main tenets of the Six Systems of orthodox Hindu Philosophy, popular ideas and practices of Jainism, the importance of history, unity and love in Sikhism, the histories of the Brahmo Samaj movements, and a look into Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in South India, are some of them.

Among the thirteen chapters are four by learned Swamis of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna. The Ashrama's Secretary, Swami Chandrananda, engaged a labour of love to bring out this first volume.

Strictly speaking, it has no price, but for an offering of Rs. 10/- plus 2/-, one can acquire it from the Patna Ashrama. Volume II will be published next year and include articles on Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, and other great spiritual movements of the people.

Swami Shivaprasadananda

BHARATIYA VIDYA, Vol. XLIX Nos. 1-4—a quarterly research organ of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

This quarterly consists of many scholarly essays on Indian philosophy, history and Sanskrit literature.

NAROTTAM. Publishers: Ramakrishna Mission School, Narottam Nagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India; January 1991.

The third issue of 'Narottam', with its splendid get up, contains a number of interesting short articles and poems by the students that reflect their blossoming thoughts. The Mission School has been doing signal service in the spread of education and developing all-round growth in the young tribal boys in this remote area.

S.M.

KAMAKOTI SHATHAKOTI: By Mudikonda Venkatarama Sastry (in Sanskrit), English translation by SHRI T. RAMALINGESHWARA RAO. Published by Ganga-Tunga Prakashan, 1423/9, 10th Main, Vijayanagar, Bangalore, 560-040, India, First Edition, 1990. Pp. xxxii plus 196. Rs. 25/-

This is a controversial book written in Sanskrit in 1963 by the learned author, Shri M. Venkatarama Sastry, and now translated into English to bring it to the notice of a larger circle of readers. It examines very minutely and critically the several Sanskrit Works published by or referred to as authority by the Kāmakoṭi Kumbhakoṇam (Kānchi) Math to establish the claim of the Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham as a Math founded originally by the Adi Shankaracharya himself, after founding the other four traditionally well known Maths in the four quarters of India at Badrināth, Dwāraka, Purī, and Shringerī, to supervise over them. It is also claimed that he lived the rest of his life at the Kānchi Math itself and passed away there.

The controversy seems to have started when in the *Panchānga* of *Prajotpatti* year (1871) Siddhānti Subramanya Sastry of Bangalore published a *śloka* (Sanskrit verse) purporting that some people are respecting the Maṭhādhipati-s (Heads of Maths) of Kūḍlī, Kumbhakonam, etc. considering them as disciples of the Shringeri *Jagadguru*-s. It is not known if the Shringeri Jagadguru-s made any such claim or it was only a general impression among people, since at that time

the Kāñchi Kāmakoṭi Peeṭham and the Kumbhakoṇam Math were known only among a small circle of people in the South and were hardly known in North India. Very few thought that it was ever established by Adi Shankaracharya and that he passed his last days there. Well known traditional accounts mention only the four Maths started by Adi Shankaracharya and that he finally disappeared at Kedarnāth to go to Kailāsa. A monument has been set up at Kedarnāth to commemorate the event. Even now, mostly, this is the widely held belief, and the unusual name of 'Kāmakoṭi Peeṭham' also does not work in its favour, since all the other four Maths are known as Shankara Maths.

However, after the *Panchānga Śloka* appeared in 1871, the Kumbhakoṇam Math took steps to controvert the statement and, to establish its claims and the supremacy of the Kāmakoṭi Peeṭham, as the author points out, published a book entitled '*Siddhanta Patrika*' in Sanskrit in 1973, and later on a number of other books from 1897 onwards as authority, giving references to a few earlier Works which were not much in vogue before or were not available at all. The author has critically examined these publications and Works of reference and shown them to be mostly concocted and pointed out the purposeful tampering with some of the earlier Works suitable to support the establishment of their claims. He has dealt with some eighteen books, including reference Works, especially Anantānandagiri's '*Shankara Vijaya*', put forth by the Kāmakoṭi Kumbhakoṇam Math, examining over 100 (*shata*) points (*koṭi*-s) in them. Hence the title of the present book, '*Kāmakoṭi Shathakoṭi*'. The *Koṭi*-s are arranged under the following nine categories:

