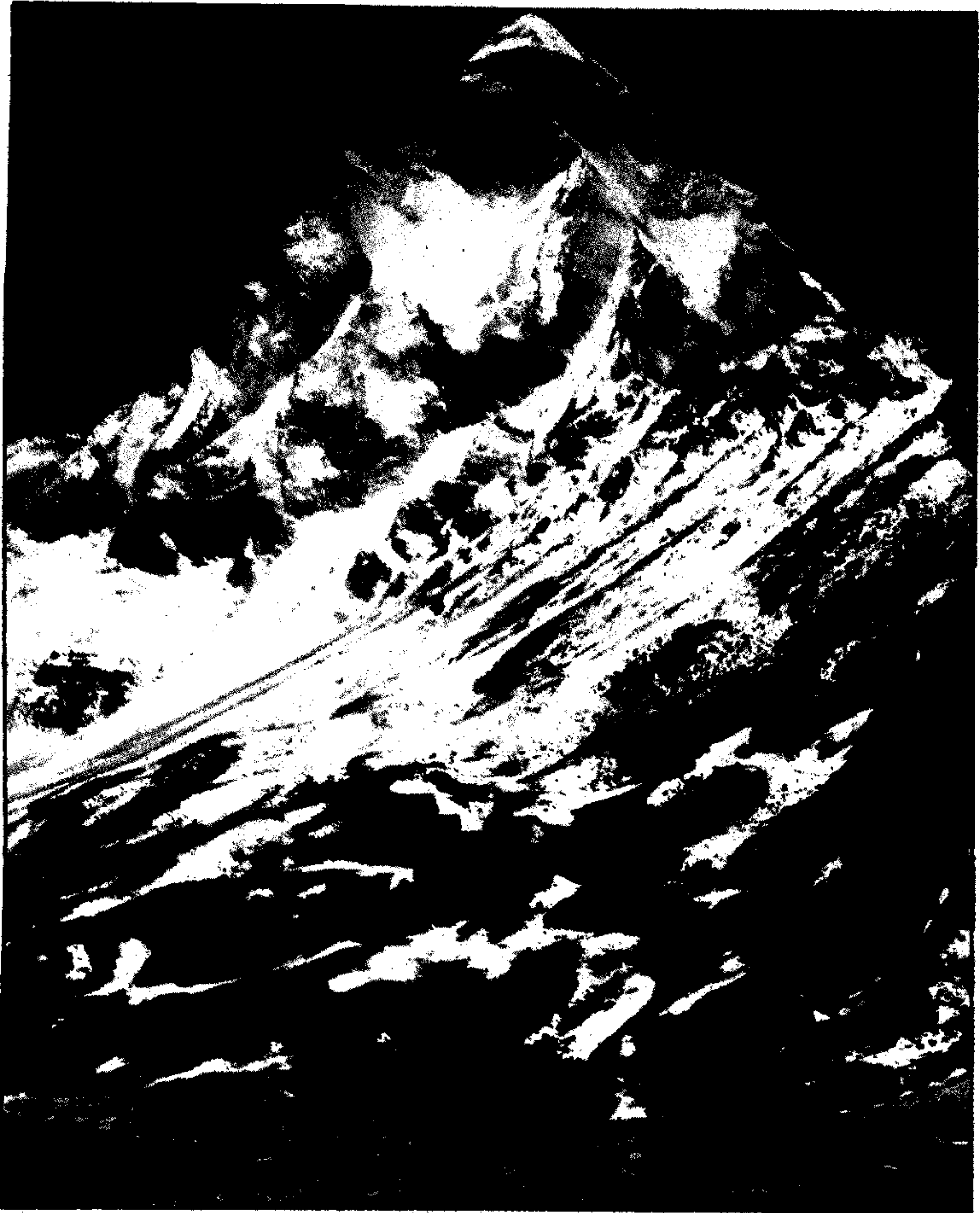


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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Himalayas

Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

FEBRUARY 1991

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

Prabuddha Bharata

Or Awakened India

VOL. 96

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No. 2

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: "Sir, why are there so many different opinions about the nature of God? Some say that God has form, while others say that He is formless. Again, those who speak of God with form tell us about His different forms. Why all this controversy?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "A devotee thinks of God as he sees Him. In reality there is no confusion about God. God explains all this to the devotee if the devotee only realizes Him somehow. You haven't set your foot in that direction. How can you expect to know all about God? Kabir used to say: 'God with form is my Mother, the Formless is my Father. Which shall I blame? Which shall I praise? The two pans of the scales are equally heavy.'

"Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Śāktas, Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavaś...all seek the same object. A mother prepares dishes to suit the stomachs of her children. Suppose a mother has five children and a fish is brought for the family. She doesn't cook *pilau* for all of them. All have not the same power of digestion; so she prepares a simple stew for some. But she loves all her children equally..

"I had to practise each religion for a time—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. Furthermore, I followed the paths of the Śāktas, Vaiṣṇavaś and Vedantists. I realized that there is only one God toward whom all are travelling; but the paths are different.

"When you mix with people outside your *Samāj* (society), love them all. When in their company be one of them. Don't harbour malice toward them. Don't turn up your nose in hatred and say: 'Oh, this man is a Christian. This man is a Hindu. And this man is a Mussalman.' It is God alone who makes people see things in different ways. Realize this and mix with them as much as you can. And love all. But enter your own inner chamber to enjoy peace and bliss."

BRAHMO DEVOTEE: "What are the means by which one can see God?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: "Can you weep for Him with intense longing of heart? Men shed a jugful of tears for the sake of their children, for their wives, or for money. But who weeps for God? So long as the child remains engrossed with its toys, the mother looks after her cooking and other household duties. But when the child no longer relishes the toys, it throws them aside and yells for its mother...."

from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*,

Siva—The Supreme

On 21st February in 1887, the holy night of Śivarātri was, for the first time, celebrated at the Baranagore Math by the young unknown monks who were living in utter poverty. They fasted the whole day and spent their time in meditation and worship. The worship took place under the Bilva tree in the precincts of the monastery. Smearing their bodies with holy ashes, they sat under the tree. Their radiant countenances, purified by the fire of religious austerities, made it appear as if Śiva Himself had been manifested in them. The fourth watch of the worship ended when the eastern sky was just aglow with the first touch of crimson.

The Śivarātri festival—the auspicious Night of Śiva, precedes by three days the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. The birthday of the Great Master, on 22nd February in 1898, held at the Math, then at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house, was celebrated in an extraordinary way. Swami Vivekananda himself supervised everything. On that auspicious day more than fifty devotees came specially prepared to receive the *Gāyatrī Mantra* and the sacred thread, attaining the status of Brāhmanas, as desired by Swamiji. After the joyous worship, with overflowing devotion, the sannyāsis, seized by a powerful impulse, dressed and adorned Swamiji to look like Śiva. They hung shell ear-rings from his ears, covered his body with snow-white ashes, placed on his head a mass of Śiva's matted locks that reached to his knees, put bracelets on his arms, and round his neck hung a long rosary of *Rudrakṣā* beads in three rows. In his left hand they placed Śiva's symbolic trident.¹ The celestial beauty of Swamiji arrayed as Mahādeva, Lord of the gods, was indescrib-

able. All felt the electrifying and supernal presence of the youthful ascetic Śiva. The vibrant atmosphere of the Math resembled that of Mount Kailās—the Himalayan Abode of the Lord of Yogis.

From that period onward, a holy tradition has come down. On Śivarātri at Belur Math each year, Brahmachārins arrayed as Śiva and the *Bhairavas*, His attendants, dance through the four quarters of the night all round the place of worship. It is a heavenly sight. On that silent star-studded dark night in the cool of Indian winter, the air resonates with the thundering sounds of Śiva's names:

“*Hara, Hara, Śiva, Śiva, Vyom, Vyom!*”

Hindus in large numbers, especially on the festival of Śivarātri, without distinction of caste or creed, visit the twelve famous shrines of Śiva scattered over the country. The symbols of the Lord are called *Jyotirlingas* (lit. images of light). They are self-born, sprung from the earth. These luminous symbols manifest the divine light of Lord Śiva. Round these holy shrines have grown innumerable legends and traditions with the passing of ages. The *Purānas* eloquently describe the greatness of each place and tell the fascinating stories of saints and sages who won the grace of the Lord by their *tapasyā* and *svātmārpaṇa*, austerities and self-surrender. So gracious and compassionate is Śiva that He cannot resist a fervent prayer issuing from a yearning heart. He is the King of Ascetics and the embodiment of renunciation. Therefore, the temples, dedicated to Him breathe an ardour and simplicity which is devoid of all pomp or show. His worship is simple and it can be performed at all times and by anyone, even by an innocent child. There are *Purānic* stories which tell that the Lord appeared and blessed children who prayed to Him with sincerity. The scriptures address and describe Śiva as *Āśutoṣi*, the One who is easily pleased. A devout Hindu never fails to experience the

1. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) Part II, p. 315.

sublime presence of Śaṅkar, particularly in the twelve famous temples. *Somanātha* of Saurashtra, *Mallikārjuna* of Sri Saila, *Mahākāla* of Ujjain, *Amaleśwar* of Omkar, *Vaidyanātha* of Purali, *Bhīmsaṅkar* of Dakini, *Rāmeśwar* at Setu, *Nagesa* of Darukavan, *Viśveśa* of Varanasi, *Tryambakeśwar* of Nasik, *Kedāreśwara* of the Himalayas, and *Ghusmeśa* of Sivalaya are the twelve self-born *Jyotir-lingas* which command the homage of millions of pilgrims.

The earliest conception of Śiva in the *Vedas* was that of *Rudra*. The *Vedas* unreservedly sang the glory and greatness of Rudra, possessing qualities both benevolent and fierce. It was the greatness of the ancient Hindu mind that was able to recognize the Divine manifested in the totality of nature, in both the benign and the terrific. Some of the great saints and devotees dared actually to worship God in the Terrible, in birth and death, in creation and in destruction. This was the alternative they saw to fear of evil and death. One finds therefore, in Śiva, a series of unified polarities.

The various *Purāṇic* epithets for the Great God denote either his incomprehensible nature or divine deeds. The epithets *Bhairava* (the Terrible), *Mahākāla* (Mighty world-destroying Time), *Kālarudra* (Destroyer), *Tripurhara* (Destroyer of Tripura), *Pinaka-pāṇi* (Holder of the mighty bow, *Pināka*), *Triśūldhar* (Trident-weilding God), and *Kapālin* (Skull-bearer) all represent Śiva's fearsome aspects; and *Śiva*, *Śaṅkara*, *Śambhu* are auspicious names that signify Śiva's benevolent nature. All these apparently opposing or complementary aspects have been rolled into a single divine personality—that of Mahādeva, the Great God. The derivation of the name Rudra comes from रुद्र दावयति i.e. *that which drives away anguish and its cause*. The *Kurma Purāna* praises Him thus:

*The entire universe is created by You!
The entire universe rests in You! And
the entire universe beginning with You is
withdrawn into You, O Pervader of the
Universe!*

The great God, Mahādeva, possesses a multi-faceted personality, the various characteristics of which interrelate in different ways in the different *Vedic* and *Purāṇic* stories. One characteristic, however, that stands out prominently is that of Śiva's being the Supreme Divine Yogin. He is a consummate celibate or Brahmacāri, living in cremation grounds and surrounded by hosts of *gaṇas*, *bhūtas* and *pramāthas* (demons, ghosts and spirits). The conflicting attributes ascribed to Śiva are really complementary. The recurring motif in iconographic representations of Śiva depict Him as *Hari-Hara* and *Ardha-nārīśwar* or *Ardha-nārī-nara*. *Hari-Hara* is half-*Viṣṇu*-half-*Śiva* and represents the identity of the two powerful Hindu gods, and at the same breath conveys the significance of the monistic view. The image conveys the idea of God transcending the concept of pluralism and indicates that there is only one basic divine Principle at the substratum which is the ground of the universe and reality. Reality is one; whether one calls it Śiva or *Viṣṇu*, it is the same. The *Rudra-Hṛdayopaniṣad* categorically states:

*Those who salute Govinda, they salute
Śaṅkar too; Those who worship Hari
with devotion, they also worship Śiva;
Those who hate Śiva, hate Viṣṇu; those
who are ignorant of Rudra are also
ignorant of Keśava.²*

2. *Rudrahṛdayopaniṣad*, (5.6.7).

ये नमस्यन्ति गोविन्दं ते नमस्यन्ति शङ्करम् ।
येऽर्चयन्ति हरिं भक्त्या तेऽर्चयन्ति वृषध्वजम् । ये
द्विषन्ति विरूपाक्षं ते द्विषन्ति जनार्दनम् । ये रुद्रं
नाभिजानन्ति ते न जानन्ति केशवम् ।

Ardha-nārīśwar is half-Śiva and half-Pārvatī, or half-male and half-female. The impersonal Principle of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* of the *Śaṅkhya* System becomes personalized as Śiva and Pārvatī for a devotee. It must be remembered that the *Purāṇas* were the efforts of Hinduism to bring lofty ideas to the doors of the masses through the popular vehicle of stories. The underlying divinity in all beings is neither male nor female—the Ātman, is sexless. For all the multiplicity in the manifest universe has a single unitary origin and that matrix is beyond male and female conceptions. As Pārvatī, or Umā, She is the Great Mother—the Womb of the universe. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* says that Umā is the Mother of the World and She is the Supreme Māyā. As Śakti, She is the Creative Energy of the universe, without which even Mahādeva is powerless to act. It is said in the *Śiva Purāṇa*, “Without Śiva there is no Śakti; and without Śakti there is no Śiva.”³ Śiva is Noumenon—Pure Consciousness, and Umā is Phenomena—Consciousness in Action. Both are the inseparable and interdependent aspects of the Absolute. One without the other is inconceivable. “Everywhere, I saw the communion of Śiva and Śakti. Śiva and Śakti existing in all living things—men, animals, trees, plants. I saw them in the communion of all male and female elements,” said Sri Ramakrishna.⁴ The *Upaniṣad* brings home this point when it states:

“Umā and Rudra are the indwelling spirit of all beings and objects, animate and inanimate. The manifest universe is the form of Umā and the Unmanifest is Maheśwar. Rudra is male and Umā is female; Rudra is Brahmā and Umā is

*Saraswati; Rudra is the Sun and Umā is the Shadow; Rudra is the Moon and Umā is the Star; Rudra is Day and Umā is Night.”*⁵

Each time, the universe is annihilated or withdrawn into God (*Mahākāla*), and once again projected by Śiva as new and fresh creation. The death of the old gives birth to the new. In denial lies renewal. To sacrifice is to receive; renunciation of the lower lifts one to the higher. When the strong idea of physical body is sacrificed from its ashes is created rich mental life. When the mind and its vagaries are sacrificed, from that ruin springs spiritual insight, leading one to the Unlimited—that is Śiva. The *Jabāldarśanopaniṣad* puts it succinctly: “Ignorant people try to see Śiva in physical forms. But wise ones, ignoring images, realize Him as their own inner Self.”⁶ Trilocana (The Three-eyed One), by the glance of his eye burns all carnal desires of a devotee who meditates on Him. Another of His names is *Kāmaghna*, or *Smarahara*—the Slayer of *Kāma* (desire and passion). He reduces to ashes all ties and attachments of one who repeats His holy Name and leads one to bliss ineffable. The poet, Pushpadanta, therefore says: “There is no sacred word better than the name of Aghora (Śiva).”⁷ Śiva’s famous feats described in Indian mythology have

5. *Rudrahṛdayopaniṣad*, (9.17.18.19.20.).

उमा रुद्रात्मिकाः सर्वाः प्रजाः स्थावर जङ्गमाः ।
व्यक्तं सर्वमुमारूपमव्यक्तं तु महेश्वरम् । रुद्रो नर
उमा नारी, रुद्रो ब्रह्मा उमा वाणी, रुद्र सूर्य उमा
छाया, रुद्रः सोम उमा तारा, रुद्रो दिवा उमा रात्रि-
स्तस्मै तस्यै नमो नमः ।

6. *Jabāladarsanopaniṣad*, (57-58).

शिवं पश्यति मूढात्मा शिवे देहे प्रतिष्ठिते ।

शिवमात्मनि पश्यन्ति प्रतिमासु न योगिनः ॥

7. *Sivamahimna Stotram*, 35.

अधोरात् नापरो मन्त्रः ।

3. *Śiva Purāṇa*,

न शिवेन विना शक्तिः न शक्त्याच विना शिवः ।

4. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 376.

deep metaphysical significance. They are impregnated with profound spiritual insight. All the thousand names of Śiva are the attempts made by a Hindu mind to describe the Indescribable, measure the Immeasurable. The Seers, though knowing their attempts were futile to define the Timeless, yet derived greatest joy in glorifying and singing in myriads of notes the greatness of the Supreme Spirit. The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* provides an irrefutable proof. Sri Ramakrishna indefatigably talked about God and God alone.

Kaivalya Upaniṣad sums up beautifully the infinite nature of God:

*"Him who is without beginning, middle or end, Who is formless, wonderful, Who has Umā as His companion, the Highest Lord, the Ruler, Who is Three-Eyed, Who has a dark throat, Who is tranquil; by meditating on Him the sage reaches the Source of beings, the Witness of all, Who is beyond darkness."*⁸

There is an interesting story in the *Kurma Purāna*, in which it is said that Brahmā and Viṣṇu once tried in vain to measure the crest and bottom of Śiva-linga. In a number of temples, over the top of the sculpture of Śiva-linga a swan is shown in flight, and at the foot, a boar burrowing. Long ago when everything animate and inanimate was lost in the undifferentiated ocean of the Void, Śiva Himself appeared in order to awaken Brahmā and Viṣṇu. Resplendent Viṣṇu saw at a distance a god of boundless light, the four-faced Brahma. In the twinkling of an eye, Brahmā approached Viṣṇu and spoke:

8. *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, Verse 7.

तमादिमध्यान्तविहीनमेकं विभुं चिदानन्दमरूप-
मद्भुतम् । उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं त्रिलोचनं नील-
कण्ठं प्रशान्तम् । ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं
समस्तसार्क्षि तमसः परस्तात् ।

"Who are you? Why are you here? Please tell me, for I am the Creator of the worlds, the Self-existent, the Great-grandfather." Thus addressed by Brahmā, Viṣṇu replied, "It is I who am Creator and Destroyer of these worlds time and time again."

While the dispute was going on like this, there appeared a matchless pillar of fire, wreathed with garlands of flame. Both ends of the column were invisible. Brahmā said to Viṣṇu, "Go quickly downwards; I will go upwards. Let us discover the limits of this." So saying, Brahmā assumed the form of a swan to find out the crest of the pillar, but failed. Viṣṇu took the form of a boar to search the bottom, but could not locate it. Amazed and frightened, they propitiated the Great Lord Mahādeva. Then Lord Śiva stood before them with bow in hand, carrying a trident, wearing a tiger skin garment, His sacred thread, a snake, making a sound like the rumbling of clouds. Then Śaṅkara said: "Ages ago the two of you eternal ones were produced from my limbs. Brahmā stands on my right side, and Viṣṇu dwells on my left. Hara is born in my heart." Then the Great God embraced both of them.

Another *Purānic* story tells how Viṣṇu got his discus called *Sudarśana*. Hari would daily worship Mahādeva with a thousand lotuses. Finding one lotus missing, Viṣṇu without hesitation plucked out one of his own eyes and offered that in place of the missing lotus with the other flowers. Extremely pleased with such deep devotion Śiva gave him *Sudarśana*, the Celestial discus with which Hari protects the three worlds.

Śiva is timeless, the Eternal Witness of everything. As Ātman, the Knower, He resides in all beings. Who can name the Nameless? delineate the Ineffable? Well has it been said by Pushpadanta in *Śiva-Mahimna-Stotra*:

"O Lord, if the blue mountain be ink, the ocean the ink-pot, the branch of the heavenly tree be pen, the earth the writing

leaf, and by taking these if the Goddess of Learning writes for eternity, even then the limit of Thy virtues will not be reached.”⁹

9. *Sivamahimna Stotram*, 32.

असितगिरिसमं स्यात् कज्जलं सिन्धु पात्रं
सुरतस्वरशाखा लेखनी पत्रमुर्वी ।
लिखति यदि गृहित्वा सारदा सर्वकालं
तदपि तव गुणानामीशं पारं न याति ॥

Sri Ramakrishna went to Varanasi with Mathur Babu. When the boat was approaching the Manikarnika Ghat, suddenly he had a vision of Śiva and went into samadhi. At first he saw Mahādeva standing at a distance; then he saw the Lord of Kasi approaching him. At last Śiva merged in Sri Ramakrishna.¹⁰

10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 803.

In Argentina And Brazil

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

This travelogue describes how in far off lands from India, the divine message of Sri Ramakrishna is reaching, drawing and giving solace to innumerable spiritual seekers. Swami Bhavyananda is the spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in London.

Invited by Swami Pareshananda, the monk-in-charge of the Centre in Buenos Aires, I went to spend three weeks in Argentina and Brazil, from 4th to 25th August, 1990. The journey is too long and tiresome, even though one is flying. It takes time to come out of the jet lag. It takes fourteen hours to fly in there. The country is in the Southern Hemisphere and it is winter there now. It is located on the opposite side of the globe from India. Argentina is a very vast country, about the same size of India, but with a population of only thirty million. Spain colonized this country for nearly five hundred years. Their greed for gold decimated the local Indian population. The few that survived are completely integrated with the rest of the society. Hence, no racial conflicts,

Unfortunately, they have had unstable governments and the country's economy suffered. They owe the rest of the world billions of dollars. They are not in a position to pay even the interest on it. They have a runaway inflation, which is calculated from day to day rather than from year to year. They count their money in dollars rather than astreals. The present rate of exchange is about six thousand astreals to the dollar. People would prefer to keep their money in dollars in a safe deposit vault than in a bank account. A day's shopping for food may cost as much as a quarter of a million astreals. The next day, the same may cost three hundred thousand. An average person is not very sure how much he has to pay for the next day's food. People from different countries of Europe have gone to settle there. Most of them send their

savings back to their country of origin illegally, in dollars. We are told in the country there are Germans, Italians, Spaniards, English, but no Argentinians.

Our Centre, which has been there for nearly fifty years, has the support of the people. Swami Vijayananda, who founded it, was a strong dynamic person. He had a fairly large following and laid strong foundations. The Ashrama is located about thirty kilometres outside the centre of the city in Greater Buenos Aires. The Centre has published a large number of books in the Spanish language, which reach far and wide. It is strange to note that the three brahmacharis there are not from Argentina. When I was there I met the devotees every evening after tea. They came from all over Argentina and Uruguay. Most of them are disciples of Swami Vijayananda and Swami Paratparananda. The people are very devotional and full of searching questions on Mother and Oriental thought. Quite a few of them stayed in the Ashrama guest house and they were very regular in their spiritual practices. Such devotees are a great help and support to the new Swami, who has been there hardly a year and a half. The Swami is young and dynamic. He is learning the language very well. I have no doubt he will be a good leader. I had a very happy and fruitful stay for ten days with the monastic members and devotees.

The next ten days I spent in Brazil, also, is a very big country, nearly two and a half times the size of India, with a population of 130 million. The south of the country is thickly populated and all development works and industries are located there. The northern parts are very thinly populated, some areas constitute the Amazonian tropical forests. Sao Paulo is the biggest industrial city. It is very crowded and full of slums. The population is very homogeneous. The people are very open and hospitable, warm and welcoming. Their economy, which was

not very stable, I understand, is becoming more and more stable. The Ashrama is located in the suburbs, which are becoming very congested now. Two disciples of Swami Vijayananda have dedicated themselves to build up the Centre. They have put all their earnings to keep the Centre going. The Swami from Argentina spends about two months every year with them.

The Ashrama is very well organized. They have accommodation for the visiting devotees, daily worship, evening services and Sunday lectures. There are about two hundred initiated devotees, who are a great support. A large number congregated daily, both morning and evening, when I was there. After evening prayer, we spent some time in discussing spiritual questions. I spent also a couple of days in Curitiba, where another dedicated disciple has built a beautiful Ashrama outside the city.

Though there are only a small number of devotees, they gather every week and keep the Centre going well. For other devotees living far and near, this is a focal point. The Ashrama is located on the bank of a small stream with about fifteen acres of ground. The building itself is new and spacious. The friend runs a small incense stick factory to earn his livelihood and keep the Centre going. The Ashrama and its surroundings are very attractive with vegetable and fruit gardens. Here, also, there is plenty of accommodation for devotees to come and stay. When I was there the devotees crowded the place. Most of my time was spent in their company answering their questions. The devotion and love of the people there was very touching. After spending about ten days in their company, I came back to England with a sense of fruitfulness of my visit. When I was in Sao Paulo several devotees from Rio de Janeiro and other places spent some time with me.

I hope some day they will get a permanent Swami in Brazil. The ground is ready for

such a move on the part of our Headquarters. Argentina and Brazil together are more than two times the size of India, with two totally different languages, and there is need for an independent Swami in Brazil.

It is interesting to witness how Sri Rama-

krishna is reaching the farthest corners of the world. When his photograph was taken and shown to him, he said that this holy picture would be worshipped all over the world. His words have come true and it is a privilege to witness it.

Sri Ramakrishna's Relevance For An Emerging World-View

(Continued from the previous issue)

S. SRINIVASACHAR

Prof. S. Srinivasachar in this second part of his learned paper elucidates on how the mystics of all religions have had similar ineffable experiences of God-consciousness, which enable one to transcend the accepted limitations of time, country and culture. In the forthcoming concluding part, he will discuss how Sri Ramakrishna's extraordinary life and teachings provide answers to all intellectual and theological problems.

Scientific Methods and Mystic Experience.

The analysis that appeared in the previous issue may not be a complete statement of all matters that come within the purview of the great mystics ; but they can be of importance in formulating a more sensible world view. The procedure followed in this brief presentation is not to take recourse to logical niceties to argue for or against the validity of mystic experience in terms of traditional methods, but to present the recorded experiences of these Seers as a valid subject for deeper enquiry. The question whether the methodology of conventional science, in which data are gathered by observation and measurement, would be useful or not, has been answered thus, by Fritjof Capra, an eminent physicist of our days:

I emphasized that the quantification of all statements has traditionally been seen as a crucial criterion of the scientific approach, and I agreed with Laing that such a science is inadequate for understanding the nature of consciousness and will not be able to deal with any qualities or values. A true science of consciousness would have to be a new type of science dealing with qualities rather than quantities and being based on shared experience rather than verifiable measurements. The data of such a science would be patterns of experience that cannot be quantified or analyzed. On the other hand, the conceptual models interconnecting the data would have to be logically consistent, like all scientific models, and might even include quantitative elements. Such a new science would quantify its statements whenever this method is appropriate, but would also be able to deal with qualities and values based on human experience.¹

1. Fritjof Capra, *Uncommon Wisdom* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1989) pp. 143-46.

Mystic experience has been described as of two kinds, namely: (1) UNION, where the experiencer and the experienced are brought into the closest possible relationship, but where the subject-object duality is maintained, and (2) UNITY or IDENTITY, where the experiencer gets merged in the experienced, losing his individuality or ego, like the raindrop losing its identity in the ocean. We began by calling attention to the common heritage of mankind in the field of religion and Sri Ramakrishna's realization by personal experience that truths are common to all the great religions.

If a mystic's experience is supra-sensory, it is also supra-theology. All theologies can be described as doctrinaire and organized or formalized religious behaviour. Their emphasis is generally on conformity based on faith in certain doctrines as expounded later by recognized theologians. Since mystics everywhere have played powerful influence on the religious impulses of people, theologians have often had to 'confront' mystics with arguments which arise from facts of common experience as well as logic. This has naturally nourished controversies, often culminating in violent passions. What was true therefore of Plotinus, Porphyry or Johannes Eckhart in the history of Christianity and of the great Sufis like al-Arabi, Ibu Sina and Rumi, to mention a few, is also true of the Indian Vedantin mystics—that they have had to contend with semantics concerning the nature of God and His relation with the material world and the individual human soul. In all theologies, particularly in the theistic religions of Judaic tradition, this relationship, as described in their scriptures and commented upon by later theologians is established as something beyond question. It would therefore be of interest to see where the insight of a mystic can find common ground with established theologies. Sri Ramakrishna's view was that basically all religions speak the same truth,

and mystic experience of God can be both Advaitic (meaning undifferentiated unity) as well as non-advaitic (in which the ripe ego retains its transformed individuality in the experience of God).

Experiences of Undifferentiated Unity.

Within the monistic system of Vedanta itself this concept of undifferentiated union has been challenged by the theisms of Ramanuja and Madhva; Ramanuja maintaining the concept of *Sāyujya* (closest imaginable proximity to a loving God) and Madhva maintaining eternal duality between the Soul and God. Of immediate relevance to our discussion is the division between two perceptions—the one advocated by the Judaic tradition, namely that this cosmos is a 'created entity' by God and very different from God, and the other which is *Upaniṣadic*, that the objective world is an emanation or projection—something which has proceeded and evolved from the primal universal Substance as the world of plurality, of which both space and time are a part. This is the view with which all the exponents of Vedantic philosophy—theists, monotheists and pure monists—agree. Sri Ramakrishna's mystic experience is of this *pan-theistic* (*Advaita-vada*) tradition. The premise for this perception is contained in many *Upanisads*, particularly the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, describing the creative impulse of the Supreme Being:

He (the Supreme Self) wished: Let me be many, let me be born. He undertook a deliberation. Having deliberated, he created all this that exists. Having created (that), he entered into that very thing. And having entered there, It became the formed and the formless, the defined and the undefined, the sustaining and the sustained, the sentient and the non-sentient, the true and the untrue. Truth became

*all that there is. They call that Brahman, Truth.*²

So, while the Vedantist considers the objective world as an emanation from God, the Semitic faiths consider it as His creation or handiwork. For these theologies the distance between man and God is real, pre-ordained, permanent and unbridgeable. At the same time, the world is real, life is real and God is personal. Indian theists like Ramanuja and Madhva also concede reality to the world, but make it subordinate to the reality and will of Brahman. To Sri Ramakrishna, arguments based on pure logic for or against this was really not relevant so long as one sought the experience of God, as one argument can always be countered by another cleverer argument. The reality of God-experience transcended both logic and time. Dualism and non-dualism are to him (the mystic) only different states of God-consciousness, and either way it made no difference to the quality of his spiritual experience. The path of love and devotion, he says, is the most suitable for such an experience.

There is one interesting point in the theistic conception which has not escaped the notice of commentators: God as a 'person' can be easily approached by human beings. Besides the Hindus, however, most religions do not accept a human being as capable of identity with God or the idea that God can become incarnated in human form (with the unique exception of Jesus Christ to the Christians). Notably, Islam and Judaism do not cherish such conceptions. If the concept of undifferentiated identity is not acceptable and the concept of union is taken as feasible in mystic consciousness, then the question arises: how different is this 'union' from 'identity'? Can it be compared to two rivers which unite in a con-

fluence? Plotinus (250-270 A.D.), one of the great writers of Europe who influenced Christian thought and the Renaissance in the middle ages, declares in unequivocal terms that the 'Seer' and 'Seen' are one, and, like the Hindu mystics, postulates no division whatever between the ONE and the soul of the mystic. To him God...

Is not an ultimate void or nothingness, attaining to which the human personality disintegrates into unconscious nothingness. It is a positive reality of infinite richness and super-abundant excellence. ...By a rigorous moral and intellectual self-discipline we awake from the alienation of our lower state and rediscover our true selves. ...When the ONE manifests to us His continual presence we rise to the mystical union. ...There is no consciousness of duality in that union. We are not aware of ourselves.

Plotinus is said to have enjoyed this ineffable bliss of mystic union four times when Porphyry (233 to circa 304 A.D.), another mystic, was with him.³ It is interesting that Ruysbroeck, another well-known Christian mystic of the fourteenth century, compares the experience of mystic union to that of heat in red-hot iron, where, while the heat penetrates the metal, it does not become iron, or vice-versa. To describe the timelessness of mystic experience, he uses the metaphor 'the eternal Now'.

This feeling of timelessness which Ruysbroeck emphasizes as mystic experience is contested by many scientists, because time is an indispensable dimension of experience. It can be measured and quantified. To the mystic, however, when he is in an ineffable state of union or undifferentiated identity, time ceases to exist. In other words, he finds himself beyond time. Time is reduced to the status of a mental construct and therefore is illusory.

One of the most celebrated mystical experiences that Sri Ramakrishna had, recorded by Swami Saradananda in *The Great*

2. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. vi. 1.

3. Ref: *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Master and remarked upon by Romain Rolland, is worth recalling because of the tremendous exertions that preceded it. The author paraphrases the Master's words:

One day I was torn with intolerable anguish. My heart seemed to be wrung as a damp cloth might be. .. I was racked with pain. A terrible frenzy seized me at the thought that I might never be granted the blessing of this Divine Vision. I thought if that were so, then enough of this life! A sword was hanging in the sanctuary of Kali. My eyes fell upon it and an idea flashed through my brain like a flash of lightning. "The sword! It will help me to end it." I rushed up to it, and seized it like a madman. ...And lo! the whole scene, doors, windows, the temple itself vanished. ...It seemed as if nothing existed any more. Instead I saw an ocean of the Spirit, boundless, dazzling. In whatever direction I turned, great luminous waves were rising. They bore upon me with a loud roar...they engulfed me. ...I lost consciousness and I fell. ...How I passed that day and the next I know not. Round me rolled an ocean of ineffable joy. And in the depths of my being I was conscious of the presence of the Divine Mother.⁴

Before we proceed to examine select cases of similar mystic experiences in non-Hindu traditions, it is well to see if Sri Ramakrishna's encounter with the Absolute through the medium of Kali, the Mother-Goddess, can be accepted as an acceptable model. His concept of the Mother-Goddess in the form of Kali is better expressed in his own words:

Kala, Siva, is Brahman. That which sports with Kala is Kali, the Primal Energy. Kali moves even the Immutable. ...Chidatma and Chitsakti. The Purusha (the male principle) is Chidatma and Prakriti is Chitsakti.

Again,

It is the Divine Mother who exists in the form of the universe and pervades everything as Consciousness. The earthly mother gives birth to this body. I used to go into samadhi (the mystic state)

4. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1956) p. 33.

uttering the word 'MA'. While repeating the word I would draw the Mother of the Universe to me, as it were, like a fisherman casting his net and after a while drawing it in. When he draws in the net, he finds fish in it.

Sri Ramakrishna's personal approach to this unique experience was based on the faith that God, in his boundless love for the devotee will manifest to him in the form in which he seeks Him. He explains it thus:

The Nitya and the Lila are the two aspects of the Reality. God plays in the world as man for the sake of His devotees. They can love God only if they see Him in a human form; only then can they show their affection for Him as their Brother, Sister, Father, Mother or Child.

It is just for this love of the devotees that God contracts Himself into a human form and descends on earth to play His lila.⁶

Referring to Beatrice Bruteau's closely reasoned thesis on the image of the Goddess, Fritjof Capra says:

The image of the Goddess...represents a solution to the ONE/MANY problem in terms of union and mutual embodiment, with the ONE manifest in the MANY and the MANY dwelling within the ONE. In such a relationship of union, which is not imposed or attained but is organically given, there is no sense of opposition between God and the world. Their relationship is characterized by harmony, warmth and affection, rather than challenge and drama. Such an image is clearly maternal, reflecting the mother's unconditional love, mother and child being physically united and participating in life together.⁷

But can the worship of idols be accepted as one of the valid modes through which religious experience comes? Sri Ramakrishna does not say that an idol can ever be an embodiment of God. He values only the feeling behind the worship and not the object. If you can think of God as one, with

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) pp. 380-81.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

7. Fritjof Capra, *Turning Point* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982) p. 463.

attributes, what harm is there in concretizing these attributes in an image? asks he. The function of both prayer and worship is purely evocative, a preparation to meditate on God. In true religious experience, words and images disappear as though they never existed.

A critic finds it hard to comprehend the concepts of 'ineffability', 'illusoriness' of time and the 'undifferentiated unity' of soul with God. A logical corollary to the acceptance of these mystical ideas would be to deny reality to experiences which happen only in space-time and therefore lead us to treat both good and evil as of little consequence to religious experience, thus depriving religion of its ethical content. It is a proposition which would be fatal to civilized conduct and therefore anti-God by implication. This we shall examine.

Regarding the 'ineffability' of mystic experience, all mystics, whatever their religious background, seem to agree. To call anything 'ineffable' is to admit the inadequacy of language or verbal communication. These intensely emotional mystic states can be aesthetic or religious or both. There is abundant evidence to prove that it is a psychological state—a state of transcendental consciousness in which truths beyond the comprehensibility of our sense perception come to light.

*The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say: "Lo, here or lo, there" for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.*⁸

*Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or, whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knoweth.*⁹

The fully developed mystical experience, common to all the great mystics, involves

the cognition of unity of all that is sentient and insentient—the ONENESS that neither can be understood by our senses nor communicated through words. It is not intellectual even as it is not sensory. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this with a picturesque parable: "So long as the bee keeps hovering over the petals, it emits a buzzing sound; but once inside the flower, it drinks its nectar noiselessly." Again he says: "One can get rid of the ego after the attainment of Knowledge. On attaining Knowledge, one goes into samadhi and the ego disappears."¹⁰

In the history of Christianity and Islam, both of which are strictly theistic, mystics have drifted toward 'Pan-theism' akin to the Upaniṣadic concept of which we have the most celebrated exposition by the sage Yajnavalkya to his wife in the *Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*:

O Maitreyi, the individual Self, dissolved, is the Eternal—of pure consciousness, infinite and transcendent. Individuality arises only by the identification of the Self through ignorance, and when this ignorance is removed, the identity of the Self is lost in Brahman.

What is even of greater significance is that in spite of the rigid mono-theism enforced by Islamic theology, Abu Yazid al Bistami (died 1240 A.D.) is even more expressive: "He is and there is with Him no before or after, nor above nor below, nor far nor near, nor union nor division, nor how nor where..." Reminiscent of the Upaniṣadic statement, he says:

When He called into being the things that are, He was already endowed with all His attributes and He is as He was then. In His oneness there is no difference between what is recent and what is original; the recent is a result of His manifestation of Himself and the original is the result of His remaining within Himself...

8. Luke X. vii. 20.

9. II Corinthians XII. 2.

10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 103, 169.

The Divine light pervades the beings of the elect and radiates from them, reflected as if by mirrors, on everything around them. The spiritual enjoyment produced by the contemplation of this reflection is even greater than that of the Vision itself. For, at the moment when they experience the Beatific Vision, the elect are transported, and losing all consciousness; cannot appreciate the joy of the Vision. Delight they feel, but the very intensity of the Vision makes it impossible for them to realise it. The reflected light, on the other hand, does not overpower them, and they are thus able to participate in all its joys.¹¹

People imagine that to say Ana '1-Haqq "I am God" is a presumptuous claim, whereas it is really a presumptuous claim to say Ana '1-'abd, "I am the slave of God", and Ana '1-Haqq, "I am God" is an expression of great humility. The man who says Ana '1-'abd, "I am the slave of God" affirms two existences, his own and God's, but he that says Ana '1-Haqq, "I am God", that is, "I am naught, He is all; there is no being but God's" This is the extreme of humility and self-abasement.¹²

To the Vedantin, the experience of God and oneness with God is *Anirvacanīyam*, indescribable in words. The concept of ineffability arises from the experience of undifferentiated unity among all mystics—Hindu, Christian or Islamic.

By and large, the Sufi mystic experience in the Islamic heritage seems to favour the concepts both of undifferentiated unity and ineffability. The famous Muslim philosopher and scholar, Avicenna Ibu Sina (died 1027) refers to the fourth stage in which the mystic sees God in all things. Passing to the fifth stage he gets close to God's presence when "...the brief flashes of lightening become a shining flame, and he attains to the direct knowledge of God and is continually in fellowship with Him. Then the gnostic passes on to the stage of contemplating God in himself." The terminal point of this

experience is, according to Avicenna, "complete union with God".

In the history of Christian mysticism also several mystics reveal similar experiences. From the days of the neo-Platonists and early Christian mystics like Dionysius (5th century A.D.), Meister Eckhart (1260-1318), Ruysbroech (1293-1317), St. Teresa (1515-1582), and St. John of the Cross (who was her contemporary), Swedenborg (16th century), right down to Arthur Koestler of our own time, there were about a hundred mystics of repute. Meister Eckhart, who was posthumously denounced by the Pope as a great heretic, was among the most outstanding mystic-philosophers of medieval Europe. His philosophy was in many ways akin to that of Sankara and Buddhist mystics, though he was ignorant of both. He spoke of the complete union of the soul with God and characterized this unity by the negative phrase 'empty unity', the *Sūnyata* of the Buddhists. To him this union was one of undifferentiated unity. "In Being," he said, "there is no action and, therefore, there is none in the soul's essence." To him, also, the mystical consciousness goes beyond time—with no past or future, but an eternal NOW. The distinctions between subject-object, space and time, the self and the environment disappears in this state. Unlike some other eminent mystics, like St. John of the Cross, Ruysbroeck and others who held the dualistic theory, Eckhart insists on the identity of the soul and God: "The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving."¹³

It would perhaps be redundant to recall more examples of mystics. In India, as elsewhere, philosophers and theologians have differed on the interpretation of mystic

11. Walter T. Stace, *Mysticism* ("Islamic Mysticism") New York: Mentor Books, 1960 p. 205.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

13. *Mysticism*, p. 157.

experience. Whatever the differences between the monists and dualists, they all subscribe to the 'pan-theism' of Vedanta, and this stream of thought finds expression right up to Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo of our days. Sri Aurobindo confirms his faith in the Vedantic 'pan-theism' thus:

The reality of the individual is Brahman, the Absolute; the reality of the cosmos is Brahman, the Absolute; the individual is a phenomenon, a

temporal appearance in the Cosmos; the Cosmos itself is a phenomenon, a larger and more complex temporal appearance. The two terms Knowledge and Ignorance belong only to this appearance; ...for the absolute Brahman exists only in its own identity and is beyond all other Knowledge. ...¹⁴

(to be concluded)

¹⁴. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram) pp. 566-67.

Approaches To Gita Down The Ages

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

The Gita has been the perennial source of inspiration to saints and savants alike down the ages. The author highlights the two cardinal teachings of the Gita, viz duty and devotion. Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao is a great scholar of Eastern and Western philosophy, and is author of many valuable books.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is an inset in the great epic, *The Mahābhārata*. Arjuna, the great hero of many a battle, goes to the battlefield with courage and determination to fight against his wicked enemies. He asks the Lord to position his chariot in between the two armies in order to have a view of those whom he is to fight. The Lord drew up the chariot, facing Bhishma and Drona, the teachers of Arjuna. As Arjuna looked on the entire opposing army he saw Bhishma and Drona as well as other teachers, cousins and kinsmen. In a context of duty compassion overtook him, and he began to experience psycho-somatic disturbances. His heart beat rapidly, he began to tremble and dropped his bow, Gandiva. His mind began to reel and he told Lord Krishna that he would not fight the battle, for he felt it was an unjust war, motivated by the Kūrus' greed for empire. He said to Sri Krishna that he

would better live the life of a mendicant and beg for his food than shed the blood of his teachers and cousins. He brings out pacifist arguments against war and ends it up by making a peroration: "I would rather be killed by the sons of Dhritarastra, weapons in hand, unarmed and unresisting, than to slay these high-souled teachers." Saying these words Arjuna slumped down on the rear part of the chariot in gloom and despondency. He fell at the feet of Krishna and asked Him to guide him in his hour of moral crisis. Arjuna addressed the Lord as his Guru and sought instructions for a way out of the moral dilemma.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* can be studied from several points of view. There are two approaches to it: (1) *The Sanctum approach* and (2) *The Forum Approach*. The Sanctum approach is the one followed by all our Ācāryas—Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

The earliest to comment on the *Gītā* is Sankara. In his commentary Sankara holds the view that the *Gītā* has as its essential message the doctrine of *Advaita Vedānta*. He regards Arjuna not a supremely eligible student for the final message. He declares that Arjuna is a *Mandādhikari*, one who is after a lower ideal and not *Mokṣa*. Hence, the doctrine of Karma-Yoga is taught to him. The *Gītā* has another doctrine, the gospel of the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, advocated for the mature aspirant, the doctrine of complete renunciation of all acts. Arjuna is not fit for this *sādhana*. So he is taught Karma-Yoga. Karma-Yoga prepares and cleanses the mind and makes it ready for the contemplation of the Lord.

Ramanuja's approach to the *Gītā* is from the point of devotion. He regards the scripture as disclosing the supreme doctrine of surrender to the Lord (*Prapatti*). Arjuna and other disciples are shown a way to reach God who is within the reach of all. Men may not be able to practise Karma-Yoga or Bhakti-Yoga, observing all the instructions specified in the scriptures. Human beings of weak will and low strength cannot overcome temptations. The Lord of the *Gītā* shows the way open to all, namely to surrender joyously, absolutely, consciously, completely without any reservations of thoughts, word or deed, their acts to the Lord. The Lord in His infinite Grace assures that He would take care of not only his spiritual needs, but also his secular wants. He assures that He will take care of the individual's *Yoga-kṣema*, spiritual well-being. The devotee of the Lord is assured that he will be given Knowledge also.

Ramanuja finds that the *Gītā* is the gospel of surrender to the Lord. Devotion ripens into surrender to the Lord. The doctrine of devotion and self-surrender are highlighted in all the chapters of the scripture. In one of the important verses the Lord promises

mokṣa, freedom from anxiety and fear to all those who resort to Him, holding back nothing as their own. This surrender must be done sincerely and once for all. It is the absolute commitment of man to the Lord. It is for all. It is the complete faith in the Grace and saving power of the Lord. The Lives of the great Bhaktas are illustrations of the Lord's saving power.

The doctrine of surrender highlights the power of the Lord's Grace, 'Man's extremity is God's opportunity'. There are occasions when our ambitions are in ruin, our apparent supports slip and our props give way. We feel the need for the Lord and cry for His help. The author of the *Gītā* says that the Lord is sensitive to the wishes of the devotee and responds at once. Man must make up his mind and surrender completely to the Lord.

Sri Madhva looks upon the *Gītā* as advocating two principles—duty and devotion. He says that Arjuna, instead of performing his duty as a *kṣatriya*, killing wicked people, entertains sympathy for them. This was not correct, so the Lord asks Arjuna to perform the duty of a *kṣatriya* and put an end to all evil forces that are opposed to *Narāyaṇa* and all those who aid the *anti-Narāyaṇa* party. Sri Madhva holds that devotion and surrender to the Lord must be born out of wisdom. At no stage the human being should give up his activities (*Karma*). The performance of Karma is enjoined on all, including the enlightened souls, even after liberation. One can stop from activities only at such periods when lost in contemplation of the Lord (*Asamprajñāta samādhi*). Madhva holds that Lord Krishna is *Para-Brahma*, the Supreme Lord. The world of reality is absolutely real and not illusory. Soul and the Lord stand in the relation of Master and Servant. He claims, on the authority of scripture, that he is the commissioned servant sent by the Lord to interpret the

scriptures aright. This he does and speaks as a prophet in the name of God.

Chaitanya, Vallabha. and Nimbarka are great lovers of Krishna. They look upon the *Bhāgavatam* and the *Gītā* as great scriptures, and devotion as a *master sādhanā* for the realization of God. The Sanctum approach to the *Gītā* claims that the *Gītā* supports the system which each Acharya propounded. Sankara claims that the *Gītā* preaches *Advaita*, Ramanuja that it is *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, and Madhva that it is neither *Advaita* nor *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, but *Dvaita*. Every Acharya claims that the *Gītā* upholds the doctrines of his respective system. Hence there is disagreement between the different commentaries.

II

The Forum approach is the modern approach. Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba, Balagangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda subscribe to this view. They all hold that the *Gītā* preaches a Universal Gospel and that it is not a sectarian scripture. They see in the *Gītā* the religion necessary for modern times. Gandhiji regards the *Gītā* as an allegory and not as an historical fact. In the very first verse of the *Gītā*, it is stated that Dhritarāṣṭra asks Sanjaya what happened on the battlefield of Kuruksetra when his people (*Māmakā*) and the Pandavas met. *Māmakā* stands for egotism, Pandavas stand for purity and *Dharma*. It is their confrontation that is described in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* advocates the righteous war against evil, one must not give any quarter to evil, or compromise with it. One must fight it out root and branch at all costs. Sri Aurobindo regards the *Gītā* as upholding the doctrine of Integral Yoga. He regards human life on earth as sacred. He does not view human existence as a time for comfortable sojourn. He wants to divinize it by the process of Yoga. He does not look upon human life as an evil to be eschewed.

"*Samsāra* is a succession of spiritual opportunity." Tilak regards that moral activities must be performed even after attaining liberation. It is in this aspect that he differs from Sankara. Most of the modern savants look upon the *Gītā* as advocating 'The Fellowship of Faiths', and favour inter-faith dialogue. They say that there are different paths to attain the Lord. Each individual can adopt that path which is suited to his temperament and ability. All are not pressed into the same restrictive mould. Each is allowed to develop according to his own inner nature. All the religions are different paths to one and the same God. The differences in methods for God-realization arise because of the differences in individual temperament and nature. There is an inherent divinity in all human souls. Nobody is lost to God. It is a question of time when one is to be saved. The God of the *Gītā* is represented as welcoming all from different paths.

The moderns interpret the Gita idea of caste (*varṇa*) as not being purely determined by birth. It is a division based on character and ability (*Guṇa* and *Karma*). The caste system is an educational formula. It is not a pyramidal or static structure. It is a federal arrangement. All the castes may not be equal, but they are all equally necessary for social well-being. Each individual must follow his nature.

One of our Swamijis has essayed forth a new interpretation of the caste system. He says that caste refers to the human body and the social arrangement, and has nothing to do with the spiritual nature of soul. Such an interpretation helps us to see the God-like wisdom in many an outcaste. The moderns are opposed to the caste system and believe that the *Gītā* supports them.

The moderns emphasize the doctrine of *Svadharmā* and describe it in terms of duty determined by one's own nature. It is nobody's *svadharmā* to avoid duty and

remain idle. The *Gītā* opens up the gates of God-love to all castes and all sexes. Some regard that such a doctrine is an interpolation introduced into the text of the *Epic*. This is ruled out by scholars today. Some others regard the *Gītā* as the work of multiple authors. Multiple authorship is also rejected. All have accepted today the unitary nature of the *Gītā* as a part of the great epic *Mahābhārata*. It has come to stay as 'the religion for our time'. It answers to our needs and does not ask for blind faith. It insists on the importance of morality as absolutely necessary for Godly life. You cannot attain to Godly life bypassing morality. A man may subscribe to all the doctrines of a system, he may experience all the fine emotions when performing the rituals, but if he is consistently selfish and unrepentant and cruel in his behaviour, his religion is a shame.

III

The central message of the *Gītā* can be spelt out in two words: Karma Yoga. It envisages the predicament of man in the world vividly. Man is pitchforked into an existence of a vale of tears. He is born in other people's sorrow and dies in his own. Having come down in the world of sorrow and impermanence, the Lord asks Arjuna, the representative man, the chosen instrument, and his close companion, to practise Karma-Yoga to fulfil his destiny and perfect his manhood and attain bliss.

To attain peace and the feet of the Lord and to perfect one's development and experience bliss, his intrinsic nature, is called *Mokṣa*—the supreme spiritual attainment of man. To attain the ideal one has to slog his mind, swelter hard, with not merely devotion to the Lord, but also through the performance of one's duty, *svadharma*. To attain bliss and put the mind at rest modern men resort to drug, drinks and on occasion,

severe ascetic practices akin to cracking their heads with hammers. A fudge surrounds all these methods. Some prophets of permissive society advocate the adoption of the ways uninhibited living.

The *Gītā* way is not all these. It sets forth the solutions to the individual clamouring problems by prescribing Karma-Yoga. Political slogans and nostrums turn out to be mere shibboleths. Liberty of speech is nothing to one who has nothing to say; liberty of thought has no meaning to one whose mind is all blank; and liberty of movement means nothing to one who regards his home as the best place in the world.

The Karma-Yoga of the *Gītā* has three sides to it. The practicant of this discipline has to imbibe faith in scriptures and the scripture-disclosed religious truths and moral values such as the concept of God, soul, the concepts of *mokṣa* and *dharma* and the Law of Karma.

The existence of all these values cannot be seen as objects in a laboratory. They have to be believed as the truths described in the scriptures. You cannot have all these things proven to you in terms of sense verification or logical demonstration. They have to be accepted on their own authority, the authority of the *ṛṣis* and sages who recorded them. Faith is the first article of the *Gītā* religion. We cannot march one step without faith. Faith is the pre-condition of all purposive living, systematic knowing and decent living. He who has no faith is lost, not only to the heavenly bliss but also to all the good things of human life. This is the verdict of the Lord.

The practicant of Karma-Yoga starts with faith, the faith that lends meaning and purpose to life. Without it we are doomed just to drift and move on from one thing to another. We get bored and in the end feel absolutely frustrated. It is faith that saves us from boredom and frustration, and makes us live in a meaningful way. It is again faith

that gives direction and goals and enables us to persevere in the pursuit of our ideals and not feel fatigue and exhaustion. It keeps us alive and hearty.

The crisis experienced by modern men and women is loss of faith. We have faith in nothing except in the pleasures of the hours on hand. We seek endlessly to escalate, to different objects to derive pleasure and end up in frustration and boredom. The doubting Thomas' of the world have no chance of peace of mind or sane life. They cannot live in amity with their fellow men. They are always in jitters and are in tension.

The Karma-Yogi has an ideal and firm faith in a power superior to him called God, and is grateful to Him for all the benefactions and gifts he gets from the Lord. Knowledge, power, learning are all His blessings. The Yogi is ever grateful to Him. He is free from the sense of the inflated ego. Faith in God and moral values are the greatest antidotes against egotism, immature rationalism and the false pride of men. Their scientific theory and technological advancement makes them assert their independence from God and cry out boastfully (without smiling): "*I am the master of the college ; and what I do not know is not knowledge. ... I am the captain of my ship and the master of my fate.*" The egotism of the faithless is described in all its lurid details in the characterization of the demonic nature—*asura-sampat*, in the sixteenth chapter of the *Gītā*. They say they do not know, nor follow any of the "do-or-don'ts"! They have no clean life or disciplined way of living. They abrogate the values of Truth and Dharma. They declare that this world is unreal and there is no God. They say: What else is there than lust prompted actions to account for the birth of men. With such a frame of mind these demonic men, lost to all wisdom, work out the ruin of the world and cause endless misery to others. These men of vaulting ambition, in false pride and

ignorance, walk through life. They are teased by endless desires and motivated by anger and greed. They go through life earning money in all objectionable ways to gratify their million desires. They declare: "I am God, I enjoy all things, I have established fame, I am affluent and who is there equal to me? I have acquired these things today; tomorrow I shall finish others." There is no end to their pride, intoxicated as they are with the world. They made no end of their boasting. By this sin the angels fell.

It is faith in God that can save us from the vain desires and soul-destroying egotism. The author of the *Gītā* again and again in the form of a refrain of a song insists on two things: Faith in religious truths and moral values—the need to practise sense and self-control to obtain self-possession and single mindedness.

The Karma-Yogin attains singleness of mind only by self-control. The normal nature of the human being is one of distraction. The senses lure him and drag him hither and thither, leaving him in the end with dissipated spirit and wrecked health.

The importance of self-control is the central theme of the *Gītā* in the early chapters. The senses are our great distractors. The mind of man is the playground for the senses. They are powerful like wild gales. They have for their loci greed, anger and lust. They entrench themselves there and egg on man to all atrocious deeds. Man first of all starts with what he thinks a harmless dotting on sense objects. Then he longs to attain it. He bends in all his resources to attain it. The foes that prevent him from attaining it and gratifying his desires make him angry and he goes into a rage. Anger is nothing but obstructed desire. It is the cross-section of our desire. Anger and failure produces frustration, which lands us in loss of faith and we become victims of all desires and thus perish. The causal concatenation and chain reaction is set forth with matchless

clarity in the second chapter of the *Gītā*. The Karma-Yogin has to overcome the distractions of the senses and secure a singleness of mind and purpose. One has to overcome the sway of unwholesome emotions. The man of distractions perishes in a thousand ways. Hence the *Gītā* insists that the Karma-Yogin must attain perfect peace and self-control to succeed in the attainment of God.

This is no easy job. Lord Krishna accepts it, but does not end on a note of despair. He suggests ways and means to attain self-control which are in perfect consonance with the psychology of human beings. He wants the practicant not to suppress his desires or maim his senses, he wants men to regulate their lives. He urges the gentle training of the mind and not violent repression. He wants men to sublimate their desires and not give way to them, and teaches the middle path. Sri Krishna in the *Gītā* counsels the avoidance of extremes, harsh asceticisms, i.e. starving oneself to death or keeping awake all the night. He pleads for moderation and for proper channelizing of our desires and not choking them. He wants men to observe and keep to the mean between the extremes. Right type of food and regulated recreation is counselled. The Lord does not countenance the way of life advocated by the permissive society—living as one likes, abandoning oneself to the play of the senses. The Lord is neither for suppression nor for uninhibited living. He wants us to walk on the middle of the road. He asks us to cultivate carefully our tastes and indulge calculatedly in them. He does not want us to dwarf our personality. He wants us to grow into our full manliness before we become saints. The first and foremost imperative in the *Gītā* is to cultivate strength and so not to become a coward in the hour of duty, or be cribbed by dangers in the discharge of duty. Sense and self-control leads men to full manliness. The author of

the *Gītā* asks men to rely on self-effort. He declares that “*man is his own friend when he regulates his mind properly, and man is his own enemy when he becomes a slave of his mind.*” The author of the *Gītā* wants us to grow our personality to its ultimate limit. He preaches *Ātma-vikāśa*, self-development through *Ātma-samyama*, self-control.

Sense and self-control are not that easy to obtain, for by long habit men have come to love pleasure. The life of sensual pleasure is hard to overcome. Even saints Visvamitra and Augustine found it difficult to withstand the temptations of sex. They became its victims. The Lord outlines a detailed way of life and gives us the know-how and technique to overcome the senses. One is advised to proceed slowly. The mind is a fickle instrument that is hard to control. Rational reflections, constant practice and devotion to God are the three methods suggested for overcoming sense distractions. A critical examination of the pleasures in human life discloses their transient nature. Our enjoyment of pleasure depends on the strength of our sense organs. When our senses grow old and weaken and wear out, pleasures of life pall on us and the law of diminishing returns operates. The enjoyment of the pleasures of life become no longer pleasures, but turn to be an addiction. Critical reflection points out to us that we cannot go on pleasing our senses for ever. Constant practice with discernment helps to overcome the power of the senses. We obtain self-control and concentration. Without concentration no spiritual progress is possible.

The *Gītā* advocates devotion to God as a potent method for achieving self-control. Devotion to the Lord transfers the sphere of our attention from other objects to God. The grace of the Lord enables us to attain self-control. Here and there the *Gītā* may speak of Rāja-Yoga, Buddhi-Yoga, or other, but all converge on the path of Bhakti.

Devotion enables us to overcome egotism. It helps us to integrate ourselves and overcome our lower nature. It enables us to overcome psychic anxiety, cloven emotions and discursive intellect. To obtain instruction in spiritual life one goes to a *Guru*, not as a mere formality but for spiritual impetus and inspiration. By sincere practice according to his instruction, devotion grows in the heart and eventually enables one to discard petty ambitions, mean motives, jealousy and cussedness. Bhakti is declared in the *Gītā* as a sovereign method. The Karma-Yogin has to be a devotee. Devotion is a form of love. It is declared to be the easiest and most natural way to reach God. It is difficult for one to become a wise man and read all the scriptures. It is difficult to a man to practise all the disciplines required for Rājā Yoga and Jñāna-Yoga, but it is open to all to love. But love is not something that can be imposed from without, it must grow from within. It is voluntary (*swarasa*), not ordered (*vidheya*). It is born out of contemplation of the glories of the Lord, from study of the scriptures (*śravaṇa*), and meditating on the words of the great teachers (*manana*), and absorption or samādhi (*nididhyāsana*).

Love is a light word in the English language. Human love is selfish and limited and is exclusive. Love is not what happens on the screen when two close-ups collide, it is a genuine total giving of the self to the Lord in full faith that His grace will save us from all troubles. God-love is not one among the other loves. It is an exclusive one all-absorbing love which transcends others. The devotee does not seek anything from God and he seeks Him alone. This is described as *Ananya-bhakti* and *Ananya-prayojana*, one pointed and needful. The

devotee does not have to do anything special for God. He has simply to acknowledge all the activities he does day by day and offer them to the Lord. He must have the spirit of dedication (*samarpana-buddhi*). All that the Lord requires from the devotee is sincerity. The *Gītā* says that one can worship the Divine Lord with only a little leaf, or a flower, with fruits, or a little water. If no water is available the devotee's tears in joy can be offered. God wants us to live our life centred in Him and not the self-centred life. Sri Krishna asks us to surrender the fruits of all our actions, whether good or bad, to Him, in complete love at the feet of the Lord. When devotion becomes mature, the Lord showers His grace on the devotee. The grace of the Lord enables him to overcome all troubles.

The devotee is not a self-seeking individual. In the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā*, the characteristics of the devotee are enumerated. He does not run away from unpleasant duty to mountain tops or monastery to secure his individual salvation. He has love of fellow men. He is full of charity and tolerance for others and service is his motto. Devotion is not merely worshipping the Lord with elaborate day-long ritual. It is also serving God in man. Devotion involves duty. Duty and devotion are the twin doctrines of the *Gītā*. Duty is not secular. It must be performed in the spirit of dedication and love. Sri Madhva says, service to others is also like a debt a citizen has to pay to society in return for society's blessings. Social service can therefore be done in a spirit of love of God. The devotee's path need not be one of severe renunciation of the world. He finds love and freedom in activity, not from activity.

Vivekananda Among The Saints

DOROTHY MADISON

(Continued from the previous issue)

In this absorbing paper, Ms. Dorothy Madison in unique style points out that Swami Vivekananda, possessor of immense spiritual powers, used those powers for the welfare of humanity. The author has been an active helper of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in America for more than five decades.

A celebrated example of this unease about visions is St. Anthony and the other desert fathers who led ascetic lives in the caves, cliffs, and ruins of the African desert, only to be tormented by visions of swarming, stinking imps and devils, assaulting them from every side with every kind of weapon and stratagem. But then, even the great St. Teresa of Avila, anything but deranged, dehydrated, or drugged, descended into hell in one of her visions and saw the hot dirt-oven reserved for her.

But somehow these frightful visions of the saints are annulled by God-sent visions of choirs of angels, heavenly glories, and the endlessly entrancing forms of Divinity. St. Anthony himself was the first of the great Christian Fathers to set up the distinguishing differences between "true" visions and those which are devilishly false. He said:

With God's help it is possible to understand the difference between the presence of good or evil spirits. When they are holy spirits, there is no disturbance about their coming or their appearance. For it is written that he shall not contend or cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice. [Matt. 12.19]. But the coming of such spirits is with calm and quiet, such that there is an immediate feeling of joy, hope, and exultation in the soul.

On the other hand, the attack of the evil spirits and their appearance is disturbed by confused

sounds, shouts and tumult, like the movement of robbers or the games of undisciplined children. Thus, there immediately occur terror of mind, disturbance, confused thoughts, sadness, hatred for those who are engaged in asceticism, dryness, memories of one's kin, fear of death; from there we have a desire for sin, weakness with regard to virtue, and instability of good habits.¹

Now, in visions of all kinds—internal, external, terrifying, and entrancing—Swamiji was practiced. Although, to repeat, he was not one to say much about his spiritual experiences, he nonetheless saw fit to describe a few of his visions to others.

One such vision—of unrelieved terror—he described in his poem, "Kali the Mother."² So great was the intensity with which he wrote this vision down, that when he had finished writing he fell on the floor. The poem's short, fierce lines describe a howling, tumultuous, death-filled darkness, peopled by multitudes of lunatic souls destroying in their path. In the midst of this pandemonium—apparently Swamiji stood in the thick of it—"a thousand thousand shades of Death" are dancing, mad with joy, scattering "plagues and sorrows." Suddenly Swamiji shouts, "Come, Mother, come!"

1. Herbert A. Musurillo, S. J., *The Fathers of the Primitive Church* (New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1966), 255-56.

2. CW., 1978, 4:384.

opens his arms to mad, death-dealing Death, and hugs her to his bosom.

Now, according to St. Anthony's standards, Swamiji's vision was clearly not from the devil, even though horror-filled and terrifying, but from God, inasmuch as the vision did not reduce him, in the end, to a state of quivering fear and hatred, but on the contrary catapulted him into transcendent serenity and love. He talked about it a few days later. "Scattering plagues and sorrows," he quoted from his own verses,

"Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!
For Terror is Thy name!
Death—is in Thy breath.
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.

"It all came true, every word of it," he interrupted himself to say.

"Who dares misery love,
Dance in destruction's dance,
And hug the form of death,—

To *him* the Mother does indeed come. I have proved it. For I have hugged the form of Death!"³

This vision had so much consequence for Swamiji that one hesitates to ask how St. Anthony himself would have judged it. Certainly it was filled with thousands of evil spirits not unlike St. Anthony's devils, causing similar uproar, havoc, and suffering. But somehow the lunatics of Swamiji's vision seem much worse, much more in earnest, much more lethal than the demons of the Desert Fathers, their depredations far exceeding those committed among the hermit caves and dwellings. In fact, in Swamiji's vision worlds were being destroyed midst an indescribable bedlam of human horror and agony. Doubtless, St. Anthony would have been nonplussed. On the one hand,

3. Nivedita, CW., 1:99.

he would have to attribute all the vision's shrieking mayhem, terror, and violence to the evil spirits let loose by the Devil, but on the other hand he would be forced to attribute Swamiji's transcendent accession of joy, love, and serene peace to God.

Swamiji himself was in somewhat the same fix as St. Anthony. As a native of the Absolute, with easy access to all levels of being and consciousness, he knew truth and worth under all their aspects and in all their degrees. Precisely because of this knowledge and wisdom, his vision of Kali delivered such an extraordinary load of meaning to him that he became a changed person. But then, it is still a fact that even an apocalyptic vision such as this one is nothing more than an impermanent phenomenon produced by interacting psychological, neurological, and bio-chemical factors. As Swamiji himself said in another connection:

"If the mind is not under control, it is no use living in a cave because the same mind will bring all the disturbances there. We will find twenty devils in the cave because all the devils are in the mind. If the mind is under control, we can have the cave anywhere, wherever we are."⁴

(CW 1:440-41).

However, on the basis of his poem about Kali it should not be thought that Swamiji, like St. Anthony, tended to be overrun by devils or that he periodically expressed himself in anagogic poetry or was given to spells of morbidity. The truth is that he was a saint whose experience of bliss was constant and uninterrupted, in the plain and literal meaning of these words. And, because he was rooted in the Absolute, he was able to perceive the entire universe of name and form not only as shining in pure consciousness, but as actually formed out of pure consciousness. In this he was like his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, and like Sri Ramakrishna

4. CW., 1986, 1:140-41.

he did not blanch at the truth that God is the source of evil as well as of good. Neither did he try to evade this truth or soften it by attributing evil to cosmic illusion (*maya*) or ignorance (*avidya*).

At this point it is well to bring Kali, the Divine Mother, into the picture. Her devotees, as well as certain schools of philosophy and systems of religious belief, say that she embodies in her feminine divinity the entire potential of richness and energy intrinsic in the Absolute. She is experienced by human beings as both the universe itself and the Divine Mother of the Universe; and she it is who is considered by her worshippers to be the giver of both good and evil. Obviously, in this context, so different from the God-versus-Satan context of St. Anthony's religious belief, Swamiji's vision in no way belied his ongoing identity with the Absolute. And most certainly the question of its good or evil provenance never arose—it was a divine vision throughout, from beginning to end.

On this point Swamiji finds strong support in the daily spiritual perceptions of the great eighteenth century Hasidic Master, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, popularly called the Baal Shem Tov, or "the Besht," an acronym. Now, the Baal Shem Tov always told his listeners that he saw God everywhere he looked, and that *not* to see God is an illusion. Further, the divine glory of God, the *Shekhinah*, is actually shining out in everything all the time. If God seems to be hiding from you, simply keep on pushing forward in your search—there is absolutely no obstacle between you and God. Equally as illusory as the absence of God is the pair of opposites, good and evil. They are illusions, and can be nothing but illusions, inasmuch as the Evil One himself is part of the divine glory of God. In truth, evil becomes "the evil that is good" when, for example, you deli-

berately transform the evil which afflicts you into an instrument of purity.⁵

Other visions, more in accord with St. Anthony's category of God-and-angel-given, Swamiji also described to others. But even among these not all were uniformly joyous. For example, when he was a wandering monk, he had a series of unhappy visions of Sri Ramakrishna which he recounted to a disciple:

Mixing with Pavhari Baba (a saintly master of yoga), I liked him very much, and he also came to love me deeply. One day I thought that I did not learn any art for making this weak body strong, after living with Sri Ramakrishna for so many years. I had heard that Pavhari Baba knew the science of Hatha-Yoga. So I thought I would learn the practices of Hatha-Yoga from him, and through them strengthen the body. You know, I have a dogged resolution and whatever I set my heart on, I always carry out. On the eve of the day on which I was to take initiation, I was lying on a cot thinking, and just then I saw the form of Sri Ramakrishna standing on my right side, looking steadfastly at me, as if very much grieved. I had dedicated myself to him and at the thought that I was taking another Guru I was much ashamed and kept looking at him. Thus perhaps two or three hours passed, but no words escaped from my mouth. Then he disappeared all on a sudden. My mind became upset seeing Sri Ramakrishna that night, so I postponed the idea of initiation from Pavhari Baba for the day. After a day or two again the idea of initiation from Pavhari Baba arose in the mind—and again in the night there was the appearance of Sri Ramakrishna as on the previous occasion. Thus when for several nights in succession [twenty-one altogether] I got the vision of Sri Ramakrishna, I gave up the idea of initiation altogether, thinking that as every time I resolved on it, I was getting such a vision, then no good but harm would come from it.⁶

No question, these were visions from God, but they were heavy with what can only be

5. Anne N. Lowenkopf, *The Hasidim: Mystical Adventurers and Ecstatics* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1973), 20.

6. CW, 1986, 7: 242-43.

called God's grief, causing unbearable perturbation in Swamiji's mind. But on the happy side, from this time forward Swamiji's self-abandonment to Sri Ramakrishna's love and his dog-like obedience to his will became a matter of legend. "And so you see," as Swamiji once said to Sister Nivedita, "mine is the dog's devotion—I am content to take His word, and follow blindly."⁷

Indeed, not many months after this episode, Swamiji was blessed with a vision of what can only have been ineffable sweetness. It so happened that he and his monastic brother, Swami Akhandananda, were walking through the Himalayan foothills in the vicinity of Almora. Suddenly Swamiji asked his companion to continue on the trail while he took a shortcut through the woods. But Swami Akhandananda did not obey Swamiji—he followed him on the shortcut. Having walked some distance, he "...came to a beautiful place full of flowers which gave off a wonderful fragrance. Then he looked up and saw Sri Ramakrishna embracing Swamiji."⁸

Somehow this enchanting vision of a mountain-meadow rendezvous is not unusual in view of what Swamiji once said about Sri Ramakrishna—that he could do whatever he wanted, such as coming disembodied to Calcutta at night, lifting Swamiji out of his body and taking him back to Dakshineswar where he would instruct him in peace and quiet and blessed privacy.⁹ As a matter of fact, Swamiji never seemed to be out of the presence of his divine Master who even, one dark night, led him through Chicago's unlighted streets. At this point it may be objected that since Swamiji's visions of Sri Rama-

krishna were part and parcel of his daily existence, and belonged therefore to Swamiji's own divinity, they should not be counted as marks of his saintly image. To this, however, it can be countered that Swamiji was so quintessentially a saint's saint, he was, by definition, one to whom visions were as natural and necessary as air.

Swamiji mentioned other visions—of Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Radha, Sita, Buddha, a Therapeutic Essene privy to the beginnings of Christianity, and a Vedic sage from whom he learned the ancient mode of chanting Vedic Sanskrit. He also had visions of the next ten or fifteen centuries, and an extraordinary cosmological vision which he immediately jotted down as he sat under an old fig tree by the side of a stream.

In the beginning was the Word, etc.

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in a living body, so is the Universal Soul, in the living prakriti (nature), the objective universe. Kali, is embracing Shiva. This is not a fancy. This covering of the one (Soul) by the other (nature) is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it. They are one and the same, and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore in the beginning was the Word, etc.

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is the combination of the eternally formed and the eternally formless.¹⁰

Admittedly, this vision is less that of a saint's and more of a sage's. Likewise, his aforementioned vision of the coming millennia is more in keeping with a prophet's kind of vision than with a saint's. But then, Swamiji was a saintly sage and a sagelike saint just as he was prophetic saint and a saintly prophet, and nothing can be done about any of it, except to say that he *was* a saint and these were some of his visions.

7. Nivedita, CW, 1: 364.

8. Ann Myren, "The Spiritual Treasure of Swami Vivekananda," *Prabuddha Bharata* (Jan. 1984) 89: 32-3.

9. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master, trans., Swami Jagadananda* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952), 771.

10. Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda*, 45.

Like visions, miracles loom large in the saintly mystique. But even so, the mixed attitudes and opinions swarming around this particular adjunct of sainthood make it the devil's own postpile. For example, Catholic saints must have at least four of their miracles investigated and verified before they can be canonized, (American saints need only two). But other religions have no such requirement, probably because they have no papal commissions to enforce the standards of sainthood. As a matter of fact, many a Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu and Judaic saint have scorned the working of miracles, considering them to be minor events at best, and vulgar displays at worst. Even St. Augustine said, "it is a far better thing to convert a sinner than to restore a dead man to life."¹¹

By definition miracles are events which natural laws cannot account for. They include such things as walking on water, moving through the air, emanating light, giving off fragrance, being in two places at once, living without eating, multiplying food, (e.g., loaves and fishes), healing the sick, and so on. According to the Christian view miracles occur when either God himself enters directly into a situation or else when He acts through a human being, namely, a saint.

To the faithful, miracles are rooted in God and rife with the mystery of His proximity; as a consequence, they attract souls as flowers attract bees. What, except a miracle, demonstrates so powerfully the active presence of God in human affairs? Nothing, except perhaps the inscrutable saints themselves, who work the miracles. Indeed, some saints excite so much faith and hope that they get snowed under by the same avalanches of human prayer as God Himself.

Generally, people pray to saints to intercede with God for help, relief, forgiveness, strength, victory, mercy, and so on. Some-

how saints seem easier to get hold of than God, probably because saints, like common folk, have man-made scars and never jest at wounds. Besides, saints are so unspeakably good, that God is much more likely to listen to them than to some no-good petitioner. Lastly, it makes no difference at all whether saints have been dead for a hundred years or a thousand—their power to do good lives after them. In fact, according to Christian writ, saints never quit; forever they are on call as God's immaculate go-betweens. Like the great bodhisattvas of Buddhism, and the Islamic "friends of God," saints use their own stored-up merit to help people get over the bad places.

With this last bit of miracle-working—the saint providing the spiritual wherewithal to desperate petitioners—Vivekananda agreed. He himself gave bountifully while he was living and promised to keep on giving after he was dead. Examples from both periods abound. However, about the more eye-catching varieties of miracles he was as pitiless as a Puritan. In a letter to one of his South Indian disciples he flared:

Why insist upon unnecessary things as miracles really are? They do not prove anything. Matter does not prove spirit. What connection is there between the existence of God, Soul, or immortality, and the working of miracles?"¹²

But it was in a lecture on *Bhakti-yoga* that Swamiji skewered miracles and left them for dead. "What," he asked, "were the great powers of Christ in miracles and healing, in one of his character?"

They were low, vulgar things that He could not help doing because He was among vulgar beings....The great strength of Christ is not in His miracles or His healing. Any fool could do those things. Fools can heal others, devils can heal others. I have seen horrible demoniacal men do wonderful miracles. They seem to manufacture fruits out of the earth. I have known fools

11. Attwater, *Catholic Dictionary*, 324.

12. CW, 1979, 5: 54-5.

and diabolical men tell the past, present, and future. I have seen fools heal at a glance, by the will, the most horrible diseases. These are powers, truly, but often demoniacal powers. The other is the spiritual power of Christ which will live and always has lived—an almighty, gigantic love, and the words of truth which He preached. The action of healing men at a glance is forgotten, but His saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart", that lives today. These words are a gigantic magazine of power—inexhaustible. So long as the human mind lasts, so long as the name of God is not forgotten, these words will roll on and on and never cease to be. These are the powers Jesus taught, and the powers He had.¹³

Despite Swamiji's low opinion of miracle-working, he somehow seems to have worked a few himself. In his defence, however, it can be pointed out that only a few of his known, so-called miracles appear to have been deliberate ones—the rest seem to have happened of themselves. Sister Christine, an American disciple, described one of his miracles—so commonplace it hardly deserves the name. As Sister Christine explained:

Early in June three or four were gathered at Thousand Island Park with him and the teaching began without delay. We came on Saturday, July 6, 1895. Swami Vivekananda had planned to initiate several of those already there on Monday. "I don't know you well enough to feel sure that you are ready for initiation," he said on Sunday afternoon. Then he added rather shyly, "I have a power which I seldom use—the power of reading the mind. If you will permit me, I should like to read your mind, as I wish to initiate you with the others tomorrow." We assented joyfully. Evidently he was satisfied with the result of the reading, for the next day, together with several others, he gave us a Mantra and made us his disciples.¹⁴

Another of Swamiji's miracles also included a touch of mind-reading, but really belongs to the curing-healing category. Mme.

Calve, who underwent the miracle, was a celebrated prima donna of the time. She wrote in her autobiography:

...He [Swami Vivekananda] was lecturing in Chicago one year when I was there; and as I was at that time greatly depressed in mind and body, I decided to go to him, having seen how he had helped some of my friends...Before going I had been told not to speak until he addressed me....

"My child," he said, "what a troubled atmosphere you have about you! Be calm! It is essential."

Then in a quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man who did not even know my name, talked to me of my secret problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends. It seemed miraculous, supernatural.

"How do you know all this?" I asked at last. "Who has talked of me to you?"

"No one has talked to me," he answered gently. "Do you think it is necessary? I read you as in an open book."

Finally it was time for me to leave.

"You must forget," he said as I rose. "Become gay and happy again. Build up your health. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows. Transmute your emotions into some form of external expression. Your spiritual health requires it. Your art demands it."

I left him, deeply impressed by his words and personality. He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and place there instead his clear and calming thoughts. I became once again vivacious and cheerful, thanks to the effect of his powerful will. He did not use any of the hypnotic or mesmeric influences. It was the strength of his character, the purity and intensity of his purpose that carried conviction.¹⁵

Still another miracle of Swamiji's, of much greater weight than mind-reading or healing, was the turnabout he caused in the life of a science professor in Madras. When that unsuspecting man, a pleasant, thoroughgoing atheist, contradicted Swamiji, and long-windedly kept on denying the existence of God, "finally, Swamiji gave the professor

13. CW, 1978, 4: 32-3.

14. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), 2: 30.

15. Ibid., 1: 449-50.

a touch, saying 'Kidi, don't you see God, don't you see God?'" The result was that "the man was completely transformed. He renounced the world and henceforth lived a meditative life in seclusion."¹⁶

Less drastically and much more colourfully Swamiji even appears to have cast out a spirit. This adventure he related to a disciple who wanted to know about the psychic powers he witnessed:

Once I had to take up my abode for a night in a village of the hill-people...I came to know... that one of the villagers had been possessed by a Devata or good spirit...A tall man with long, bushy hair was pointed out to me and I was told that person had got the Devata on him. I noticed an axe being heated in fire close by the man; and after a while, I found the red-hot thing being seized and applied to parts of his body and also to his hair! but wonders of wonders, no part of his body or hair thus branded with the red-hot axe was found to be burnt, and there was no expression of pain in his face! I stood mute with surprise. The headman of the village, meanwhile, came up to me and said, "Maharaj, please exorcize this man out of your mercy." I felt myself in a nice fix, but moved to do something, I had to go near the possessed man. Once there, I felt a strong impulse to examine the axe rather closely, but the instant I touched it, I burnt my fingers, although the thing had been cooled down to blackness. The smarting made me restless and all my theories about the axe phenomenon were spirited away from my mind! However, smarting with the burn, I placed my hand on the head of the man and repeated for a short while the *Japa*. It was a matter of surprise to find that the man came round in ten or twelve minutes. Then, O the gushing reverence the villagers showed to me! I was taken to be some wonderful man! But all the same, I couldn't make any head or tail of the whole business.¹⁷

Swamiji may not have been able to make up his mind about the hillman, but he had an explanation for a cluster of miracles

16. Swami Prabhavananda, "Vivekananda and His Message" (*Vedanta and the West* Nov. Dec. 1962) 158: 32.

17. CW, 1986, 6: 515-16

which happened to him in America, namely, that they were "manifestations of the wider faculties of the mind, subjective, mere automatic mental operations."¹⁸ These recurrent miracles he described to a disciple:

When I began lecturing in Chicago and other cities, I had to deliver every week some twelve or fifteen or even more lectures at times. This excessive strain on the body and mind would exhaust me to a degree. I seemed to run short of subjects for lectures and was anxious where to find new topics for the morrow's lecture. New thoughts seemed altogether scarce. One day, after the lecture, I lay thinking of what means to adopt next. The thought induced a sort of slumber, and in that state I heard as if somebody standing by me was lecturing—many new ideas and new veins of thought, which I had scarcely heard or thought of in my life. On awaking I remembered them and reproduced them in my lecture. I cannot enumerate how often this phenomenon took place. Many, many days did I hear such lectures while lying in bed. Sometimes the lecture would be delivered in such a loud voice that the inmates of adjacent rooms would hear the sound and ask me the next day, "With whom, Swamiji, were you talking so loudly last night?" I used to avoid the question somehow. Ah, it was a wonderful phenomenon.¹⁹

Less open to explanation was the voice which Swamiji heard in Kashmir, where for several days he had been worshipping the Goddess with ritual offerings in a ruined temple. One day, while worshipping, he thought:

"Mother Bhavani has been manifesting Her Presence here for untold years. The Mohammedans came and destroyed Her temple, yet the people of the place did nothing to protect Her. Alas, if I were then living, I could never have borne it silently." When, thinking in this strain, his mind was much oppressed with sorrow and anguish, he distinctly heard the voice of the Mother saying: "It was according to my desire that the Mohammedans destroyed this temple. It is my desire that I should live in a dilapidated temple, otherwise, can I not immediately erect a seven-storied temple

18. *Life*, 1: 548.

19. CW, 1986, 7: 124.

of gold here if I like? What can you do? Shall I protect you or shall you protect me?" Swamiji said: "Since hearing that Divine Voice, I cherish no more plans. The idea of building Maths etc. I have given up; as Mother wills, so it will be." The disciple speechless with wonder began to think, "Did he not one day tell me that whatever I saw or heard was but the echo of the Atman within me, that there was nothing outside?"—and fearlessly spoke it out also—"Sir, you used to say that Divine Voices are the echo of our inward thoughts and feelings." Swamiji gravely said:

"Whether it be internal or external, if you actually hear with your ears such a disembodied voice, as I have done, can you deny it and call it false? Divine voices are actually heard, just as you and I are talking."

The disciple without controverting accepted Swamiji's words, for his words always carried conviction.²⁰

(To be concluded)

²⁰. Ibid., 130-1.

Spiritual Practices Of The Holy Mother

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

(Continued from December Issue)

Swami Brahmeshananda, drawing extensively from the recorded incidents in Holy Mother's life shows how the Karma and Bhakti Yogas were happily blended in her life. Seemingly trivial everyday things in the Mother's life reflected her supernal and perfect nature. The author is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga is considered the easiest among the Yogas. Since no great stress is laid upon the qualification of an aspirant, all, irrespective of caste, sex, or station in life can practise Bhakti Yoga. Essentially it consists in loving God. But, although everyone is capable of loving, it is not possible to love God without purification of heart. It is thus, that certain disciplines in what is known as Vaidhi Bhakti—devotion to God associated with rites and ceremonies, are prescribed in the scriptures.

The spiritual practices of the Holy Mother were mainly devotional. Being pure at heart she had natural love for God from the very beginning. Yet she practised the various

disciplines in some form or other throughout her life. According to Ramanujacarya, the first essential preparation for Bhakti is *Viveka*, or discrimination in regard to the food one eats.¹ Food must be free from the three-fold impurities as far as possible: (a) those arising due to the nature of the food itself (*jāti*)—(One should thus avoid taking extremely rich, spicy or stimulating substances.) (b) those arising from the contact with persons of impure character (*āśraya*), and (c) those due to contamination

¹. Cf. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta; Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. IV, p. 4.

because of the environment—dust, dirt, etc. (*nimitta*). Born in an orthodox Brahmin family, the Holy Mother was naturally careful about food. She generally partook only of food which had been ceremonially offered to God in the daily worship. Naturally she was careful about accepting things from doubtful or impure sources.² Yet, the Mother was not excessively fastidious.

According to Sankaracarya, the practice of *Viveka* (discrimination) implies observing purity in regard to intake through all the senses, not only food. Having lived under the watchful guidance of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi was able to adjust herself in the new suburban environment in regard to her standards of purity, cleanliness in cooking and so on. Most important, her mind always dwelt on a very sublime level.

The next of the *Vaidhi-bhakti* practices is cultivating freedom from desires (*Vimoka*).³ Besides her desire to serve Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother had no other desires in the world. The next is Practice (*abhyāsa*).⁴ This is constant and uninterrupted remembrance of God. It is known that the Holy Mother used to perform *Japam* continuously. Once, we know, she said encouragingly to her niece, Nalini, "...What a lot of work I did when I was your age...and yet, in spite of all that work I repeated my mantra a hundred thousand times."⁵ She was also fond of music, and with Sister Laxmi often used to sing devotional songs.

The Hindu scriptures speak of the five kinds of sacrifices, or *yajñas*—sometimes called debts—man owes to others for his happiness on earth. Everyone should somehow acknowledge this debt to other

beings, by certain acts or observances. *Kriyā*⁶ consists of the five sacrifices for this purpose, enjoined on householders by the scriptures: *Svādhyāya*, or study of the scriptures, is the *Brahma-yajña*. It acknowledges our debt to the Divine Lord. We have already noted that the Holy Mother would read for herself from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and she often used to listen to oral readings in group. Traditionally, the *Agnihotra*, or some such Vedic sacrifices fell in the category called *Deva-yajña*, worship of the gods and goddesses who preside over the forces of nature and bestow rain, light and other blessings on mankind. But they have gone out of vogue and have been replaced by daily ritualistic worship of modern times which the Holy Mother performed regularly. She performed *Pitr-yajña* or worship for the welfare of the forefathers, to whom we owe the blessings of human birth, by offering *pindas*, or oblations to the departed ancestors at Gaya.⁷ Her whole life was an unbroken *Nṛ-yajña* (observance of one's debt to society), in the form of feeding and serving innumerable devotees and guests who visited her. Finally, by showing kindness to birds, pet animals and cattle, she performed the fifth *yajña*, *Bhūta-yajña*, paying of debt to inferior creatures which provide human life with food, transport and other conveniences and blessings. Holy Mother used to say that each one, be it a god or a tiny worm, must get its rightful due. She herself was always the embodiment of kindness toward the lower animals.

Truth, simplicity, charity, compassion and non-violence collectively constitute the next pre-requisite called *Katyān*.⁸ Truthfulness and non-violence have been discussed in the Mother's life in relation to her practice of *Rāja Yoga* and *Jñāna Yoga*. The Holy

2. Cf. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1955) p. 470.

3. *Complete Works*, Vol. IV, p. 7.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

5. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd 1963)

6. *Complete Works*, Vol. IV, p. 9.

7. *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 167.

8. *Complete Works*, Vol. IV, p. 10.

Mother was extremely simple and guileless, and anyone could get anything from her by simply addressing her as 'Mother'. Further, her compassion ever flowed to others, even to sinners and the wicked. Far more significant than material gifts, which Holy Mother bestowed profusely, were her spiritual gifts in the form of initiation to uncounted disciples over the years with the divine Name.

Another great virtue of preparatory Bhakti is *Anavasāda*,⁹ cheerfulness. To those who saw her, and knew her well, the Holy Mother was always as merry as a girl. Never was she morose or depressed. Staying confined in that tiny room at the Nahabat over the many months and years when she served the Master, though some compared it to Sita's exile, never depressed her spirits. On the contrary she considered her years there as the best part of her life. But Holy Mother was too modest to give external expression to her inner joy in public. It is another quality of a devotee, called *anuddarśa*.

Narada in his *Bhakti Sūtras* has mentioned a few more virtues which a devotee must exercise. A devotee must shun evil company.¹⁰ In regard to this injunction, Sri Ramakrishna was very careful in cautioning his disciples, including Sarada Devi. A certain old lady who had not led a pure life in youth used to visit her. Sri Ramakrishna noticed it and warned the Holy Mother not to allow her in her room.¹¹ Sri Sarada Devi used to point out this incident to show how Sri Ramakrishna used to protect the youngsters. She similarly warned her young disciples.

One of the greatest aids to devotion mentioned by Narada is solitude.¹² In her own life this need of solitude was providentially

fulfilled when she came to stay in the Nahabat. *Service to the holy* is another. This was fulfilled in the Mother's life to a wonderful degree as she served Sri Ramakrishna and so many exalted souls for so many years.

Humility and absence of conceit are also essential for a devotee.¹³ Even though Holy Mother was honoured as the wife of the Paramahansa, and was repeatedly addressed as 'goddess', 'divine Mother', etc. there was not a trace of conceit in her. She always considered herself a village woman like any other.

To cultivate bhakti one should sing the glories of God and listen to the chanting of his Name.¹⁴ So did the Holy Mother as she witnessed the divine *līlā* at Dakshineswar. When Sri Ramakrishna sang and danced with the devotees in ecstasy in his room, he would ask that the door facing the Nahabat be kept open saying: "In this room intense feeling and love of God will be expressed. She must witness it; otherwise, how will she learn?"¹⁵ Referring to this the Holy Mother said later: "What a unique man he was! How many minds he illumined! What unceasing bliss he radiated! Day and night his room echoed and re-echoed with laughter, stories, talk and music. ...The Master sang, and I would listen hour after hour, standing behind the screen of the Nahabat. When the singing was over I saluted him with folded hands. What joyous days we passed through! People poured in day and night, and there was no end of spiritual talk. I never saw him sad. He made merry with all—a boy of five or an old man."¹⁶

According to Narada, a devotee must not waste even a single moment in vain.¹⁷ Holy Mother was never idle. She was always busy

9. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

10. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, p. 43.

11. *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 83.

12. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, p. 47.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

15. *Holy Mother*, p. 75.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

17. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, p. 77.

servicing others and doing useful household chores. Whenever she got a little leisure she made garlands for the Goddess or talked to the devotees on spiritual matters. The most important means toward bhakti according to Narada is the grace of great souls or of God Himself.¹⁸ Who could be the greater recipient of the grace of a God-man like Sri Ramakrishna than Sarada Devi?

To meditate with faith and devotion on the Chosen Ideal, the *Iṣṭam*, accompanied by repetition of the holy mantra after getting initiated by a competent guru, constitutes another most important practice in Bhakti Yoga. This may be aided by ritualistic worship. The worship can be of an image or some other symbol of one's Chosen Deity. The Holy Mother was initiated in her girlhood in her native village by one Swami Purnananda,¹⁹ and the Divine Mother was her Chosen Deity. Later on, Sri Ramakrishna also initiated her. It is mentioned that she was one of the very few the Master initiated by writing the mantra on the tongue.²⁰

As the devotee practices according to the above mentioned methods, gradually love for the Chosen Deity awakens in his heart. He then forms an intimate relation with God with the help of any one of the five attitudes mentioned in the scriptures.²¹ Initially the Holy Mother considered the Goddess as her Mother. But later, through the Grace of Sri Ramakrishna, she came to know his identity with the Divine Mother, and other moods developed. At times both she and the Master used to consider themselves as handmaids (attendants) on the Divine Mother (*Dāsya-bhāva*). And she was the spouse of Sri Ramakrishna, who was to her God incarnate (*Madhura-bhāva*). Later, when her motherhood developed, she started considering gods and goddesses, including Sri

Ramakrishna, as her children (*Vātsalya-bhāva*). This was remarked upon by her disciples when she used to invite the deities to take their meal in the daily worship.

Parābhakti

Narada has mentioned a few signs indicating perfection in bhakti which came to be manifested in the Holy Mother. Such perfected ones shed tears, get horripilations, and embrace each other.²¹ At Dakshimeswar the Holy Mother experienced such states on one or two occasions. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, when she went to Vrindavan, she and Yogin Ma embraced each other and wept, in the agony of separation from their Divine Beloved.

According to Swami Vivekananda, love can be represented by the three angles of a triangle. There can be no true love without its three characteristics: (1) Love knows no fear, (2) Love knows no bargaining, and (3) Love knows no rival.²³ The Holy Mother was the bestower of fearlessness on her countless children. It goes without saying that only one who is free of fear himself can bestow fearlessness upon others. We know Holy Mother was fearless because she never asked anything of Sri Ramakrishna. She only desired to serve him unflinchingly and help in the fulfilment of his mission. She never asserted her special claim on Sri Ramakrishna, but actually believed that the Master belonged to all.

An advanced devotee who succeeds in ascending the highest rung of the ladder of *Parābhakti* gets visions, ecstasies, *bhāva* and *samādhi*. Visions of gods and goddesses were common with the Holy Mother. Moreover, in Vrindavan, in the height of *bhāva*, or inner realization she experienced her union with Sri Ramakrishna.²⁴ This union

18. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

19. *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 109.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

21. *Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 95-99.

22. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, p. 68.

23. *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 86.

24. *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 142.

with one's Chosen Ideal is considered the highest attainment in Bhakti Yoga.

Being a woman, it is but natural that the Holy Mother would choose Bhakti Yoga as the main path for her spiritual life. But it is amazing and noteworthy how she could observe and follow even the details of *Vaidhi-bhakti* and ascend to the greatest heights of *Parābhakti* even while fulfilling her household duties and responsibilities.

Karma Yoga

To work ceaselessly but without attachment to action and the fruits that accrue is called Karma Yoga. Karma is the means by which the mind is purified, making one fit for God-realization and Bhakti. Karma is also one of the four Yogas that lead one to Self-Knowledge and liberation. Therefore Sri Krishna in the *Gita* eulogises it so highly and urges always the performance of duty. In Karma Yoga one does not find the two divisions like *Vaidhi* and *Parā* bhakti. Here the essential thing is a right attitude towards work. The Holy Mother lived an intensely active life, performing the various kinds of duties entailed in the service of the Master and his divine mission. Whatever she did was for the good of others and she hardly did anything for herself. She was a perfect Karma Yogin. At the age when most children spend their time in play only, she used to assist her mother in bringing up her younger brothers, and in sharing the responsibilities of managing the household.

At Dakshineswar her task was a similar one, but now her family was a very large one, and in fact her work was highly specialized and demanded all her concentration, skill and resourcefulness. The Master's digestion was delicate and he was often in precarious health. She had to keep in mind all these things, and besides, remember the many and various requirements of the devo-

tees who regularly came to him. For the Master she would prepare his special diet. While he ate she had to remain with him to divert his mind with secular talks so that he might not go into ecstasies. For otherwise, how would he eat? She had at other times to keep a close watch on Sri Ramakrishna's movements lest he fall and hurt himself while walking in the God-intoxicated state oblivious of his surroundings.

Service to Sri Ramakrishna's aged mother was another of the Holy Mother's duties. When the Master's devotees started coming in large numbers she had to prepare sufficiently large quantities of chapatis and vegetables, and always special dishes for individuals. Whenever she got leisure at intervals she used to busy herself with making garlands for the temple worship. Often she had to console and counsel devotees, especially the ladies. This task of spiritual ministrations and guiding others increased tremendously in the latter half of her life. But even it was considerable during Sri Ramakrishna's own lifetime. Besides, the Mother never was free from worry about the households of her brothers who lived in the village. She had often to solve their domestic problems.

It was remarkable that Sri Sarada Devi could do everything with utmost perfection. Naturally, she was very efficient in the use of time for the performance of her many duties. She was so skilful in making flower garlands for the Temple that Sri Ramakrishna was charmed. She had keen common sense and was highly practical. Spinning ropes from jute fibres and being able to find use even for all the remnants may be cited as one example of her practicality. But in fact, in everything she was equally adept and skilful. She received a good deal of instruction in being practical from Sri Ramakrishna and this doubtless helped her. By practice she became adept in knowing how to modify her actions to suit the requirements of time,

place and persons.²⁵ None ever came away without feeling pleased and charmed by her Motherly affection.

Most remarkable, however, was the attitude with which the Holy Mother fulfilled all her duties. All her activities were centred round the idea of pleasing Sri Ramakrishna, whom she regarded as the Divine Mother Herself. In this she never thought of her own pleasure or comfort. At times, owing to the large number of visitors coming to the Master, she was deprived of her joy of seeing him for days together. Although living so close to him, yet she never complained or was sorry. This shows the attitude of a true *bhakta* who performs work only for the sake of the Beloved without any thought of return.

Marks of a Perfected Karma Yogi

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, a true Karma Yogi sees action in inaction and vice-versa.²⁶ That means he is intensely active, but is equally calm within. Conversely, he may be inactive outwardly, but may be actively thinking of God within. The Holy Mother never lost her inner poise even while remaining incessantly busy with multifarious duties. Even during apparently idle moments, she was active within, doing *Japam* and praying for the welfare of others.

The next characteristic of a true Karma Yogi is *same-sightedness*, or *samatva*²⁷ towards all actions, situations and persons, as well as towards the results of actions, such as success or failure. For Sri Sarada Devi, cooking, dusting, sweeping, feeding others and worship were all equally important from the spiritual standpoint. Neither was there any difference in her eyes between a saint like Swami Saradananda and a sinner like Amzad. Both to her were sons.

Another index of perfection in Karma Yoga is non-attachment, or a spirit of detachment. Apparently deeply attached to Radhu, her niece, the Holy Mother was actually free from attachment within. As she herself once described it: "This constant doting of mine on Radhu is a form of attachment. But I can sever it even this moment by my mere wish. I do not do so only because of compassion. How can maya bind me?"²⁸ Such totally non-attached great souls, who have no personal interests to serve, work only for the good of the world and to set an example for posterity to emulate. Sri Sarada Devi herself told that she did far more than what is required for setting an ideal.

Conclusion

From the foregoing it will now be evident that the Holy Mother was an embodiment of perfection in all the four Yogas, and in her life we can see a confluence of all these in equal measure. Like Sri Ramakrishna, all aspects of her personality, viz intellect, heart and skill in work were equally and harmoniously developed to perfection; the only difference being that, in her case, perfection was manifested in the setting of a simple domestic life. Her whole life is a glorious example of how dedicated service to others and particularly love of God through service to human beings lead one to the ultimate spiritual goal.

The most important factors we see at work behind the Holy Mother's unique success in spiritual life were her wonderful birth, her exceptional early life and upbringing, and her great good fortune in having the guidance of a World Teacher like Sri Ramakrishna. Can there be any question that her life was part of the Divine Plan?

All aspects of the Holy Mother's life have very important meaning for us. Generally it is believed by devotees that it

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

26. *Bhagavad Gītā*, IV. 18.

27. *Bhagavad Gītā*, II. 48.

28. Holy Mother, p. 139.

is not possible to lead an intense spiritual life in the world ; that it is not possible to practise Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga without withdrawal into solitude. Although the usefulness of seclusion, especially in the early phases, cannot be denied, the first important message conveyed by the Holy Mother's life is that one can achieve the highest spiritual unfoldment even while living an intensely active life in the world.

The second lesson is that the four Yogas are not so independent of each other as many imagine, but rather are interdependent. There are a number of factors common to all the Yogas. Says Swami Vivekananda: "...but you must at the same time remember that these divisions are *not* very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. ...We have found that in the end all the four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal."²⁹ This is amply borne out in the Holy Mother's life.

Practice and renunciation (*Abhyāsa and Vairāgya*) are the two fundamentals of spiritual life. Whichever path an aspirant may choose, he renounces attachment for the world and concentrates his energies, through practice, to the Lord. The various steps and parts of the Yogas employ practice and renunciation as their means. Some obser-

vances are meant specially to purify the mind of all worldly dross, while others help to fix such a purified mind on God. In exceptionally pure souls, eminently qualified, like the Holy Mother, renunciation and practice of spiritual disciplines produce their results very quickly.

In each Yoga there are some preliminary observances which are external and secondary to the essential inner core of practice. It will be observed that the Holy Mother taught the essential parts and asked others not to be so fastidious about less important points. Like the Master, she used to say that in the modern age the path of Bhakti, love of God, is the best. Work, meditation, intellectual discrimination and reasoning should be practiced so as to nurture love of God.

We have tried here to study and understand the perfect life of Sri Sarada Devi by showing how the Yoga *Śāstras* support her life, and conversely, how her own life upheld the validity of the scriptures. The real greatness of her divine character, however, cannot be the subject of such an analysis. One becomes simply speechless to contemplate that sublime life of hers so apart from our ordinary experience. The beauty and grandeur of her life of love, service and self-sacrifice must become the object of our meditation. If we practise with humility and reverence even a fraction of the example she has set, our lives will be transformed and we will find peace and fulfilment.

²⁹. *Complete Works*, Vol. I p. 108.

"Day and night the seeker after Truth meditates thus: The Supreme Lord alone dwells in all beings as Ātman ; this universe, though ultimately unreal, appears to be real because Brahman alone is its ground ; since Brahman is my inmost Self, the universe has its root in the Self ; it cannot exist independent of Ātman.

To Vivekananda, The Divine Messenger

SWAMI JAGADATMANANDA

In this stirring poem, which is a translation of the dedicatory verse in the author's book 'Badukalu Kaliyiri' in Kannada, Swami Jagadatmananda effectively portrays a profile of the limitless personality of Swami Vivekananda—Prophet extraordinaire. The author is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order at Belur Math.

O Thou whose valour embraced the earth and the heavens,
Thou harbinger of the new Vedantic Gospel
Of serving God in man ;

Thou whose mere glance could thrill the souls of man,
Whose heart, brimming with love, felt the pain
Of suffering humanity ;

Thou the embodiment of Religion Eternal,
Thou the breaker of the walls imprisoning
The splendour of this land ;

O Redeemer of the poor and the downtrodden,
O Seer of eternal Truths whose effulgence
Illumines the whole of life ;

Thou Universal Man, the Lion of Vedanta
Whose roar has shattered masses of fear,
Inertia and ignorance ;

Thou the Image Divine sculptured by Ramakrishna,
Whose trumpet call, "Arise! awake!" acts
As tonic to worn-out souls ;

O Swamiji, Master of my soul, Captain of my life!
May this flickering lamp of my life,
Ever burn at Thy holy feet!

REVIEWS & NOTICES

SRI RAMAKRISHNA BHAGAVATA, By R. S. Ramabadrán. Publishers: R. S. Ramabadrán, A-8, 185 Ramakrishna Math Road, Sri Durga Apartments, Mandavali, Madras—600028, 1989. Pp. 184; Rs. 20/-.

Many scholarly and informative books are being published every year elucidating the luminous life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. As one explores this infinite ocean called the Sri Ramakrishna Avatar one discovers profound and new aspects of the divine personality. Every new book casts fresh illumination on the many-splendoured life of this saint. Sri Ramabadrán's commendable efforts find their fruition in his *Sri Ramakrishna Bhagavata*. We find in this volume delightful blending of deep devotion, cogent logic and vast learning. The author draws parallelisms from the Hindu Puranas—such as from the lore of Ganesa, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Sita, Radha, Durga and Kali, and shows with ingenuity how Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi embodied in themselves all the qualities of these divine characters. They often demonstrated in their lives the traits of the gods and goddesses. The author quotes extensively from the *Puranas* incidents and sayings of these two great world teachers and develops the basic theme of the book. His comparisons have the quality of cogency.

Readers will find a plethora of new material collected from many sources placed in this one volume. Sarada-Ramakrishna are truly *Sarva-deva-devi Swarupins* (embodiments of all gods and goddesses). That is the belief of all devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. The author forcefully substantiates this view of his and we have no hesitation in saying that he has, to a great extent, succeeded in his noble endeavour. This moderately priced, elegantly printed and bound volume deserves the serious attention of everyone, especially devotees. Such a good book never fails to give pure joy and spiritual experience to aspirants.

S.M.

YOGA: THE TECHNOLOGY OF ECSTASY, By Georg Feuerstein; Publishers: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Los Angeles. pp. 344. \$ 14. 95.

THE YOGA-SUTRA OF PATANJALI: A New Translation and Commentary, By Georg Feuerstein. Publishers: Inner Traditions

International, Rochester, Vermont. pp. 179. \$ 12.95.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF YOGA, By Georg Feuerstein; Publishers: Paragon House, New York. pp. 430. \$ 24.95.

These three books by Georg Feuerstein—who has been described by Ken Wilber as “a scholar-practitioner of the first magnitude”—constitute a library in yoga (and more broadly in Hinduism) that will serve comprehensively adequate for most. They will serve also as core texts on the subject.

The author has been studying and practising yoga for about twenty-five years and is a founding member of the Indian Academy of Yoga at Benares Hindu University. He is also Co-Director of the Yoga Research Centre at Durham University. In these three books we find scholarly facticity combined with experiential insight. Feuerstein's broad and deeply informed, first-hand knowledge of yoga is presented in a clear and lively style that will appeal to those with a genuine interest in the subject.

Yoga: The Technology of Ecstasy is a comprehensive introduction to the more-than-4000-year-old quest for self-transcendence as that has developed in India. With short chapters on yoga in Jainism and Buddhism the bulk of the book focuses on the yogic tradition as it has evolved in Hinduism. The author understands yoga as a means to ecstasy or self-transcendence but presents several other connotations of the word as well. Drawing on his intimate knowledge of the classical texts, Feuerstein treats such varied forms of yoga as Hatha, Tantra, Kundalini, Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, Raja, etc. Select excerpts from the classical literature provide a sense of the original. Insightful interpretation and commentary demonstrate the abiding and contemporary relevance of the ancient theory and practice. The book is replete with various aids to understanding: a map, pronunciation guide, chronology, glossary, bibliography, diagrams, charts, illustrations, and, of course, a comprehensive index.

No single text has had a more lasting and profound influence on yoga than Patanjali's summary presentation in 195 terse, enigmatic aphorisms. In *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali*, Feuerstein not only ably translates these *sutras* (aphorisms) into intelligible English but provides elucidating commentary and interpretation. Little is known about Patanjali himself, though his work is generally

credited to the third century of the Common Era (A.D.). The entire work, brief as it is, develops and expounds Patanjali's key understanding of yoga as "the restriction of the fluctuations of consciousness" (I. 2). In subsequent aphorisms one finds delineated, among other things, the traditional eight limbs or branches of Patanjali's discipline leading to liberation: restraint, observance, posture, breath-control, sense-withdrawal, concentration, meditative-absorption, and ecstasy—(*samādhi*, translated "ecstasy" by Feuerstein in the work above). Without a thorough grounding in this germinal work one cannot hope to properly understand or practise Classical or Raja Yoga.

Feuerstein's most recent book (1990), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* is an essential reference for anyone reading in the area of yoga or Hinduism. The encyclopedic dimension of the book is represented by concise essays on such central topics as *karma* (action), *cakra* (wheel), *pranayama* (breath-control), and *siddhi* ("magical" power); such scriptural texts as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, and *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*; such practices or paths as mantra-yoga, hatha-yoga, jnana-yoga, and kriya-yoga; such personalities as Sri Aurobindo, Shankara, and Ramakrishna, and such general categories as the divine, ego, mind, and psychology, the latter, of course, all presented from a Hindu/yogic perspective. The dictionary dimension is represented by shorter entries that define such terms as *devi* (goddess), *gopi* (shepherdess), *hridaya* (heart), *lila* (play), *mala* (rosary), and many hundreds of others. Over eighty photographs and drawings illustrate this thoroughly cross-referenced resource.

In making these three volumes available to the student of yoga, Georg Feuerstein brings order and clarity to bear on what might otherwise seem an unwieldy and incomprehensible domain. With the comprehensive survey of *Technology of Ecstasy*, the fundamental exposition of the *Yoga-Sutra*, and the ready explanations of the *Encyclopedic Dictionary* the novice as well as the accomplished student of yoga have a set of indispensable and unsurpassed resources.

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RAMAKRISHNA AS WE SAW HIM, Translated & edited by Swami Chetanananda; Publishers: The Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., 1990. pp. 495. \$ 22.95.

The book under review is a collection of fascinating accounts of forty people who saw and came under the magical influence of Sri Ramakrishna. Among them are the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, two relatives of the Master, some of the lay and monastic disciples, and Brahma devotees and admirers. The book is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters contain the experiences and descriptions of the Master by the devotees. The last chapter is an appendix which contains (1) some new findings about Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Saradananda, (2) an excellent article on the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Vidyatmananda, and (3) a graphic description of the Dakshineswar Temple Garden by 'M'. The book is further enriched by thirty-six excellent photographs of Sri Ramakrishna and the narrators.

At the end of the second chapter in the *Gītā*, we find Arjuna questioning the Lord thus: "What are the characteristics of a saint, a man of realization? How does he talk, walk, and act and react in daily life?" Such questions naturally spring to our mind. Whenever we hear of a saint we are overtaken by curiosity to know as to: How does he look? What does he do? How does he spend his time? And above all, what is it that distinguishes him from others? We usually are not content with his teachings. We want to know more about the man. This book of reminiscences answers some of these questions to a great extent. It also helps to bring one nearer to Sri Ramakrishna.

It was through the lectures and writings of Sri Keshab Chandra Sen, the popular Brahma leader, that Sri Ramakrishna came into the public limelight. As a result many people started coming to the Saint of Dakshineswar. Sri Keshab Sen himself went to meet Sri Ramakrishna often and brought many of the Brahmos. Many seekers came to Dakshineswar to receive the Master's guidance. Some came out of curiosity and some were brought by friends. Whatever the motive behind their coming to the saint, all alike were drawn by his magnetic and divine personality. They were charmed by his childlike simplicity, extreme humility and utter lack of pretensions and were overwhelmed by his extraordinary purity. They felt uplifted spiritually in his presence. They were delighted by his apt stories and similes which were sometimes humorous but highly instructive. They were enthralled by his soul-stirring singing of devotional songs and returned to their homes with a sense of direction and fulfilment.

Sri Ramakrishna's influence on some of them

was permanent; it brought about metamorphosis in their lives. It helped many to progress on their own Chosen Paths. We also come across some who, though acknowledging his greatness, could not take advantage of it. There is a popular saying: "Even if a pestle goes to heaven it starts pounding there also." Meaning one can benefit only according to one's fitness. And so there were some who refused to visit him again lest the spirit of his renunciation might deprive them of their worldly enjoyments. Nevertheless, with that negligible number of exceptions, all those who saw Sri Ramakrishna were transformed.

Through these accounts there emerges a splendid picture of Sri Ramakrishna—absolutely pure, utterly innocent, always full of joy, simple like a child and with infinite love for all. Sri Ramakrishna was nothing if not blissful. "He was an ocean of Bliss. Whenever he smiled waves of bliss streamed forth." Even a critical observer was forced to say that his "face was unlike any other I saw". Religion is a matter of joy, much more than anything else. "One visit to him kept one intoxicated with bliss for several days." What wonder if many returned for another dose—Such is the value of the *Sat-Sanga*. It is the elevating Presence—not the mere teachings—by which miracles are wrought.

Replete with touching incidents and instructions this book will, surely, serve as a sourcebook of meditation on the divine *Līlās* (sportive dramas) of the Lord.

The readers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature will be familiar with some of these reminiscences. Many of them, however, are newly come into English, being translated from Bengali for the first time. There is no gainsaying that the reader will get much valuable material, heretofore scattered over a number of books, in one compact and beautiful volume.

Swami Chetanananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and at present is the leader of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis in the U.S.A. He deserves the gratitude of all of us, especially of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, for bringing out such a wonderful book. It is superfluous to recommend it; it recommends itself to all.

This elegantly brought out American edition may be too costly for many Indians. For them, soon, we hope there will be an Indian cheaper edition.

Swami Dayatmananda

KAPPHINABHYUDAYA (Sanskrit)—*The Exaltation of King Kapphina* Edited by Gouri

Shankar & Michael Hahn. Publishers: Aditya Prakashan 4829/1 Prahalad Lane, 24 Ansari Road, New Delhi-110 002.

Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi, deserves our gratitude in bringing out such a valuable treatise as *Kapṣhīnābhyudaya* (*The Exaltation of King Kapphina*) of Śivasvāmin. No less credit is due to Paṇḍita Gouri Śankar, the principal Editor of the work. In fact, it is an example, how a man highly handicapped by paucity of manuscript material can edit a difficult Sanskrit *Mahā-Kāvya* (epic poem)—which had no commentary attached with it—depending only on defective manuscripts and overcoming all obstacles by his keen insight and intellect, his clear vision, his untiring attention and close adherence to the principles of textual and literary criticism. We cannot help but admire the efforts of the editor.

Śivasvāmin, one of the gems of Avantivarman's court in Kashmir, was a prolific writer. But as ill-luck would have it, excepting *Kapṣhīnābhyudaya* and a few stray verses, nothing else of his has come down to us. Yet what is left is admirable indeed! Based on the simple *Avadāna* story, the poet has created an epic—a *Mahākāvya*, which is the product of a superhuman genius. Śivasvāmin follows the rules and principles laid down by Daṇḍin in his *Kāvya-darsa*. Here, the hero is King Kapphina who, getting reports from a spy, and by the advice of his courtiers and allies, marches against Prasenjit of Kos'ala, but ultimately by the influence of the Buddha gave up war and ruled only for the *Buddha*, *Dharma* and *Sangha*. A heroic *Kāvya*, having fiery speeches, it ends on a serene note. The poet does not neglect picturesque descriptions of nature, palaces, amorous sports of young people, kings, courtiers, war and so on.

The *Mahākāvya Kapṣhīnābhyudaya* is not written in a simple style. Rather it has been written in a highly complex and ornate style. The reviewer echoes the opinion of Gulbahar Singh when he says: "...Only a scholar equipped with an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit grammar, language, rhetoric and literature and fully conversant with the modern critical method of study and research could do justice to it...its value and importance can only be realized by minute and laborious study supplemented by the help afforded by the Editor's introduction."

The Editor's introduction is really "a crest-jewel" of the present work. Yet the Editor could have done well for the general readers had he

supplied a simple Sanskrit commentary of his own or an English translation of the verses. In that case, though the book would have been bigger, the readers would have been relieved of some difficulties.

The appendix of the work is also an asset, and romanized transliteration of some of the cantos by Michael Hahn is a great help to those who do not know *Nāgarī script*. Why he has left other cantos undone is beyond understanding.

The quality of paper and printing of the book is highly satisfactory. The reviewer has not come across a single printing mistake.

The price of the book in present market price is not much. All public libraries should possess *Kapphiñābhyudaya* and enrich their collections.

Dr. Pradyotkumar Bandyopadhyay

HISTORY OF HINDU-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTERS,
by Sita Ram Goel; Voice of India, New
Delhi, 1989. 405 pages plus x, Price Rs. 250/-

The book, as its title suggests, is a record of a number of conflicts between the Hindus and the Christian missionaries in the process of imposing Christian faiths, by direct or indirect methods of force or allurements, upon the unwilling and tolerant Hindus. The author cites instances from history by which he tries to prove that the Semitic religions are aggressive by nature and in the name of 'One True God' Christianity destroyed the Hindu temples, deities and their cult and culture since the days of the Roman Empire, even in the remote Hindu colonies of West Asia, North Africa and Southern Europe. The Christian missionaries, out of their ignorance and zeal for forceful conversion, gave wrong pictures of Indian religious rites and image worship of 'One God' in 'diverse forms' to their European mother lands, inviting more money and missionaries to execute their evil design. (Chapters 1 to 4)

The tolerant Hindus, with their liberal 'Sanatana Dharma' were passive observers in the early days towards the activities of the Christian preachers. But when open and brutal force was being applied in destroying the temples and images of the Hindu gods by the missionaries, with the help of the Portuguese and French rulers, and the conversion of thousands of helpless Hindus against their will, naturally a resentment and voice of protest arose from the Hindus. Hindu-Christian encounters took

a new shape in the form of dialogues between the Christian preachers and the defenders of Hindu Sanatana Dharma. The author presents in detail the fallacies in conception of Christian 'One God', 'Son of God', theory of 'sin', virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection, etc. against the logical, scientific and highly philosophical and spiritual ideals of the Hindus. Christianity and its methods of proselytization were protested through discussions and writings down the centuries by Malabar Brahmins, Sanskrit Pandits and Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra intellectuals, among whom Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda, Swami Vivekananda, M. Dandekar and Mahatma Gandhi deserve special mention. (Chapters 6 to 13)

To sum up the views of all the liberal Hindus, Dr. Goel rightly observes: "No Hindu thinker has had the least objection to Christians believing in and seeking salvation through Jesus. Nor do the Hindus bother about the dogmas of 'the only sonship', the virgin birth, and atoning death, the resurrection and the rest, so long as the Christians keep these to themselves. It is only when the Christian missionary apparatus tries doggedly to impose these dogmas on the people that Hindu thinkers are forced to register a protest and have a close look at the Jesus of history."

Views of Swami Vivekananda (Ch. 12) and Mahatma Gandhi (Ch. 13), both being respectful and at the same time wary of Christian methods, are presented in detail. Both of them disliked the methods of Christian preaching. Some critical observations by other Indian political leaders are discussed in detail with recorded evidence (Chapters 14 and 15). Chapter 16 of the book deals with the nature of Sanatana Hinduism, and criticism towards the methods of new preaching of Christianity in the Hindu garb.

The author deserves credit for presenting with evidence how Christianity has been destroying our Hindu culture and national integration. New demands for different states in India by the tribal people are in great part the result of work by Christian missionaries who, according to the author, were the agents of foreign rulers.

There must have been many spiritual truths in the teachings of early Christians, but to adore Christ, the Messenger of God, is altogether different from encountering the designs of the missionaries of Jesus. With due thanks to the author, we expect to hear more from him in future, the good message that Jesus brought to us.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

(Words of Swamis Vivekananda and Brahmananda)

“To remove all corruption in religion, the Lord has incarnated Himself on earth in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. The universal teachings that he offered, if spread all over the world, will do good to humanity and the world. Not for many a century past has India produced so great, so wonderful, a teacher of religious synthesis.

“Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the only man who ever had the courage to say that we must speak to all men in their own language. ...He is the true disciple and follower of Sri Ramakrishna, whose character is perfect and all-sided...The formation of such perfect character is the ideal of this age, and everyone should strive for that alone.

“My Master’s message to mankind is: ‘Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself.’ He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realization; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel...Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization.

Sri Ramakrishna came to teach the religion of today, constructive, not destructive. He had to go afresh to Nature to ask for facts and he got scientific religion, which never says ‘believe’, but ‘see’; ‘I see, and you too can see.’ Use the same means and you will

reach the same vision. God will come to everyone, harmony is within the reach of all. Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings are ‘the gist of Hinduism’; they were not peculiar to him. Nor did he claim that they were; he cared naught for name or fame.”

—Swami Vivekananda

“Sri Ramakrishna, the avatar of this age, is helping every sincere, earnest aspirant. He is waiting for you. Make a little effort and spread the sails of faith and devotion. The spiritual breeze that is blowing will take you to the goal. Do not look back. Go ahead. Let your life be blessed by His vision.

DISCIPLE: “But Maharaj, do you mean that Sri Ramakrishna is still living?”

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA: If he were not alive, why should we lead such a life, giving up our homes and all our possession? He is. Pour out your whole heart in prayer to Him. Ask to see and to know Him. He will take away all your doubts and will show you His true nature...Japam. Japam. Japam. While you work, practise japam. Let the wheel of the name of God go round in the midst of all activities. Do this! All the burning of the heart will be soothed. Don’t you know how many sinners have become pure and free and divine by taking refuge in the name of God? Have intense faith in God and in His name. Know that God and His name are one. He dwells in the hearts of His devotees. Call on Him earnestly. Pray to Him: ‘Reveal Your grace to me. Give me faith and devotion.’ Pray earnestly. Make your mind and your lips one...Pray to Sri Ramakrishna. He still lives. Pray to Him sincerely and He will show you the path. ‘You are mine and I am yours.’ Merge yourself in His consciousness

—Swami Brahmananda