(1) Exposing false statements; (2) Exposing statements which do not carry the weight of authority; (3) Exposing misleading and deceitful statements; (4) Exposing statements made due to hallucination or delusion, confusion or perplexity, and unlearnedness; (5) Exposing concocted statements; (6) Exposing statements of distortion; (7) Exposing statements contradictory to one's own other statements; (8) Exposing statements contradictory to statements in their other books of authority; (9) Exposing amazing statements.

The arguments marshalled are formidable and numerous, and the merits or demerits of these scholarly refutations may be judged by the intelligent people for themselves. No doubt, the appreciative attention of a wider circle of people, both in the South and the North, has been drawn to the Kāñchi Math by the saintly life of the old and venerable Paramacharya, the present Head of the Kāñchi Kāmakoṭi Peeṭham, who visited Varanasi in 1935 and was received with honour. Still, in view of these powerful criticisms, the Kāñchi Kāmakoṭi Peeṭham should establish its claims by other reliable means rather than taking recourse to controversial Works, which were hardly known to tradition from earlier times before the Kumbhakoṇam Math projected them recently. For instance, to establish that the Kāñchi Peeṭham existed from the time of Adi Shankaracharya, independent evidences may be produced such as from early epigraphy; ancient Governmental communications as to endowments etc.; well known donations and gifts from the public; the dealings of the Kāñchi Math with the other four Maths in its supervisory capacity; outstanding Works written by the Heads or monks of the Kāñchi Math in early times which have been well known to all; etc. It may also be pertinently questioned as to why the Adi Shankara has not mentioned in the *Maṭhāmnāya*-s made by him for the other four Maths that they should follow the guidance of the Kāñchi Math. Is there any reliable evidence for the existence of the Anantanandagiri's '*Shankara Vijaya*', which differs on important points as to the parentage, place of birth, life span etc. of Adi Shankara from the generally accepted *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* and other long-standing traditions, and what is the date of its earliest extant manuscript?

We hope the effort to substantiate through controversial publications will be put to an end and the subject will be approached from the perspective of reliable historical evidence, since it is an important historical issue. It may also be noted that the greatness of a Math does not solely or even mainly rest on

whether Adi Shankara established it or a later Shankaracharya in comparatively recent times, but on how it has been conducting itself for the welfare of humanity and what it does for the propagation of the noble life and philosophy of the Great Shankara, who was *Loka-Shankara* (one engaged in the good of the whole world).

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PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. AN APPROACH TO WORLD RELIGIONS, By A. R. MAHAPATRA. (Second Revised and Enlarged Edition) New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., (1990) 210 pages plus xiv ; Rs. 150/-.

There is a close relationship between philosophy and religion. The aim of philosophy is to interpret the world in terms of a rational systematisation of facts and values. Religion aims at the principle of unification and harmonisation through faith in the ultimate unity of man with God. But in the ancient world, there was no difference between philosophy and religion. A. R. Mahapatra, attempts in his book to elucidate the inter-relationship between philosophy and religion, and states that this can be observed in a particular branch of philosophy known as the Philosophy of Religion. The book is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the philosophical problems of religion, while Part II describes the ten important religions of the world.

In part I, A. R. Mahapatra gives a comprehensive analysis of the historical development of religion, and the philosophical problems associated with it. He discusses only the oriental aspect of religion, claiming that most of the great religions of the world such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam had their origin in the East. In this section, he takes analogies from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism to trace the relationship between religion and morality. He deals with the use of symbols and myths in religion, the immortality of the soul, the problem of bondage and freedom, the problem of evil, and the doctrine of Karma. Since the task of a philosophy of religion is to explain to the intellectual and rational aspect of man the fundamental truths of existence, Sri Mahapatra concludes most of these discussions with a critical analysis of the central premises of each doctrine. His approach is thus free from dogmatism and emotionalism.

However, in the chapter on "The Religious Experience," the author could have emphasised that the philosophy of religion must be based on religious experience. While philosophy is needed to discipline religion, religious knowledge comes through religious experience. Philosophy is theoretical, but religion is practical. A harmonious fusion of the two is needed to avoid excessive intellectuality on one side, and excessive credulity on the other.

In Part II, Mahapatra traces the origin and development of the important religions of the world. There is a comprehensive, but concise analysis of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, and Taoism and Shintoism. The book is an able attempt to lay down the universal truths that bind all religions. If the fundamental truth of love, peace, unity, self-control and compassion is universaliy realised, then it can be the discipline on which can be laid the foundation of a new and spiritually enlightened world order. It is, as the author mentions in his preface, an introductory text in the philosophy of religion, for university students, scholars and general readers.

However, though the style is simple, it can be improved upon. The frequent typographical and grammatical errors (which can jar a sensitive reader) could have been avoided had a meticulous attention for detail been present in this "carefully revised and enlarged edition..." (p. ix). Besides, the organic link between Part I and Part II of the book remains nebulous. The well-prepared Glossary of Sanskrit terms, Bibliography and Index will, however, help to make the book useful to the discerning reader.

Dr. Rama Nair
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PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

...As he spoke Sri Ramakrishna manifested great spiritual fervour. He was in an ecstatic mood, talking to the Divine Mother.

A little later he said, "I am very happy to see these pictures of gods and goddesses. (*in Nanda's house*) He added: "It is not good to keep pictures of the terrible aspects of the Divine Mother. If one does, one should worship them."

PASUPATI (*smiling*): "Well, things will go on as long as She keeps them going."

MASTER: "That is true. But one should think of God. It is not good to forget Him."

NANDA: "But how little we think of God!"

MASTER: "One thinks of God through His grace."

NANDA: "But how can we obtain God's grace? Has He really the power to bestow grace?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "I see. You think as the intellectuals do: one reaps the results of one's actions. Give up these ideas. The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with flowers in my hand: 'Here, Mother, take Thy sin; here, take Thy virtue. I don't want either of these; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy good; here, take Thy bad. I don't want any of Thy good or bad; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma; here, take Thy adharma. I don't want any of Thy dharma or adharma; give me only real bhakti...."

NANDA: "Can God violate law?"

MASTER: "What do you mean? He is the Lord of all. He can do everything. He who has made the law can also change it...."

NANDA: "Why has He assumed all these different forms? Why are some wise and some ignorant?"

MASTER: "It is His will."

ATUL: "Kedar Babu puts it nicely. Once a man asked him, 'Why has God created the world?' He replied, 'I was not present at the conference where God made the plans of His creation.'"

MASTER: "Oh! It is His sweet will."

So saying, the Master sang:

O Mother, all is done after Thine own sweet will;
Thou art in truth self-willed, Redeemer of mankind!
Thou workest Thine own work; men only call it theirs.
Thou it is that holdest the elephant in the mire;
Thou, that helpest the lame man scale the loftiest hill.
On some Thou dost bestow the bliss of Brahmanhood;
Yet others Thou dost hurl into this world below.
Thou art the Moving Force, and I the mere machine;
The house am I, and Thou the Spirit dwelling there;
I am the chariot, and Thou the Charioteer;
I move along as Thou, O Mother, movest me.

He continued: "The Divine Mother is full of bliss. Creation, preservation, and destruction are the waves of Her sportive pleasure. Innumerable are the living beings. Only one or two among them obtain liberation. And that makes Her happy...."

NANDA: "It may be Her sweet will; but it is death to us."

MASTER: "But who are you? It is the Divine Mother who has become all this. It is only as long as you do not know Her that you say, 'I', 'I'.

"All will surely realize God. All will be liberated. It may be that some get ther meal in the morning, some at noon, and some in the evening; but none will go without food. All, without any exception, will certainly know their real Self."

from The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna