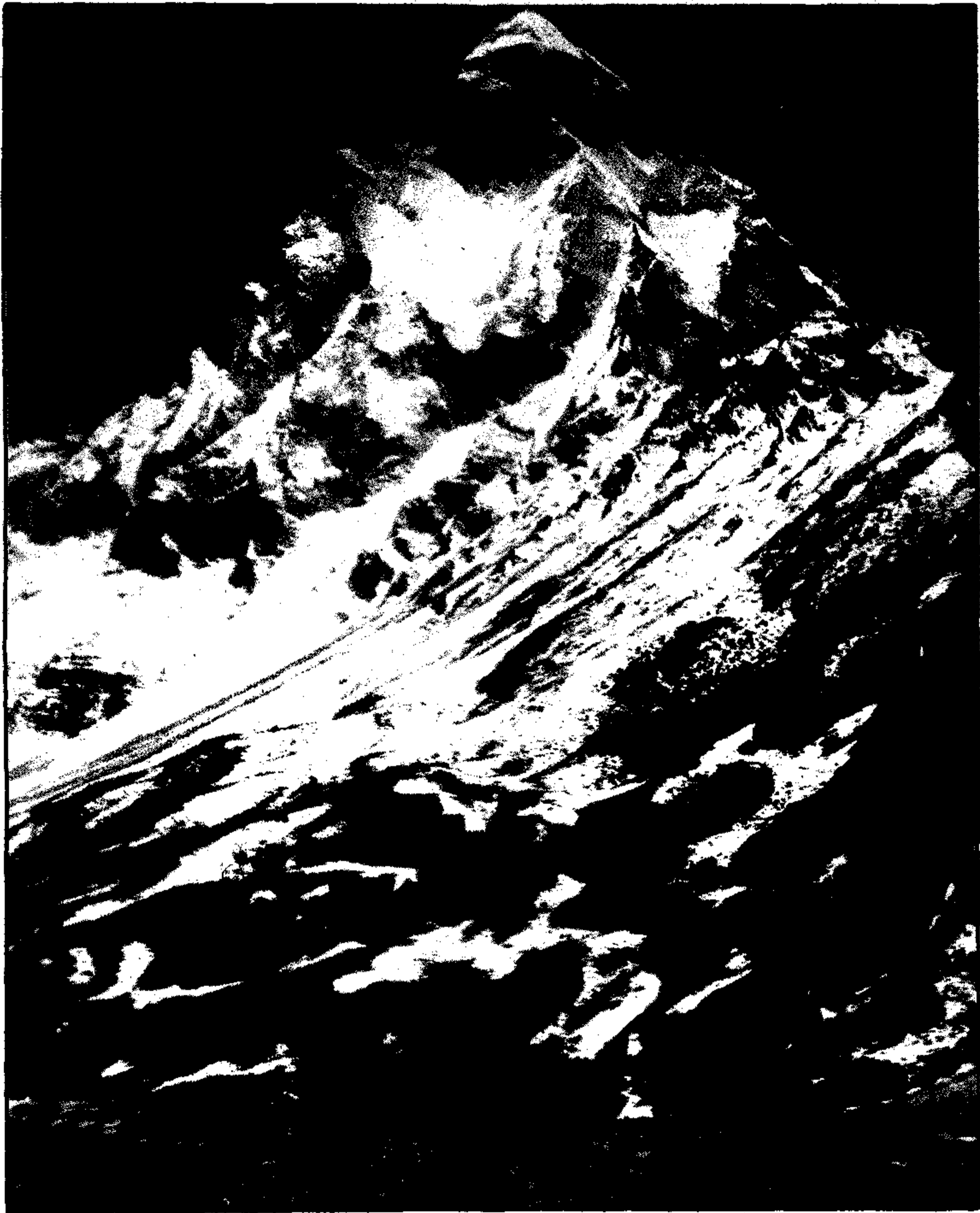


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or Awakened India



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Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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

Prabuddha Bharata

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NO. 3

The Divine Message

Prahlada said : Wise men should begin the practice of devotional disciplines (*Bhāgavata-dharma*) from their very boyhood. For, human birth in which alone devotional disciplines can be practised, is extremely rare, and it is uncertain how long life lasts. The highest and noblest act for a man to do in life is to surrender himself at the feet of Lord. For He is the dear one, the soul, the master and the friend of all beings. Just as all creatures, having a body, experience naturally a measure of sorrow, happiness also accrues to them naturally without their effort. The *Prarabdha* or the Karma that has brought the body into being, yields them both these types of experience, and no special effort is required for them. Beyond exhausting life's span, nothing is achieved by efforts put forward for the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. A man full of desires never attains to that state of Bliss which one who serves the Lord attains.

Therefore one entangled in the fearful state of *Samsāra*, if he is really intelligent, should in every way strive for the attainment of the Divine before the fall of this short-lived human body, even while it is in its full vigour and power. Man lives for a hundred years at the most. Of this span of life, if a man is of uncontrolled senses, half is wasted in sleep at night when he is in a state of darkness and inertia, almost like that of a dead body. Of the remaining half, the first twenty years are spent in the ignorance of childhood and the playfulness of early youth. Another twenty are spent in the decrepitude of old age, which reduces man to a helpless condition. Chained to domestic life,

and oblivious of the ultimate purpose of his existence, the rest of man's life too is wasted in the pursuit of insatiable sexual enjoyments and under the domination of overwhelming infatuation.

Where is the man among those attached to their homes, enslaved by the senses and bound by the strong cords of affection to their near and dear ones, that can make even an effort to liberate himself? Who can give up the hankering for wealth which is dearer to man than his life itself — wealth for earning which thieves, servants, merchants and others pawn their very lives? How can a man renounce the intimacies he has been having with his dear wife in privacy as well as her loving prattle, his close friends and his lisping infants to whom he is bound by cords of affection? How can he renounce his sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and sickly and pitiable parents — his attractive furniture and other household articles, houses, cattle, servants and hereditary vocations, when powerful memories of them are attracting his mind? Unsatisfied with enjoyments and imprisoned by greed in the cocoon of bondage-generating works, a man considers indulgence in sex and gluttony as the main purpose of life. How can a man in this condition, overpowered as he is by such an increasingly infatuated outlook, practise renunciation? (Therefore if a person is to tread the path of devotion, he must practise renunciation from early life, before all kinds of tendencies and entanglements have become finally established.)

Srimad Bhāgavata, VII.6.

Nataraja-The Divine Dancer

“One thing I must tell you,” said Swami Vivekananda addressing the intent eager audience at the Parliament of Religions on 19th September 1893, “...we find that somehow or other by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque, or a cross. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms.”¹

The Primordial Energy, or the Creative Force that creates and permeates everything, even down to the minutest of the sub-atomic particles called quarks, cannot be seen or conceived. But it is accessible to the intuitive perception. This most subtle invisible Energy, or limitless consciousness, is made visible through the tangible concrete medium of religious symbols and divine images. The artistic excellence which created these images was proximate to living reality. There is an intimate relationship between spiritual reality and phenomenal reality, and it is achieved through the external representation of the profound internal vision. A religious symbol always invokes in the mind of the worshipper the eternal truth which it represents. The use of holy images thus becomes a support for meditation and capable of kindling in the devoted, visions of the unseen world of divine reality and beauty.

The creative imagination has always played a constructive role in all the religions of the world, helping people form ideas of and worshipful attitudes toward Ultimate Reality. ‘Formless Void’, ‘Unmanifest Absolute’, or ‘in-describable state of bliss’ — these abstruse expressions do not elicit fertile responses in the beginner on the spiritual path. They remain only as attractive rhetoric or purely intellectual formulae to inspire awe in people. Mind needs names and forms to function. Without names and images it cannot proceed much from the beginning. It is highly advanced spiritual souls only who like to dwell in the state of ‘Pure Awareness’ bereft of names and forms. Even the *Gita* cautions that the contemplation of the Absolute or the Unmanifest is very difficult. This arduous path is not easily accessible to all and sundry. It is through concentrating on the object of its devotion, or on the personal divinity, that the mind achieves a certain degree of one-pointedness, and is able to put aside the multiplicity of distractions. The great Yoga-philosopher Patanjali, has advocated this practical method in his *Yogaśāstra*. The Supreme Knowledge is directly accessible to a concentrated mind. Yoga and art, in Hinduism, were wedded together. The artist, in Buddhism was called *sādhaka*, *mantrin* or *yogin*. The matchless beauty of clouds, flowers, tender leaves or snow-clad mountains can act as external stimulus sufficient to throw mystics into internal states of rapture. Sri Ramakrishna, when he was barely six years old, went into ecstasy when he saw snow-white cranes against the background of dark spreading clouds. “Artistic emotion,” comments Romain Rolland, “a passionate instinct for the beautiful, was the first channel bringing him into contact with God.”² Many devotees and

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. I, p.16.

2. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p.23.



saints had the taste of divine inebriation in the presence of magnificent images of the Madonna, of Christ, of Siva, Visnu or the Goddess Durga, their personal 'chosen forms of God'. Truth, beauty, art, aesthetic appreciation and mysticism are inseparably woven together. As long as mind is not able to transcend the plane of duality, so long idolatry cannot be branded as superstition. Idolatry has, over millenia, not only satisfied the thirst of souls but has also helped them in their spiritual evolution.

The image of Natarāja, the timeless Siva dancing, owes its origin to the creativity of

Saivism in South India. The Saiva scriptures pay rich tributes of praise and offer insightful observations about the idea behind the divine figure. It is an embodiment of the transcendental truth, beauty and joy of Divine Reality. Impersonal truths are the profound realizations that come as revelations to gifted souls. In Kakrihat, near Almora, under the peepul tree, Vivekananda had the rare realization while in meditation, of the oneness of the macrocosm with the microcosm. In the microcosm of the body everything that is there in the macrocosm exists. The whole universe exists within an

atom. The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. In other words, Vivekananda's was the ineffable experience of Siva embracing Siva. Such mind-boggling visions are beyond the power of just-awakened spiritual souls to grasp or contain. To help them understand and appreciate, concepts of the limitless or the all-pervading, require the clothing of concrete symbolism. It is the representation in the Natarāja, the cosmic dance of Siva, that tries to unveil the supreme truths of God. The graceful gestures of hands and feet of Natarāja are replete with deep metaphysical significance.

Siva's worship (Saivism) is as old as Indian civilization. Archaeological finds in Mohenjodaro and Harappa have brought to light some of the deep roots of the cult of Siva spreading beyond the chalcolithic age. The antiquity of Siva's worship in the symbolic *Sivalinga* is prehistoric. The *Mahabharata* and other works repeatedly make mention of the spread of Saivism and its vitality. Krishna himself figures in one place as the chief devotee of *Mahādeva*, and through his austerities he had the glorious vision of the Lord. The *Kirātārjunīya* episode also pointed to the supremacy of Siva. Siva appeared before Arjuna in the disguise of a hunter and humbled his pride. Saivism thrived under the Guptas in the fourth century A.D. according to the records of Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador sent to India by Seleucus. In the South under the patronage of the Pallavas (fourth to ninth century) and Colas (eighth to twelfth century), Saivism became immensely popular. A number of Saiva saints, called *Nayanmars*, through their exemplary lives, ushered in an era of devotion. They also produced prolific devotional and philosophical literature, keeping Siva or Nataraja as their converging point. It is known as *Saiva-siddhanta*, or the final position of Saivism. In Kashmir, in the first half of the ninth century, Saivism as a monistic system of thought arose. It too left a considerable impact. The *Puranas*, specially *Vāyu*, *Kūrma*, *Linga*, *Siva* and others, played commendable roles in

taking different strands from prevalent beliefs and practices and weaving them into a tapestry of religio-philosophical systems.

We learn from history that the image of Siva, made of precious metals, was used in domestic worship during the reign of the Guptas. Over the centuries this art of image casting reached a state of high perfection, revealing aesthetic and religious inspiration. Appreciating the metal icons of South India, "especially in the Kingdom of the Colas," A. L. Basham writes, "the greatest Indian works of art in metal were made by a school of bronze-casters which has not been excelled in the world."³ Further he adds, "The greatest and the most triumphant achievements of Tamil bronze-casting are undoubtedly the dancing Sivas, of which there are many examples dating from the eleventh century onwards. It was as 'Lord of the Dance' that the Tamil Masters specially delighted in portraying the god. Thus Siva appears as the very essence of vital, ordered movement, eternal youth and ethereal light... . Once the religious background is understood, even the Westerner can recognise in the finest specimens of the dancing Siva a genuine religious inspiration, a wholly successful effort at depicting in plastic terms divine truth, beauty and joy."⁴ The Chidamburam temple in Tamil Nadu was already famous in the seventh century A.D. and the sculptures of its *gopura* (gateway) show all the hundred and eight different modes of dance listed in the *Bharata-nātya Śāstra*, the ancient treatise on dance.

Cosmic activity is the central motif of Natarāja's dance. The exquisite figures of Nataraja in bronze and sculptures depicting his different moods are essentially based on *Paurānic* stories. It was the stupendous attempt to portray noumenon and phenomena in one

3. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1975) p.377.

4. *Ibid.* pp.377-78.

divine personality. In this dance pose one witnesses the reversal of roles of Siva and Sakti. Siva is usually described as Unmanifest-actionless and Sakti, his spouse, as the Manifest-dynamic principle. But in this unique portrayal, Siva is dynamic and Uma is the silent witness. It is said in the *Lalitasahasranāma : Maheśvar mahākālpa mahātāndava saksinyai* (V. 232)—*who is the witness of the Supreme Lord's awesome cosmic dance*. Among the various dances of Natarāja, the Saiva scriptures enumerate seven important ones: 1) the *Kālīka-Tāndava*, which represents creation; 2) *Gouri-Tāndava* and 3) *Sandhyā-Tāndava* each denote both the aspects, origination and protection; 4) *Pralaya-Tāndava* each indicates the destruction of the universe; 5) *Tripura-Tāndava* signifies the veiling power (illusion); 6) *Urdhva-Tāndava* specifies release from the bondage, or liberation; and 7) *Ānanda-Tāndava* connotes the dance of the supreme bliss. All these dance poses of Siva encompass the ideas of creation of the universe, its preservation and final dissolution, or absorption, back into the Absolute at the end of the cycle.

Much meaning is attached to the *Mudras*, the poses of the hands and feet of Natarāja. All these indicate the Supreme Lord's activities in different aspects. In most of the images, especially in the magnificent Cola bronzes of the ninth and tenth centuries, Siva is depicted with four arms and flying tresses, dancing on the prone figure of a dwarf demon known as *Mulayaka*, the *Apasmāra-purusa*, symbolic of man's ignorance or ego. The back right hand of Natarāja holds the *damaru* or tabour and the front right hand gestures with the *abhaya-mudrā*, symbolizing God's protection. The rear left hand holds fire in its palm, and the front left hand is held across the Lord's chest, in the *gajahasta*, or elephant pose, indicating auspiciousness. The raised left foot indicates the Lord's grace in granting liberation; and the firmly planted right foot gives shelter to weary souls. The locks of Nataraja's hair stand out in

several strands and are mingled with the Ganga, a skull, and the crescent moon, all traditional insignia recalling Siva's protecting grace, renunciation and *tapasya*. Siva's figure is encircled by a ring of flames denoting the Lord's aureole. Fire held in the palm shows reabsorption of the universe back into Himself.

The dance executed by Siva as King of Dancers is the visible symbol of the cosmic rhythm, and it shows that Siva is the source of all movement within the universe. The purpose of His dance is to release men from the bondage of illusion. The stage of the dance is the centre of the universe, in reality, within the heart. A legend says that Siva once went to Darukāvan to teach a group of rsis who had become very egotistical. They tried to drive the Lord away with their might, but before Him they could not do anything. Enraptured, Siva danced, and his divine dance released the sages from the thraldom of their delusion and they took shelter at His feet. Siva's gestures are five-fold and indicate his five-fold activity (*pancakṛtya*). The *damaru* symbolizes the creation. Out of its sounds the universe is produced. These sounds are electro-magnetic vibrations. Bestowing protection to created beings means Siva blesses them with fearlessness, in love of the Divine Lord. Bearing fire and offering liberation to beings, Siva indicates that He alone is the Source and the Divine Goal of all living and non-living things. Worshipping Him there is no death, but eternal Life. The Lord Himself is the Primal Energy, the Creative power, the Father and Mother of the universe, and the Ever-benign Receptacle to which the whole universe dissolves in the end.

In the Saiva scriptures there are beautiful descriptions— "O my Lord, Thy hand holding the sacred damaru has created and ordered the heavens and earth and the other worlds and innumerable souls. Thy lifted hand protects both the conscious and unconscious order of Thy creation, All these worlds are transformed by Thy hand bearing fire. Thy sacred foot, firm on

the ground, gives an abode to the tired souls struggling in the coils of Karma. It is Thy lifted foot that grants eternal bliss to all that approach Thee. These five actions are indeed Thy Handiwork.

Our Lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses His power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn."

The mystic dance of Natarāja has commanded the adoration of wise men, devotees, artists and savants down the ages. It is one of the grandest symbols ever conceived in the world's religious history. Ananda Coomaraswami significantly remarked that the dance of Siva is a synthesis of science, religion and art. Elaborating he said : "The Nataraja...affords an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature, not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, nor acceptable to the thinkers of one century only, but universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover, and the artists of all ages and all countries. How supremely great in power and grace this dancing image must appear to all those who have striven in plastic forms to give expression to their intuition of Life. ...Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive, not of any superstition or dogma, but of evident facts. No artist of today, however great, could more exactly create an image of that Energy which science must postulate behind all phenomena."⁵

It has already drawn the attention of some scientists. Fritjof Capra, the popular writer, said : "The Eastern mystics have a dynamic view of the universe similar to that of modern physics, and consequently it is not surprising

that they, too, have used the image of the dance to convey their intuition of nature. ...The metaphor of the cosmic dance has found its most profound and beautiful expression in Hinduism in the image of the dancing Shiva. ...According to Hindu belief, all life is part of a great rhythmic process of creation and destruction, of death and rebirth, and Shiva's dance symbolizes this eternal life-death rhythm which goes on in endless cycles. ...The dance of Shiva is the dancing universe; the ceaseless flow of energy going through an infinite variety of patterns that melt into one another. ... Modern physics has thus revealed that every sub-atomic particle not only performs the energy dance, but also is an energy dance, a pulsating process of creation and destruction."⁶ In this way another scientist, Heinz Pagels concluded his book *The Cosmic Code* saying: "Science shows that the visible world is neither matter nor spirit; the visible world is the invisible organisation of energy."⁷

The Primal Energy—that remote impersonal Principle, Divine to the Hindu, becomes intimately personal to a devotee of God. It is sometimes addressed by him as masculine, feminine or neuter— He, She or It—according to his liking. The devotee's conception may be of the form of Goddess Durga, or Kali; or it may be Natarāja or Lord Visnu; but always the principle is that the worshipper is helped towards the discovery of Inner Truth and realization of the Divine Reality. The genius of the Hindu mind lies after all in its hankering to transcend this world of matter and appearances to find the deeper truth. Liberality in religious forms and tolerance of other faiths are glorious but are secondary adjuncts.

5. Ananda Coomaraswami, *The Dance of Shiva* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1948) p. 94.

6. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1976) pp. 256-58.

7. Heinz R. Pagels, *The Cosmic Code* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984) p. 312.

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita

MAMATA RAY

Prof. Mamata Ray sheds light on many factors which brought about the salutary changes in Margaret Noble transforming her into the fully blossomed personality of Sister Nivedita. The author, who is a frequent contributor, is a lecturer in Political Science at Viswa Bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal.

While it is true that Margaret Noble would never have become Sister Nivedita if she had not met Swami Vivekananda "on a cold Sunday afternoon"¹ in November 1895 in London, it would be a distortion of history to say that the transformation took place overnight. The metamorphosis of Margaret Noble was gradual, even tortuous. The purpose of this article is to relate how the year 1895-1896, featuring several discourses in London given by Swami Vivekananda attended by Margaret Noble, marked the beginning of this transformation of Margaret Noble into one of India's greatest friends and faithful servants at the turn of the twentieth century.

I

As has been narrated in the previous article, Margaret Noble was born into a religious family and she herself was very religiously inclined. But, at the same time she was distinctly an independent type, and averse to accepting things unquestioningly. Her independence and high spirits often came into conflict with her religious sensibilities. At the age of ten she clashed with her headmistress who always dwelt on sins and insisted on her young pupils' atoning for such imaginary sins. Margaret felt considerably pained at her admonitions and interpretation of Christian doctrine. How can human beings be looked upon as miserable sinners? The more she would brood over the question, the more repulsive the fundamentalist interpretations would seem to her. She was too

young to revolt against such fare at that time but the foreboding was already there that she would someday refuse to have anything to do with such unenlightened religious teachings. To her it was anything but truth. How can there be truth where there is no freedom?

Eager to find the truth which she believed lay in freedom, Margaret joined at the age of fifteen the Tractarian movement, which aimed at ensuring the freedom and dignity of the Church, *vis a vis* an all-absorbing State. Her initial enthusiasm in espousing the cause of "free" domain for the church, however, soon evaporated when she found too much rigidity and illiberality. Refusing to be regimented in such a movement, she "regained" her personal freedom by leaving. She would not stay and be suffocated by something quite alien to her basic nature.

Persisting in her quest for truth and freedom, she joined later what she supposed to be an open-minded group within the Church of England. In this venture too she was disappointed. The group she soon found was charged with cynicism and intolerance, which entailed for her the very negation of her concept of freedom.

Her disappointment with religious organizations and Church authorities turned into despair during her teachership at Wrexham in 1886-1889, when she found the Church authorities more sectarian than humanitarian in their approach to the service of the poor and the needy. She took to battle against this sectarianism of the Church to the pages of newspapers and journals.

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) Vol. I, p. 17.

Margaret's mental separation from conservative Christianity was now almost complete. It was the end-result of a series of disappointments. Then a vacuum existed in her mind (a vacuum which was all the more agony to her due to the death of the man she loved during her years at Wrexham). In order to find mental peace, Margaret began to search for an answer to questions and the fundamental "wherefore" of things. She tried Christianity over the years and found herself still in need of something. She tried the natural sciences and did not find them very adequate either. Finally she took up the study of Buddhism and was happy to note that Buddha talked not in terms of sins and atonement, but in terms of relieving the sufferings of human beings. Her questing soul was, however, not yet satisfied. She was not yet fully convinced that she had found what she was searching for.

When such was the state of her mind, an invitation came her way one day to meet a "Hindu Swami" who had made a name for himself at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September, 1893. How could she know at the time she accepted the invitation that the Swami was to become the beacon light of her life and lead her to the truth and freedom that she had so long been seeking.

In a lecture entitled "How and Why I Adopted the Hindu Religion" delivered at the Hindu Ladies Social club in Bombay in 1902, Nivedita herself describes this phase of her life. The lecture deserves to be quoted in part for its candidness and the light it throws on Margaret Noble's life:

I was born and bred an Englishwoman and up to the age of eighteen ... I devotedly worshipped the child Jesus ... But after the age of eighteen I began to harbour doubts as to the truth of some of the Christian doctrines. Many of them began to seem to me false and incompatible with truth. These doubts grew stronger and stronger and at the same time my faith in Chris-

tianity tottered more and more. For seven years I was in this wavering state of mind, very unhappy, and yet, very very eager to seek the Truth.

During the seven years of wavering it occurred to me that in the study of natural science I should surely find the truth I was seeking ... but it made the doctrines of the Christian religion seem all the more inconsistent. Just then I happened to get a life of Buddha, and I became more and more convinced that the salvation he preached was decidedly more consistent with the truth than the preachings of the Christian religion.

And now came the turning point for my faith. A cousin of your great Viceroy Lord Ripon invited me to have tea with him and to meet there a great Swami from India who, he said, might perhaps help the search my soul was longing for. The Swami I met here was none other than Swami Vivekananda, who afterwards became my Guru and whose teachings have given relief my doubting spirit had been longing for so long.²

If we take a second look at this statement of Sister Nivedita, we can observe four things:

(a) She was a follower of Christianity up to the age of eighteen. This statement needs some qualification. As has been shown, her unhappiness with some of her Christian experiences began as early as the age of ten, a logical culmination of which was her mental separation from Christian organizations around the age of eighteen. That is to say, she began to harbour doubts about her life and religion long before she reached the age of eighteen. The process which was already on for quite some years became only prominent since she reached the age mentioned in her lecture.

(b) For seven years since the age of eighteen, Margaret Noble was wavering in her

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 160-61

religious conviction, during which time she began to enquire into fundamental questions, the fundamental wherefore of things from the study of natural sciences. This, if anything, made her all the more dissatisfied with her life.

(c) For the next three years, i.e. till the age of twenty-eight she got absorbed in the study of Buddhism which afforded her some pleasure and something more satisfying than her Christian life had been to her. The search, however, was still on.

(d) Her doubting spirit got some relief when she met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895-1896. To her, it must have been like seeing the light at the end of a long and dark tunnel.

The light she saw, however was dim at first. Only gradually it became bright and clear. The first meetings between Margaret Noble and Swami Vivekananda were more of the nature of "encounters" between a "doubting spirit" and an "enlightened soul". In order to understand the true nature of these encounters or what was given and how Margaret reacted, we must give in some detail the accounts of these meetings. But before that, a word or two about Swami Vivekananda.

II

Swami Vivekananda had left India to attend the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. He immediately became famous in America due to his direct and simple, yet profound oratory. His thesis struck the Chicago assembly deeply because even though he spoke as a representative of the Hindu religion, unlike representatives of other religions, he did not address the parliament with an attitude of superiority. His was a universal message which appealed to the hearts of the people. He openly and warmly acknowledged the truth and importance of all the religions represented in the Parliament, and said that though there is one Divine Being who is worshipped in a thousand different forms and names, this should not be the cause of bad feeling, quarrel or divisive

spirit among the various religions. After all, the world religions represented a single truth even though the symbols they used were a thousand in number. To quote Swami Vivekananda:

The whole world of religions is only travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them.³

If the central truth of every religion consists in evolving a God out of man, in recognizing divinity in every man and woman and in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature, then, Swami Vivekananda asked, where is the scope for intolerance, sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism which, in the so-called name of religions, has long taken possession of the earth? Thus, Swami Vivekananda's message at the Parliament of Religions was for tolerance, acceptance and harmony. What made him and his message unique among others at the Parliament, and what struck his American brothers and sisters' most was his plea, not for the triumph of any one of the religions over others, or their destruction, but his plea for keeping realization central in all religions. He said, the aim of religion is to help "man become divine by realizing the divine". He referred to Hinduism as the "mother of all religions" because "the whole religion of the Hindu is centred in *realization*".⁴ (Emphasis added). "The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing—not in believing, but in being and becoming."⁵

In proclaiming the virtues of Hinduism, did Swami Vivekananda mean to convert others to his own beliefs, as is the wont of religious preachers in general? The answer is an emphatic no. That was contrary to the whole message of Swami Vivekananda, contrary to the catholicity

3. *Chicago Addresses* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama. 1968) p. 34.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

of spirit which he exhibited at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and *grow according to his own law of growth.*"⁶

'Assimilate, but grow according to your own law of growth', represents one aspect of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom. How is one to assimilate, yet retain his own individuality? Well, this is to be done the way a seed does it. The seed, put into the ground, assimilates nourishment from air, the earth and water, but does not become either or all of them. It converts what it assimilates into plant substance and grows into a plant.

The other aspect of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom holds that the soul is divine, but it is held in the bondage of matter. The bondage of matter represents *Maya*, the enchantment of the world. So long as the soul is enveloped by *Maya* it is not free. The attainment of freedom consists in bursting such bondage. Freedom so to say, means freedom from doubt, "freedom from death and misery", and release from the bonds of imperfection.⁷ In a word, according to Swami Vivekananda, to realize freedom means to develop according to the laws of one's own individual spiritual nature and innate capacity.

These two complementary aspects of Swami Vivekananda's doctrine of freedom are essential for an understanding of Margaret Noble's transformation into Sister Nivedita.

III

On the eve of her first meeting with Swami Vivekananda, Margaret Noble suffered from deep personal and spiritual loneliness. "Her exterior life—her profession, the social and politi-

cal friendships on which at twenty-nine she might well be proud—could not fill the gulf in her soul."⁸ Margaret did not realize at that time, in that state of her mental despair, that more than anything else what she needed at the moment in her search for truth and spirituality was *freedom*, the sense of buoyancy, and self-assurance that comes only after one comes into contact with one's spiritual destiny. "Cut off the bonds of imperfection and elevate yourself to divinity according to your own true nature," Swami Vivekananda had said. If these words of his counted to her more than anything else, it was because they enabled her to trace the soul within her, which seemed to be lost to her at the time. No wonder that the great Swami who had ended her groping in darkness and illumined her way was soon accepted by her as Guru. But as we have pointed out, this acceptance could not be instantaneous. It came slowly and gradually, and because it was so we should trace as closely as we can the early moments of her conversion when she met the Swami.

Despite the fame Swami Vivekananda earned in America, he was not very widely known in England and was referred to in the press as merely 'a Hindu Swami in London' during his visit to the city in October-November, 1895. Lady Isabel Margesson arranged a lecture⁹ for the Swami in her own house before an intimate gathering of her friends and acquaintances (fifteen or sixteen in number) of whom Margaret was one. Margaret came to the meeting more out of curiosity than anything else, "to hear a Hindu Swami speak".¹⁰

8. Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1935) p. 31.

9. Swamiji's first lecture in London was delivered at the Princes' Hall on October 22, 1895. Margaret was obviously not present on this occasion as she records in her book that she first met Swamiji in Lady Margesson's place in November 1895. See Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1977) p. 12.

10. Reymond, p. 32

6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

What did Swami say to this select group? He spoke on a wide variety of subjects. He made the point that the need for an exchange of ideals between nations, especially between the East and the West, was even greater than the customary exchange of market commodities between them. He elucidated the idea of Hindu "Pan-Theism". He observed that there was but One, even though that One's manifestations were many. He held that love of God and love of man was rightly extolled as the highest religious emotion in both Hinduism and Christianity. He spoke of the infinite power of man, and of *Yoga*—Karma, Bhakti and Jnana, the three paths which lead the human soul to the knowledge of God. With a touch of humour he observed somewhat critically that "it was well to be born in a church, but it was terrible to die there." What he meant by this was that it was not any specific faith, but self-realization which constitutes the essence of religion. And he declared the one message of all religions lies in the call to renunciation.¹¹ Finally, he held that it is the soul, which transcends both the body and mind, and that the goal of individual life lies in the attainment of the freedom of the Soul.

How was the message of Swami received by his audience? "It was not new", or "There was not much of originality in Swamiji's pronouncements", or "All that he has said has been said by other people many times before" were the kind of expressions with which the Swamiji's message was received by the people present, and this surely included Margaret Noble as well who was, more than anybody else, suffering at that time from a kind of scepticism. Writing ten years later as to the reason for coldness or indifference, and also possibly stubborn pride with which Swamiji's audience reacted; Margaret wrote that it was a difficult audience, chosen in the first place for their sceptical attitudes — an audience which came to the meeting

psychologically pre-disposed to a sort of resistance to whatever the Hindu Yogi might have had to say. To quote her,

We were not very orthodox, or open to belief, we who had come to meet the Hindu Yogi, as he was called in London at that time... Most of us had, I incline to think, been singled out for the afternoon's hospitality, on the very score of our unwillingness to believe, for the difficulty of convincing us. ...Only this habit...can, as I now think, furnish any excuse for the coldness and pride with which we all gave our private verdicts on the speaker at the end of our visit.¹²

Whatever verdict Margaret Noble might have passed in a hurry about Swamiji's lecture, her conscience was far from easy in dismissing in such a crude fashion the message of a new mind: "It occurred to me that though each separate *dictum* might find its echo or its fellow amongst things already heard or already thought, yet it had never before fallen to my lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour had been able to express all that I had hitherto regarded as highest and best. I therefore took the only two opportunities that remained to me, of hearing the Swamiji's lectures while he was still in London".¹³

The lectures referred to in Nivedita's writings were delivered by Swamiji on the 16th and the 23rd of November, 1895. Swamiji left England for America in November itself, but returned to London in April 1896 and continued his discourses, meeting as many as four times his followers. Lizelle Reymond points out that ..."Friday was the day set apart for questions. Margaret would submit the Swami each time to a veritable cross-examination which the rest of the audience followed with growing interest. Her clear voice invariably began the bombardment: "Excuse me, Swamiji, but you said that..." and a passionate discussion [would] ensue."¹⁴ The purpose of such cross-examination

11. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, "The Master As I Saw Him" Vol.I. p. 19.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

14. Reymond, p. 45.

was for Margaret to be as clear as possible about what Swamiji was saying. The more she questioned, the more she became convinced of the soundness of what the Swami preached. And, as Barbara Foxe points out, with every meeting she attended she "came nearer" to Swami Vivekananda."¹⁵

IV

What was the highest and best that Margaret Noble identified in Swami Vivekananda's thoughts through attending his lectures delivered in London in 1895 and 1896 through her studious reflections on what she heard? More than any newness of thought that Swami Vivekananda brought to the fore, Margaret was impressed by the breadth of his religious culture, by the fact that Swamiji "took his stand on what was noblest and best in us, the fact that his call was sounded in name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man."¹⁶

As regards his breadth, Margaret writing ten years later as Sister Nivedita, noted down:

Neither then, nor at any aftertime, did I ever hear him advocate to his audience any specialized form of religion. He would refer freely enough to the Indian sects—or as I would like to call them 'Churches'—by way of illustration of what he had to say. But he never preached anything but that philosophy which, to Indian thinking, underlies all creeds.¹⁷

Since religion, to Swamiji, was a matter of realization and not mere belief in any 'faith' or

sect in the conventional sense of the term, he upheld "the perfect freedom of every soul to be itself"¹⁸ to realize for itself the truth of the "Immanent God"¹⁹ And where is the God? Is he in the Heaven? No, He is in the temple of the human body itself, in the soul of man himself. "He is in our own hearts. Thou art He, O man! Thou art He!"²⁰

How was the freedom of the realized soul to be attained? Often Swamiji's one-word answer to this question was that freedom is to be attained through renunciation. All the three great paths of *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* (Knowledge, love and disinterested work) required renunciation on the part of the questing soul. Man must grow continually into Pure Consciousness. Transcending the body and lower order of consciousness, he can attain spiritual consciousness only by refusing to be ruled by desires, by the ego, by the body, by the emotions. Why is the body to be transcended? Because the body represents the *Maya*, the seat of man's attachment to the sensory existence. We are in *Maya*, in bondage, we are in slavery so long as we inordinately crave for the satisfaction of the senses. In order to attain the freedom of the realized soul we must grow by consciousness given by renunciation, *out of Maya into the Self*. To be into the self is to know the immanence of God—*So'ham, So'ham, I am He; I am He*. From *Maya* into the *Self* through renunciation—these three concepts represent the whole of Swamiji's philosophy of life as well as of religion.

Giving her own understanding of swamiji's philosophy of life and religion in the perspectives of *Maya*, *Self*, and *Renunciation*, Sister Nivedita wrote:

By *Maya* thus meant that shimmering, elusive, half-real, half-unreal complexity, in which there is no rest, no satisfaction, no ultimate certainty, of which we become

15. Barbara Foxe, *Long Journey Home* (London: Riderand Co., 1975), p. 26. Philosophical enlightenment apart, these frequent meetings helped Margaret develop a good personal rapport with Swamiji, enabling her to tell him of her personal problems, her educational and even political activities. According to Lizelle Reymond, "When Margaret showed him her school, he wept with joy." (p. 48). The thought of having someone as dedicated as Margaret to work for the education of poor children and women of India must have crossed his mind at that time. It was only a matter of some gap in time before such an invitation from Swamiji came her way.

16. *The complete works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. I, p. 24.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 7

19. *Ibid.*, p. 25

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aware through the senses, and through the mind as dependent on the senses. At the same time—"And *That* by which all this is pervaded, know *That* to be the Lord Himself!" In these two conceptions, placed side by side, we have the whole theology of Hinduism as presented by Swami Vivekananda in the West.²¹

Giving her own slightly extended interpretation of Swamiji's philosophy of renunciation, Sister Nivedita observes that by renunciation, Swamiji actually meant 'conquest' of ease, sustained and determined effort, absorption in hard problems through lonely hours, and the achievement of mastery not just in the field of religion but in any field of life. It means taking life as a battlefield rather than a ballroom. "To him," as Sister Nivedita writes of Swami Vivekananda, "the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of monk or the door of the temple".²²

Stephenson, who by sustained toil and refusal of ease, invented the steam engine, was as great in his own way as any saint or monk worth the name, in religion. Swamiji thus said (in the urgency of the moment for rousing up India), "Make no distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce." One final comment that Nivedita makes reveals her own philosophy of life in a better light than any she could have written to express :

Towards the end of his life I told him that renunciation was the only word I had ever heard from his lips. And yet in truth I think, that "conquer" was much more characteristic of him.²³

Commenting on Margaret Noble's perception of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, Lizelle Reymond observes :

... in this philosophy Margaret perceived all the efforts, mutually subordinated, that she had made upto that time, all the development, she had passed through in her religious experience. A new light shown upon her life, revealing to her all its difficulties and unhopd-for openings.²⁴

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

24. Reymond, p. 46.

Margaret Noble's initiation into her new thought-world begun in 1895, had progressed a lot indeed by 1896. She was now deeply attracted by the personality of Swami Vivekananda and could not but do obeisance to the character of a man who placed the cultivation of strength and character above everything else.²⁵ It was the heroic fibre of the Swami that could but compel her admiration. Also, she could not but be astounded to see the breadth of his religious culture and experience. While other religious teachers known to her would claim finality for what they spoke or stood for, Swami Vivekananda was completely unlike them. "Although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to the extent that this recognition implies," wrote Margaret years later, "I became his disciple."²⁶

It is a further measure of the breadth of Swami Vivekananda's religious culture that he sounded his call in the name of all that was strongest, finest and noblest in man, and never in the name of sectarianism, bigotry or fanaticism or, so to say, the meaner elements in man. He taught both tolerance and universal acceptance as well as the validity of all religious paths. He taught that each soul is potentially divine and that human beings should be viewed,

25. To quote Nivedita, "And above all, he preached that character, and character alone, was the power that determined the permanence of a religious wave. Resistance was to his mind the duty of the citizen, non-resistance of the monk. And this, because, for all, the supreme achievement was strength." *The complete Works of Sister Nivedita* Vol. I, 28. Another western disciple of Swamiji wrote of him, "His whole purpose was, not to make things easy for us, but to teach us how to develop our innate strength. 'Strength ! Strength !' he cried. 'I preach nothing but strength. That is why I preach the Upanishads.' ...His attitude had the effect of a tonic. Something long dormant was aroused, and with it came strength and freedom." Quoted from Barbara Foxe, p. 26.

26. *The Complete works of Sister Nivedita* vol. I. p. 22.

not as sinners, but as divinities on earth.²⁷ Yes, divinities! Because man has the god-like power within himself to raise himself above the world to a pure life. Once Swamiji gave an illustration: Ordinarily a woman who is a mother would be frightened away from a place by the sight of a tiger. "But suppose," he said, with a sudden change of tone, "suppose there were a baby in the path of tiger! Where would your place be then? At his mouth—any one of you I am sure of it."²⁸ The point of his illustration was that human beings—children of God, of course, and not sinners, are capable of supreme sacrifices, and being motivated by love entailing total selflessness. That kind of conscious elevation of the human soul to the noblest and best that is already in us, was, to Swami Vivekananda, religion in the highest sense of the term—*realization*, or so to say, *the freedom of the realized soul*.

The one thing that man is struggling for is the freedom of his soul. He is always seeking to burst the bondage of his imperfections, his Maya, so to say, without perhaps even being aware of it. But the struggle he must carry on, till by continuous conquest of the meaner ele-

ment of him, he realizes the noblest and best in himself. As Swami Vivekananda proclaimed, "All our struggle is for Freedom, we seek neither misery nor happiness but Freedom, Freedom alone."²⁹

V

Could Margaret Noble struggling for freedom, for complete self-expression of the essential perfection within her, ignore the call of a man who took his stand always, as she says, "on what was noblest and best in us"? She obviously could not. Because Swami Vivekananda represented in his person that thing, that freedom steeped with selfless love, which she had been searching for right from her childhood. No wonder that before Swamiji left the West on his return for India towards the end of 1896, Margaret Noble addressed him as "Master" and expressed her desire to make herself "*the servant of his love for his people*."³⁰

Margaret Noble found in Swami Vivekananda what she was seeking. Her real career had now just started. Giving her candid acknowledgement that she could never have been what she became later had she not met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895, she wrote

27. In response to Margaret Noble's query as to what was his ideal, Swami Vivekananda wrote a very illuminating letter to her from his London address on June, 1896:

"Dear Miss Noble, My ideal can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ...Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call." As a matter of fact, Swamiji meant by 'yoga' the union of the 'god within' with the 'god outside', i.e. the union of the soul of man with the whole universe. Comparable is Rabindranath's singing to the following effect: "*Visvasathe yoge jethay biharol seikhanete jog tomar sathe amaro*." (My union with thee takes place at the point where thou meet with the whole universe.) In Swamiji's system of thought, yoga, divinity, renunciation and freedom are all inter-linked concepts. Yoga leads to divinity and freedom. Renunciation is the method of attaining yoga, divinity, and freedom. Renunciation in this sense means the abnegation of the self, i.e. the meaner elements as represented by the ego of man, and the cultivation of Self, i.e. the best and noble elements in the innate divine nature of man, leading to the union of the human soul with the cosmic

soul. Man's true freedom lies in developing his nature to the level of divinity. As Swamiji said in one of his greatest lectures before his London audience (which included Margaret Noble, for certain): "That ideal of freedom that you perceived was correct but you projected it outside yourself and that was your mistake. Bring it nearer and nearer, until you find that it was all the time within you, it was the self of your own self. That freedom was your own nature...not only to see it intellectually, but to perceive it, actualize it, much more definitely than we perceive this world. Then we shall know that we are free." (See Barbara Foxe, p. 29) Central to Swamiji's system of thought was such realization. Whether he talked of yoga or of religion or divinity or renunciation or freedom, he drove always essentially at this kind of realization on the part of the human soul. If there is any one word which holds the key to Swami Vivekananda's system of thought, it is *realization*.

28. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol I, p. 24

29. Quoted in Reymond, p. 34

30. *The complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol I, p. 22

(Contd. on Page 141)

Technology Alternatives For The Use Of Rice Husks

PROF. P. K. MEHTA

Continuing in his illustrated paper begun in our January issue, Prof. Mehta gives more on the technology of producing construction cement economically and efficiently using the agricultural by-product, rice husks. There is no gainsaying, it could prove a boon to India's developing housing projects. The article is the outcome of the author's research in 'materials' at the University of California's Civil Engineering Department, Berkeley, U.S.A.

In his book, *Good Work*, the late E.F. Schumacher described his dream of mini-cement plants for providing cement to the rural poor in developing countries; this dream can be fulfilled by introducing appropriate technologies for the manufacture of pozzolan cements. For instance, pozzolan cements from rice husk ash (RHA) can be made at a surprisingly small scale and low cost, provided that the science of these cements and the socio-economic aspects of the technology alternatives are properly understood. These points are covered in this review of the pozzolan cements and technologies for making RHA cements.

Pozzolans and Pozzolan Cements

Chemical reactions which lead to the formation of calcium silicate hydrates are the basis of cementitious properties in water-resisting mortars and concretes used for construction purposes. Mortars and concretes in ancient Greece and Rome were made by mixing lime and volcanic ash which served as a source of reactive silica. Named after the town of Pozzuoli near Mt. Vesuvius, such reactive silica materials are called pozzolanas or pozzolans.

According to the American Society of Testing and Materials, pozzolans are defined as siliceous, or siliceous and aluminous, materials which in themselves possess little or no cementitious value but will, in finely divided form and in the presence of moisture, chemically react with calcium hydroxide at ordinary tempera-

tures to form compounds possessing cementitious properties.

Many natural and industrial materials possess pozzolanic properties such as volcanic ash, diatomaceous earth, calcined clay or shale, and fly ash produced by the combustion of pulverized coal. In general, the rate at which a pozzolan can react with calcium hydroxide at ordinary temperature is dependent on silica content, crystallinity of silica, and surface area of the material. Amorphous or non-crystalline silica is most reactive, whereas crystalline forms of silica show only a little reactivity to lime. Generally, the lime-pozzolan cements contain 20 to 30 per cent lime by weight.

Modern pozzolan cement is generally made by blending portland cement with a pozzolan. When compared to lime-pozzolan mixtures, Portland-pozzolan mixture develop higher strengths, and at a much faster rate, even when the pozzolanic material is of low reactivity. However, these properties are not essential for small-scale building and since portland cement is expensive and generally unavailable to the rural poor whereas lime may be less expensive and relatively easily made from local limestone, it may be assumed that lime-pozzolan cements can be a feasible alternative in many areas of developing countries. In this context, it is important to note that if satisfactory and consistent setting and hardening properties are desired, the use of a pozzolan with high pozzolanic activity is more important in the case of lime-pozzolan

cements than in Portland-pozzolan cement since lime itself is not cementitious.

Technologies for converting Rice Husks to Cement

Rice husks contain about 40 per cent cellulose, 30 per cent lignin, and 25 to 30 per cent hydrated silica which is present in non-crystalline form. Although cellulose and lignin can be separated from the silica by chemical extraction, combustion is a more economical method. The method of burning is the key to the production of RHA with high pozzolanic activity. Another consideration is the importance of recovering energy as a by-product of the process, since 3,500 cal/g heat energy is released on combustion of rice husks.

The US Technology

Experiments by the author at the University of California in the early 1970s showed that the silica in RHA can be maintained in a highly pozzolanic state if the temperature of combustion is kept below 700°C and if the ash is not held too long at the high temperature. The ash, consisting mostly of silica, was found to be completely amorphous, porous, and easy to grind. The surface area of the lightly ground product was 55m²/kg, and it became the basis of production of both lime-pozzolan-type cements possessing excellent strength and durability characteristics. (Recently, concrete cylinders made six years ago with Portland RHA cement containing 35 per cent ash by weight showed compressive strengths on the order of 80 Mpa or 816 kg/cm² after continuous exposure to a moist environment, as compared with 60 Mpa or 612 Kg/cm² for the control concrete made with Portland cement only.)

In the USA, huge piles of husks near centralized rice-milling areas present a serious waste disposal problem. Based on the scientific work at the University of California, Pitt designed an air-suspension furnace which converted rice husks into a highly pozzolanic ash. Since energy recovery rather than the initial

plant cost is of more interest to US entrepreneurs, the 1/4-tons and 7-tons per hour rice-husk-burning furnaces installed respectively in California and Arkansas were equipped with boilers for making steam. Also, due to the great demand for the acid-resisting cements in the US, only Portland cement-based RHA cements were produced. Thus, the economic viability of this capital-intensive technology is made possible through the efficient recovery of heat energy as steam despite the high selling price of the high-strength acid-resisting cement needed in the construction of floors and walls in meat-processing, fertilizer, and chemical plants.

Based on the Mehta and Pitt process, a 1-ton per hour rice-husk-burning air-suspension furnace with a boiler is currently under installation in Malaysia.

Technologies Developed in India and Pakistan

A process for making cement by intergrinding lime and crystalline RHA, obtained from uncontrolled burning in parboilers, was reported by Dr. P. Kapoor of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. At the first UNIDO/ESCAP/RCTT workshop on RHA Cement in Pakistan a manufacturer of this cement, called Ashmoh, stated that the ash was difficult to grind and the cements were of low strength failing, at times, to set and harden. Subsequent work at the Cement Research Institute of India (CRI) has shown that the energy consumption rate for grinding the crystalline RHA from parboilers to a specific fineness was about twice the rate for grinding the amorphous RHA from the controlled incineration process. Also, the lime reactivity values showed a gradual decrease from 160 to less than 20 kg/cm² from the amorphous to the parboiler RHA.

A modification of the IIT, Kanpur process involves the use of Portland cement, instead of lime. For intergrinding crystalline RHA and Portland cement, a 3 tons per day capacity unit is in commercial operation at Kurukshetra, India. The crystalline RHA is produced by an open-field burning operation.

The Central Building Research Institute of India developed a process in which the heat produced by the combustion of rice husks was used to calcine limestone, and the product pulverized into a cementitious material. Since the calcination of limestone to lime requires temperatures in excess of 900°C, the RHA becomes crystalline and, therefore, of little value as a pozzolan. No commercial application of the process is reported. The Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) produced amorphous RHA by overnight combustion of rice husks in used oil drums which were fitted with chimneys in order to obtain a good air draft and to keep the combustion temperature low. The experimental cements produced by intergrinding the ash with lime gave a significantly lower strength than Portland cement, but the product was considered adequate for use as a masonry cement.

A CRI development was a 300 kg/day incinerator to make amorphous RHA, which is interground with 40 to 50 per cent hydrated lime by weight to produce a masonry cement capable of giving about 10 Mpa (102 kg/cm²) strength at 28 days. A 3-ton/day unit is in commercial operation in Haryana, with a cost similar to that of the Kurukshetra plant. An undesirable feature of both the PCSIR and CRI incinerators is that the heat energy produced is completely wasted.

Rice Husks as Fuel for Cooking.

In the major rice-growing countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, rice husks have been used for centuries as a cooking fuel in households and small hotels. The portable domestic cooker used in India (called *angithi*) and Bali for burning either rice husks or compacted sawdust as fuel, consists of a cylindrical sheet-metal container lined with clay. It is usually about 12 inches in diameter and of similar height. Two pieces of wood, one placed horizontally at the bottom and the other placed vertically in the middle of the cylinder, provide an ingenious method of getting air for combus-

tion. When the cooker is packed to the top with rice husks, the pieces of wood are gently removed, thereby leaving behind vents for air. The *angithi* normally costs about Rs. 55/.

The cooker used in hotels in India (called *bhatti*) and the Philippines is constructed indoors in the form of a rectangular chamber of about 6 x 4 x 3 ft made from either fireclay or sheet-metal lined with fireclay. Rice husks are fed in at the top at one end while the smoke is removed through a roof-top chimney at the other end. An inclined cast-iron grate (Fig. 1) is used to draw combustion air by natural draft. The ash accumulates at the bottom and is periodically removed by means of a manual stoker. Ash derived from these burning operations in Asia consists mainly of crystalline silica and contains considerable amounts of carbon and even unburnt husks, and is invariably wasted. The cost of construction of the cooker is about Rs. 1,800/-. It is capable of continuous operation and can handle two to four large cooking pots.

An Evaluation of the Available Technology Alternatives.

From the standpoint of strength and durability characteristics of product, consistency of quality, utilization of the maximum potential of the raw material (both as a source of energy and a highly pozzolanic ash), and economic viability, the technology developed in the United States has proved to be sound. The capital costs, however, may keep it beyond the reach of many entrepreneurs in developing countries.

The technologies developed at IIT and the Central Building Research Institute of India would require much less capital investment, but do not make scientific and economic sense because they permit the conversion of a highly valuable form of silica present in the rice husk into a virtually useless ash composed of crystalline silica. Crystalline silica requires considerable energy expenditure (prolonged ball-milling) to develop some pozzolanic ac-

tivity; even then, the cements produced are low in strength. They may be used for ordinary plastering and masonry work in building construction but strict quality control will have to be exercised; a difficult job when there is large variation in the quality of RHA such as par-boiler or field-burnt ash. The main drawback of the CRI and PCSIR processes is that the heat energy potential of rice husks is totally wasted.

Although the idea of recovering heat energy and making cement from rice husks has great potential for the developing countries, none of the available technologies appears to meet the requirements of the most needy in these countries. These people have nothing to invest, so how can they buy ball mills for grinding cement, or pay for the manufactured product to improve their housing conditions? Another consideration is the time spent in rural areas gathering firewood for domestic cooking.

From the above it follows that, ideally, the RHA cement technology appropriate to the needs of the people in developing countries should not only be inexpensive but people-oriented. It should be able to provide pozzolanic ash for making cement of consistent and high quality, at the same time satisfying people's needs for a readily available source of domestic fuel. With this object in mind, first at Berkeley and later at the Centre for Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas (ASTRA), Institute of Science, Bangalore, the author developed an inexpensive cooker which uses rice husks as fuel and produces a non-crystalline silica ash. This cooker, described below, is somewhat similar in operation to the Indian *tandoor*.

Design and Operation of the Tandoor-type Rice Husk Cooker.

The cooker consists essentially of two parts, namely a ring and a removable lid with a spout in the middle which serves as a vent for smoke. The parts can be easily made from fired-clay by a village potter; or a mason can fabricate them from ferrocement. From the standpoint of safe thermal load (to keep silica in the amorphous

state) the maximum diameter of the ring was fixed at 15", and the height at 6". Adequate insulation against heat loss can be provided if the wall thickness is half an inch or more. As shown in Fig. 2, the ring and cover assembly is placed on a 3 mm wire-mesh screen which rests on top of two bricks. As rice husks produce a dense smoke during evolution of the volatile matter, the cooker is best suited for outdoor operation.

Rice husks are difficult to ignite. Once ignited, they burn in two stages. In the first stage, the volatile matter is removed in the form of bluish dense smoke. The brownish residue left behind is called char, which contains unburnt carbon from cellulose. The heat for cooking food is derived from the combustion of char to ash.

In order to start ignition of husks, dry leaves and grass are piled under the wire-mesh and are lighted after the ring (without the lid) is loaded with husks to a depth of about 1" only. When the colour turns from yellow to brown, more husks are added and the process is repeated until the ring is full of char; about 2 kg of husks are needed for this. Meanwhile, when the charring process is underway, about 1/2 litre of rice is soaked in 1 litre water in a 7" diameter earthenware pot, and 1/4 litre of lentils or beans are soaked in a similar quantity of water in another pot. The two-pot assembly (Fig.2) is inserted in the middle of the ring as soon as it is full of char. The ring is then covered with the lid; cooking time is about two hours. The quantity of food is adequate for a family of three to four persons. The food in the cooker can keep warm for several hours after the char has fully burnt. A local potter in the Bangalore area sold the fired clay-ring and lid assembly for Rs. 9/-, and earthenware cooking pots for Rs 4/-, thus the entire cooking system including the wire-mesh costs about Rs. 16/-.

Due to low heat-mass and small bed-thickness, the measured temperature in the cooker did not exceed 600°C. Each 2 kg batch of husks produced about 400 g ash which contained 2 to

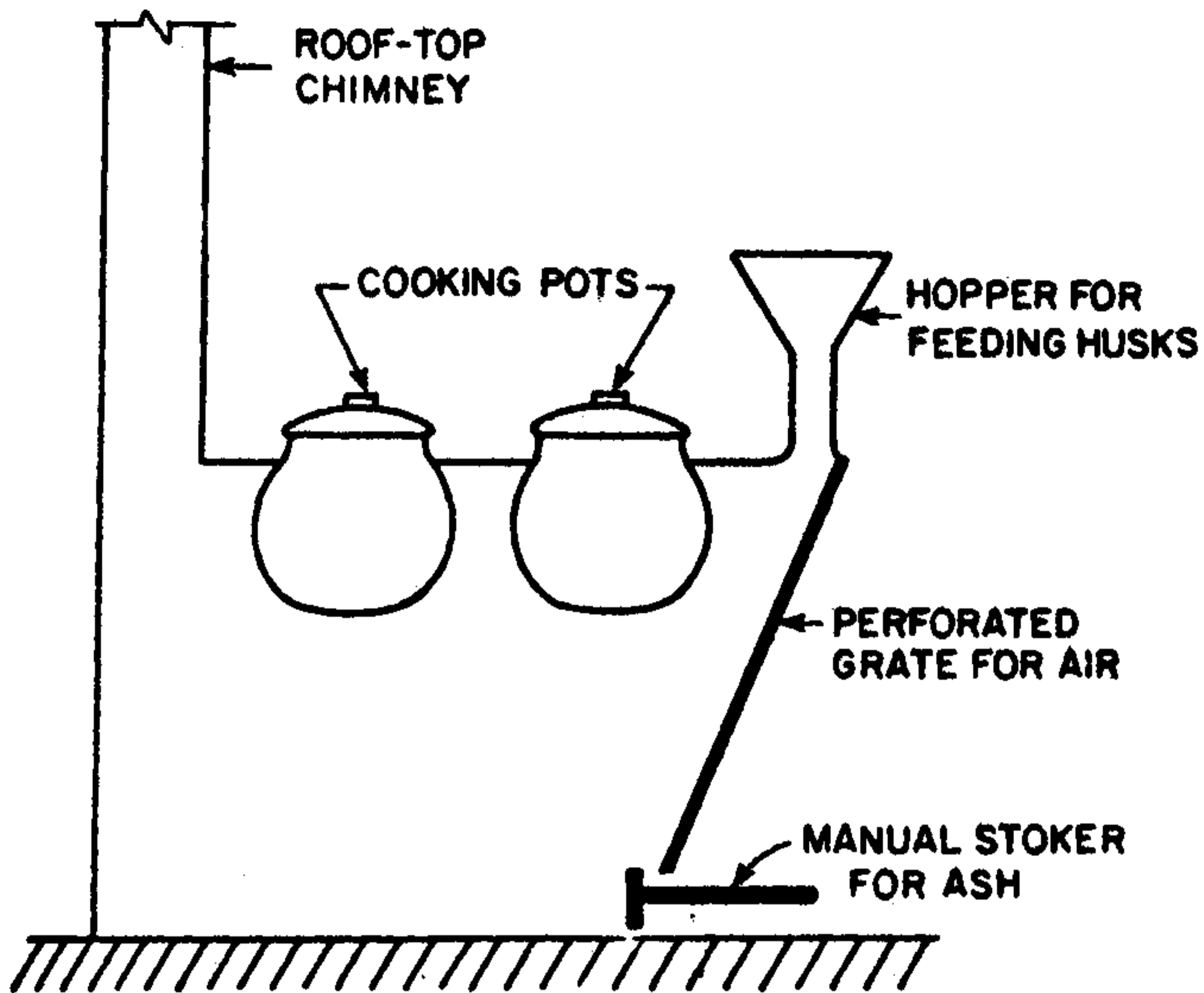


Fig 1 Bhatti-type indoor rice-husk cooker

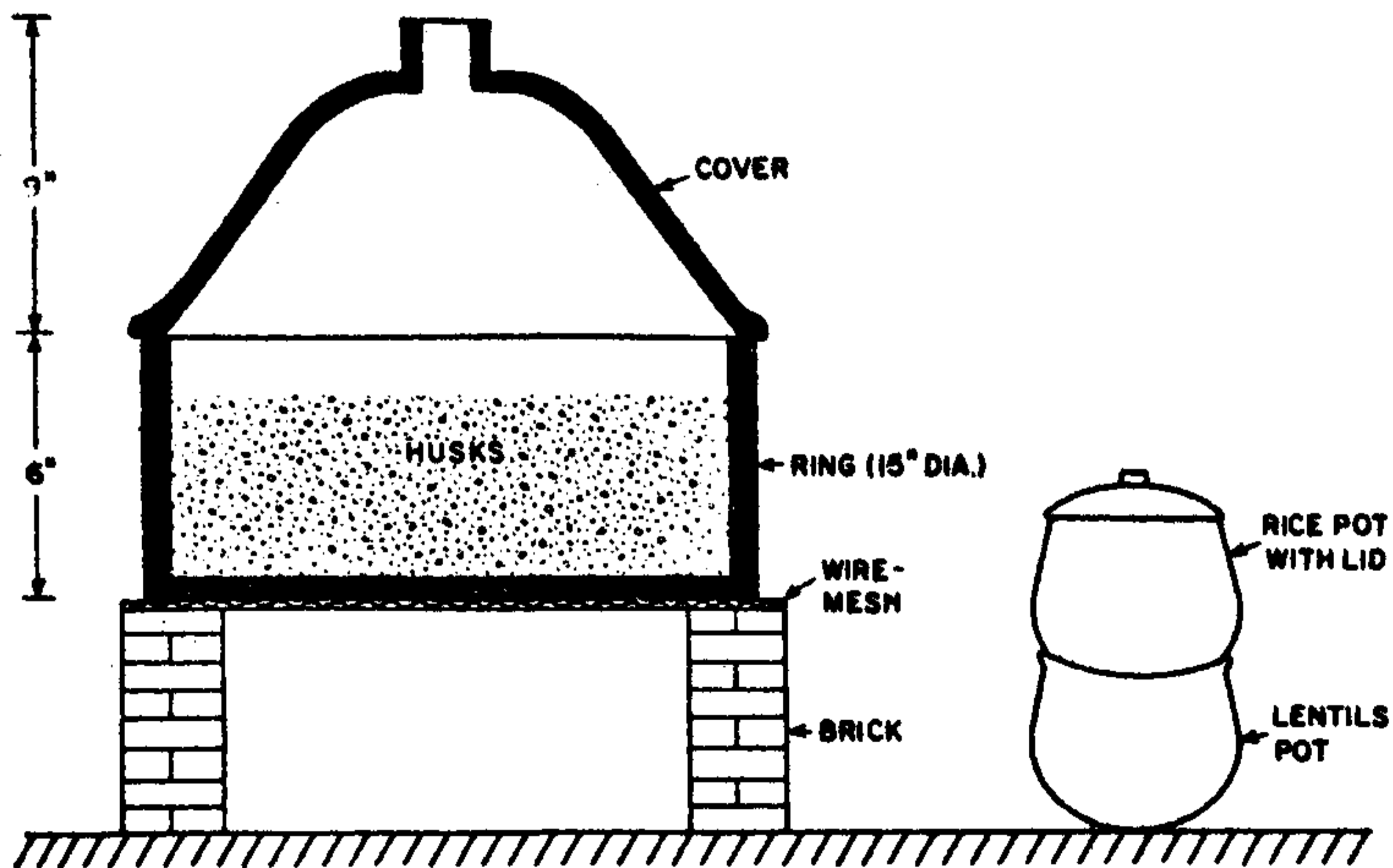


Fig 1 Tandoor-type outdoor rice-husk cooker

4 per cent carbon, the rest being essentially silica. The absence of large diffraction peaks in the tandoor ash confirms that silica therein was essentially non-crystalline. The ash was soft and could be ground easily into a high surface-area product using a pestle and mortar or a hand-operated stone grinder.

Assuming two cooker operations a day, a month's ash will amount to 24 kg which, on blending with 6 kg of freshly slaked lime, would produce a bagful of high-quality cement. This may not seem a large quantity of cement for one household, but the technology demonstrates an idea which can provide the basis for making poor communities self-reliant in cement. For the best results, village co-operatives should be formed to collect the pozzolanic ash in one place and provide cement to each member in turn. Co-operatives would have the added advantage of setting up a quality-control laboratory, and centralized grinding of lime-ash mixture with an edge-runner or other types of equipment which may be less expensive in capital and operating costs than ball mills.

Selection of an Appropriate Technology.

Due to the wide diversity of industrial and social conditions within large rice-growing countries, a single solution to the problem of selecting a technology which is appropriate to the entire country is not feasible. There are certain areas in Brazil, India, Malaysia, and Vietnam where the disposal of rice husk heaps is a major problem, and high-strength acid-resistant cements of the type produced in the USA would be useful for industrial applications. In such cases, proper utilization of the raw material potential, and fulfilment of local needs will be optimized by selecting the air-suspension type of furnace. On the other hand, there are vast areas in many developing countries where, due to decentralized rice-milling, the collection of rice husks for large-scale burning would be expensive. Where rice husks are already in great demand as a fuel for domestic and restaurant

use, and cementitious materials are badly needed for improving the quality of housing for the poor, it will be highly desirable to adopt technologies which permit small-scale manufacture of lime-pozzolan cements from pozzolanic ash.

Thus, at one end of the spectrum is the capital-intensive technology which is quite efficient from the standpoint of utilization of maximum energy and pozzolanic potential of the raw material; at the other end is the inexpensive technology of a domestic rice-husk cooker which is not as efficient as the air-suspension furnace. In between, there are limitless possibilities. How about a sealed-down version of the air-suspension furnace for community kitchens? Or improvements in the design and operation of *tandoor*, *angithi*, and *bhatti* to make them more energy efficient, at the same time producing ash with good pozzolanicity?

This is because the success of lime-RHA cements depends on the recognition that the lime-pozzolan reaction is very slow and therefore, even for ordinary construction work, good pozzolanicity in the ash is needed to achieve adequate strength in a reasonable time. In short, the technology can be modified or developed to suit the social and economic objectives of a society, but the underlying scientific principles have to be understood and respected.

Conclusion.

While the American technology for recovering energy and making high-strength cements from rice husks may not be suitable for large-scale applications in developing countries, the alternative technologies being developed in the rice-growing countries of Asia are neither aimed at utilization of the full potential of the raw material, nor take into account the needs of the poor for a readily available cooking fuel and a masonry cement of reliable quality. Although these alternative technologies are less expensive than the US technology, they are still beyond

the reach of the poor; also, the quality of cement has been neither adequate nor consistent.

Only a technology based on sound scientific principles can be quality-effective; only one which is owned and controlled directly by the people at the lowest strata of society can be relied upon to serve their needs. Rice husks and

other crop residues, which yield large quantities of high-silica ash on combustion have the potential of making a significant contribution to meeting the needs of the poor in developing countries for domestic fuel and low-cost cement provided the scientific and socio-economic aspects of the technology alternatives are kept in proper perspective.

Miss Noble Into Sister Nivedita (Contd. From Page 134)

years later to a friend : "...suppose Swami had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso!"³¹ In the interest of fairness to history, it must be added however that the Master needed the Disciple as much as the Disciple needed the Master. The disciple needed the master to harmonize all her possibilities while the Master needed the disciple to have someone (to quote Nivedita's own words), "...to pour his own mind and thought into"³² ... to have above all, " a woman radiating with infinite freedom, who had developed her talents to the limit of their capacity, who had amassed gifts which could be used later like helpful

tools."³³ Therefore, one evening in November 1896, when in a gathering at the house of Henrietta Muller in which both the Master and the disciple were guests, Margaret announced through Miss Muller that she intended to realize herself by working for the Master in India, Swami Vivekananda gently responded by saying: "Yes in India...that is where you belong."³⁴

That moment marked an epoch—the beginning of an era of transformation in the life and career of the disciple that was to become Sister Nivedita.

31. Letter to Miss Josephine MacLeod, dated July 26, 1904. See *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Editor, Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta : Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol II, P. 661

32. *Ibid.*

33. Reymond, p. 52.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 53

Sri Ramkrishna's Relevance for an Emerging World View

S. SRINIVASACHAR

(Continued from the previous issue)

This is part three of the author, Sri S. Srinivasachar's article on how men may develop a new way of looking at themselves and the world. The learned author discusses the mystics' intuitive perceptions of spiritual truths, and revolutionary changes brought about the science against the background of man's ever-present problem of living at peace in society, in mixed cultures and strained environment. The author is on the teaching faculty of the Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore.

Arthur Koestler wrote that in one of his early experiences as a communist he found himself involuntarily in a mystic state while he was in General Franco's prison cell awaiting execution along with many others. " ... that I had ceased to exist.. [because it (the 'I') had been] ... dissolved in the Universal Pool, [bringing about] "peace that passeth all understanding." ¹ This state which was apparently not motivated by any religious meditation, came to him spontaneously. It completely altered the author's perceptions on life and he later abandoned communism: " I went to communism (in 1931) as one goes to a fresh spring of water, and I left communism (in 1938) as one climbs out of a poisoned river strewn with the wreckage of flooded cities and the corpses of the drowned. The reeds to which I clung and which saved me from being swallowed up were the outergrowth of a new faith." ²

Sri Ramakrishna's personal experiences of ecstasy in a state of undifferentiated unity is perhaps in a similar class with these, proving the theses that ; 1) Mystic experience knows no barriers of culture or religion or theology, 2) that it is an experience of undifferentiated unity, 3) that it is not capable of being fully communicated to others due to the limitations of lan-

guage, 4) that it is an experience of ineffable joy, and 5) it is paradoxical, transcending logic, space and time. To this must be added the mystics' unanimous view that it is from the highest spiritual experience that all the fundamental ethical values sprout. In an interesting observation that Koestler makes on the basis of his mystic consciousness— " It struck me as self-evident that ... we were all responsible for each other— not only in the superficial sense of social responsibility, but because, in some inexplicable manner, we partook of the same substance of identity, like Siamese twins or communicating vessels.... If everybody were an island, how could the world be a concern of his ?" ³ The mystics hold, without exception, that in a state in which all distinctions are lost, how could there be any distinction between 'I', 'you' and 'they' ? All ideas of injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, selfishness and the like spring only from a sense of separate individuality which is wiped out in spiritual experience. Even the prospect of death loses all meaning, because the fear of death arises only due to our attachment to an insignificantly small world of relations of which we are physically a part. When the 'I' gets dissolved in an ocean of bliss, there is no room for tensions of any kind.

1. Walter T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics*, p. 230

2. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (New York : Macmillan, 1954) p. 15.

Elaborating on the relative ethical implications of an Impersonal God and pantheistic faith

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 355-56

and faith in a personal God, Swami Vivekananda observes : "How can you expect morality to be developed through fear ... [of God] ? It can never be. ... Love cannot come through fear ... [of a personal God] ; its basis is freedom. When we really begin to love the world, then we understand what is meant by brotherhood of mankind, and not before."⁴

In an address which he delivered in 1941 at a symposium on Science, Philosophy and Religion in New York, Albert Einstein almost echoed the same idea when he said :

In this struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a Personal God, that is, give up the source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests.

Upholding the Vedantic concept of unity as a basis for ethics, Swami Vivekananda says :

The motive power of the whole universe, in whatever way it manifests itself, is that one wonderful thing, unselfishness, renunciation, love, the real, the only living force in existence. Therefore the Vedantist insists upon that oneness. We insist upon this explanation because we cannot admit two causes of the universe ... one good and the other evil, one love and the other hatred. Which is more logical ? Certainly the one-force theory.⁵

Vivekananda always held that man is essentially good and his deepest inclination is to do good; if he behaves contrary to this nature it is because of ' the limitation of the unlimited ' by which he means that immoral action comes only when an individual, veiled by ignorance, directs his love through very narrow channels. To Sri Ramakrishna, spiritual life was the ideal, the terminal point of devotion. But what prepared him for it was the purity and inner strength that flowed from love, compassion, service and humility. Whenever he spoke about learned men like Vidyasagar or Keshab Chandra Sen, he was very particular to know whether their learning was accompanied by humility. He attached very high value to this quality because it promoted the qualities of love, compassion, service and a

yearning for God. It was unthinkable that one who yielded to temptations of lust and greed could ever qualify for the spiritual quest: " Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things ? Say but once, ' O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things, but I won't repeat them'. And have faith in His name."⁶ Sri Ramakrishna considered attachment to truth as the greatest of virtues. "If a man clings tenaciously to truth he ultimately realizes God. Without this regard for truth, one gradually loses everything."⁷

Not a Life-negating Mystic

It would be an error to characterize Hindu mysticism as invariably non-dualistic and a negation of life's realities and moral virtues. For a Vedantin, burning love of God should overflow into visible channels of love for the suffering (*Bhūta-dayā*). This love, by its very nature will be universal and not confined to mankind alone. It is never conceded that the spiritual quest should be permitted to deflect a man from his path of duty or self-effort. Dependence on God's mercy can never be a substitute for human effort even as learning and logic cannot be a substitute for the knowledge of God. Sri Ramakrishna asks : " Why should we trouble the Lord for what can be accomplished by our own exertions ? " Referring to householders, he says that they should diligently perform their duties. He does not advise sannyasa for one who has not fulfilled his duties in the world. In another context, while discoursing with a sannyasi he said : " Why should you give up the world ? Since you must fight, it is wise for you to fight from a fort. You must fight against your sense-organs, against your hunger and thirst. Therefore you will be wise to face the battle from the world."⁸ Sri Ramakrishna's idea of renunciation was not based on a philosophy of

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. II, p. 322

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 355

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 138

7. *Ibid.*, p. 312

8. *Ibid.*, p. 627

life-negation. His admonition was that so long as one was engaged in worldly activities, he should be guided by a genuine spirit of service. Everyone should be guided by a genuine spirit of service. Everyone should do sincerely what is enjoined on him by the station he has chosen in life. He is free to enjoy the fruits thereof so long as he does not become covetous. While acts of charity and compassion are necessary, they should become part of his spiritual endeavour and not be motivated by desire for profit or fame. This is real morality. "Those who build hospitals and dispensaries and get pleasure from that, are no doubt good people, but they are of a different type. ... You may think you have no motive behind your work, but perhaps there has already grown (in you) a desire for fame."⁹

Sri Ramakrishna's concept of morality was an integral part of the spiritual quest. Religious intolerance or hatred was, to him, a denial of both the moral and spiritual imperatives. He never failed to emphasize that all the religions of the world contain the same truth, however much they may differ in their theology or externals. To him mere tolerance, however, had a deeper connotation. Tolerance implies a certain amount of condescension towards the other, a facet of the ego which is not fully enlightened. To Sri Ramakrishna, though, it entailed a certain effort to identify with the other point of view to discover its positive side. It was in this spirit that he voluntarily underwent other disciplines — those prescribed by Christianity and Islam, and experienced a vision of the Madonna with Jesus in her arms, or Christ as an embodiment of light and Love, and of Mohammed, the Prophet of God.

New Scientific Thinking And Sri Ramakrishna

" It is the aim of science to establish general rules which determine the reciprocal connection of objects and events in time and space. ... The

fact that on the basis of such laws we are able to predict the temporal behaviour of phenomena in certain domains with great precision and certainty is deeply embedded in the consciousness of the modern man, even though he may have grasped very little of the contents of those laws. ... To be sure, when the number of factors coming into play in phenomenological complex is too large, scientific method in most cases fails us ... " said Albert Einstein.¹⁰

It is no more a point for argument that life is a mystery. An even greater mystery is the world of Superconsciousness. Physicists do not expect, and should not be expected, to give up their mechanistic view because the organic world view cannot help the scientist to solve his technical problems or build machines. The difference between the scientist whose methods are experimental and results quantifiable, and the mystic whose method is meditative, intuitive, and non-quantifiable, is real. But this is no reason to deny the validity of both the levels of Knowledge — one sensory, and the other of the Super-sensory; the one that belongs to relations and the other where relations do not exist. Our storehouse of knowledge has grown both from the rational and from the intuitive faculties. The two are not antagonistic; they are complementary. Where the one stops and cannot proceed on its own momentum, the other takes over, but on an entirely different plane. If Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual endeavours have any meaning at all, it is to demonstrate this complementarity. As we discussed earlier, he did not retire like a hermit to a forest in pursuit of *Nirvāna*. He recognized the value of learning and scholarship, but he proved that one's spiritual experience can be unrelated to such an acquisition. The old dichotomy between science and religion is gradually yielding place to new perceptions in which Capra's 'organic world-view' is, in his words, "... although of little value for science

9. *Ibid.*, p. 671

10. Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions* (Calcutta : Rupa & Co., 1984) p. 38.

and technology on the human scale, becomes extremely useful at the atomic and sub-atomic level."¹¹

The new scientific hypothesis (called the 'bootstrap philosophy' of modern physics)* shares the world-view with Buddhist and Taoist mystics "... that there is mutual interrelation and self-sufficiency" in all phenomena, that there are no fundamental constituents of matter, and "that the universe is an inseparable whole where all forms are fluid and ever-changing and there is no room for any fixed fundamental unity". Indian mystics, Buddhist or Hindu, do not mince words when they speak of the illusory nature of our sensory knowledge, in which pluralities and relations exist in a state of continuous flux.

The human mind works at the empirical level and all our perceptions are conditioned by our sense of space and time which provide the frame for the events of which we ourselves are a part. This has so far determined our World-View. It is exactly this World-view that has bred and nourished the egocentric attitudes in men, involving them not only in mutual conflicts, but pitting them against Nature itself. If Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual exertions are evaluated in the light of new-thinking in sub-atomic physics, microbiology — not to speak of the

alarming ecological crisis, we shall be left with no option but to ponder on the wisdom of Seers who comprehended the organic unity in all the diversity that we see.

The Residual Problem And Sri Ramakrishna's Answer

We are thus left with a residual problem — a problem of vital importance to science as well as to religion — whether the world of flux in which we live, think and operate, is only our mental construct, or *maya*. Also, if according to the mystic view, Superconsciousness alone is the primary reality and the ground of all Knowledge — "material, formless and void of all content", in what way can we comprehend this Consciousness? Is it possible to derive from such relative knowledge a definable goal in terms of values which should regulate our moral and spiritual life? In the state of undifferentiated unity there is extinction of all dualities when the individual soul loses its identity in the Absolute. This extinction of duality should amount to physical annihilation also, since space and time within whose framework the ego functioned are also annihilated.

As a corollary, one would naturally be inclined to enquire whether Sri Ramakrishna faced this problem as a mystic, and if he did, how? This would be of interest to everyone who values religion as a primary force in the evolution of man as a moral and spiritual being. As a *sādhaka* or 'achiever', he experienced various levels of *Samādhi* of which the ultimate state is one of identity with Brahman.

If undifferentiated unity is synonymous with physical annihilation, how can one 'experience' ecstasy in such a state? We see from the records that the mystic returns to his natural state to tell the story, or, is unable to do so because the experience itself was ineffable. Sri Ramakrishna answers this problem in an ingenious way. According to him, what actually happens in this state of identity is that what is annihilated is the grossness of the ego — "the ego of ignorance",

11. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1975) p. 321.

* "Quantum theory has shown that sub-atomic particles are not isolated grains of matter but are probability patterns, interconnections in an inseparable cosmic web that includes the human observer and her/his consciousness. Relativity theory has made the cosmic web come alive, so to speak, by revealing its intrinsically dynamic character; by showing that its activity is the very essence of its being. In modern physics, the image of the universe as a machine has been transcended by a view of it as one indivisible dynamic whole whose parts are essentially interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of a cosmic process. At the sub-atomic level the interrelations and interactions between the parts of the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. There is motion but there are, ultimately, no moving objects; there is activity but there are no actors; there are no dancers, there is only the dance." Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (London: Fontana-Collins, 1982) p.6.

and what survives is the "ego of knowledge" or "the ego of love" or "the servant ego". If we should risk a simile, the ego loses its impurity in the state of non-dualism as gold loses its blemishes in fire. The following dialogue between Sri Ramakrishna and Mahimacharan is significant :

MAHIMA (*to the Master*) : "Sir, can a man return from the plane of samadhi to the plane of the ordinary world?"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (*in a low voice, to Mahima*) : "I shall tell you privately. You are the only one fit to hear it.

"Koar Singh also asked me that question. You see, there is a vast difference between the jiva and Iswara. Through worship and austerity, a jiva can at the utmost attain samadhi, but he cannot come down from that state. On the other hand, an Incarnation of God can come down from samadhi. A jiva is like an officer of the king; he can go as far as the outer court of the seven-storey palace. But the king's son has access to all the seven floors; he can also go outside. ... How [then] do you account for sages like Sankara and Ramanuja ? They retained the 'ego of Knowledge'. ... If you see in anyone a trace of 'I-consciousness' after the attainment of true Knowledge, then know that it is either the 'ego of Knowledge' or the 'ego of Devotion' or the 'servant ego'. It is not the 'ego of ignorance'. ... The God of the jnani is full of brilliance, and the God of the bhakta full of sweetness."¹²

In other words, this survival of ego in its purer form is a gift of God's mercy that comes to the *Iswarakotis*, freed souls, who, "on returning to the plane of relative consciousness after attaining samadhi" can work for the welfare of humanity. Speaking to Narendra (Vivekananda) on the subject, Sri Ramakrishna said : "I have seen that He and the One who dwells in my heart are one and the same person."

In another interesting conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and a devotee, the devotee asks :

— "Then why should one call the world *maya* ?" And Sri Ramakrishna replies : "He who has attained God knows that it is God who has become all this. Then he sees the God, *maya*, living beings, and the universe form one whole. God includes the universe and the living

beings."¹³ Attainment of God, according to Sri Ramakrishna, leads one to the Knowledge that comes from discrimination, that is, that God alone is eternal and that all else is impermanent. So true religious experience results in the awakening of the spirit of discrimination and not a spirit of disdain for things that belong to this world. Even the world of flux is a part of God and to that extent we shall have to take note of everything that belongs to it. To another searching question from the devotee : "Is there no virtue and no sin?" Sri Ramakrishna replied : "They both exist and do not exist. If God keeps the ego in man, then he keeps in him the sense of differentiation and also the sense of virtue and sin. But in a rare few He completely effaces the ego and these go beyond virtue and sin, good and bad."¹⁴

He says very clearly that it is anti-God to commit sin. ... "It is God alone who does everything. You may say that in that case man may commit sin. But that is not true. If a man is firmly convinced that God alone is the Doer and that he himself is nothing, then he will never take a false step."¹⁵

This brought the sage directly to the concept of 'free will'. He elaborated on the idea in the following words to the disciple :

It is God alone who had planted in man's mind what the Westerners call free will. People who have not realized God would become engaged in more and more sinful actions if God had not planted in them the notion of free will. Sin would have increased if God had not made the sinner feel that he alone was responsible for his sin.

Those who have realized God are aware that free will is a mere appearance. In reality man is the machine and God its Operator, man is the carriage and God its Driver.¹⁶

The classical scientific notion that an individual is an isolated self, autonomous and free-willed, is gradually being undermined by the New Physics which postulates inherent har-

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-28.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 328

15. *Ibid.*, p. 379

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80

12. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 767-68.

mony in nature as a result of "new explorations in the atomic and sub-atomic world". To the mystic, the notion of free will is relative, limited and, as they would say, illusory, like all other concepts we use in our rational descriptions of reality.

The mystic concept of God being the indwelling Principle in the universe is likely to give rise to doctrinal disputations, because if God is in everything, and everything is suffused with divinity, evil also becomes a part of God. Sri Ramakrishna's answer to this seems to agree with what the scientists say, though their presentations may be different. The autonomy or free will exercised by organisms, according to the systems-point-of-view, increases in proportion to the complexity of the organism, and man is the most complex of the organisms. He therefore enjoys a greater degree of autonomy than any other living creature to function in an environment which is perennially in flux. If it is the goal of man to transcend the world of appearances, to enjoy the presence of Reality, he has to rid himself of all his limitations. This is the moral imperative that has to precede his spiritual endeavour. So, the question of equating evil with good, or denying the reality of both as a mere appearance, does not arise at all. A man of God *can never* think of evil. It is also worthy to note that mystic experience can come to a man in any walk of life.

That a new World-View is emerging is a fact. It is a fact because the mystics' view of cosmic unity and the unsubstantial relativity of time, space and natural laws is finding an echo, however feeble yet, from the scientists. The concept of an organic universe in which events do not occur as unrelated phenomena, or where objects do not function as independent units, is taking root as a follow-up of the Quantum Theory. The thinking of men is changing. The emerging World-View cannot and will not become a creed, but it will be a new and more

brilliant perception of man of himself in relation to the cosmos. In this perception, which came to Sri Ramakrishna as a product of his Superconsciousness, as indeed it came to many others before him, we see the prospect of a new sense of destiny where faith and reason are not locked in fight but orchestrate in harmony; where religion frees itself from the irrelevance of externals; where the pursuit of scientific knowledge is in happy alliance with the pursuit of values. Sri Ramakrishna's mysticism is suggestive of a World-View in which all relations are governed by love and understanding. In itself, this may not make a new religion, nor will it negate the great religions which, in their essence, he found to be equally true. The new trends in scientific thinking which we have briefly noticed give us some hope that the credit of discovering a UNIVERSAL SELF which has so far been claimed for religion will be soon shared also by the New Science. From this new-found alliance a Universal Religion may emerge to shape the Universal Man. The spirit of such a universal religion will only be a full-throated echo of what other prophets said before their words came to be corrupted by the deeds of their followers.

There are as many ways to God as there are souls, as many as breaths of Adam's sons.

Prophet Mohammad in Hadis

Those who worship other Gods with faith, they too adore me. Behind these forms, unknowing yet, of the one direct way—

Bhagavad Gita

Vivekananda Among The Saints

DOROTHY MADISON

(continued from the previous issue)

This is the concluding part of Ms. Dorothy Madison's brilliant portrayal of Swami Vivekananda. His many-sided personality and extraordinary mind and character continue to reveal the unfathomability of this saint-extraordinaire. The author is an active worker spreading the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the U.S. She lives in Alameda, California.

Although Swamiji's opinion of miracle-working was altogether bad—no amount of fiddling can ever change that—he himself was often the focal point of extraordinary miracles witnessed by others, although not by himself. One such miracle was related by his fellow-disciple, Swami Shivananda:

One night I had fallen asleep beside Swamiji. There were also Swami Ramakrishnananda and others sleeping nearby. In the dead of the night I suddenly awoke and found the whole inside of the mosquito net flooded with light. Looking beside me for Swamiji, I could not find him, but in his place were a number of little Shivas lying asleep, all of them seven or eight year old boys, beautiful, of white complexion and with matted locks on their heads. It was the light of their bodies that illumined the room. This sight amazed me profoundly. At first I could not understand it at all; I thought it was an hallucination. Rubbing my eyes well, I looked again and saw the same little sleeping Shivas. I just sat there, not knowing what to do. Aside from not wishing to lie down, I was afraid that if I fell asleep my feet might touch the Shivas. The whole night I spent more or less in meditation. When morning came I found Swamiji sleeping there as in the beginning of the night. Later in the morning, when I had told him everything, he laughed a great deal. Long after, I unexpectedly came across the Sanskrit hymn addressed to Shiva Vireswara, and in it I found Shiva described exactly as I had seen him that night. Then I knew that I had had a true vision; it had revealed the true nature of Swamiji. He was born of the being of Shiva—that is what I saw in this vision.¹

For the present discussion the point about Swami Shivananda's vision of Swamiji is not the little sleeping Shivas—as mind-boggling as that is—but the great light which he perceived around them. This light is a phenomenon shared

by many saints. The great Hasidic master, the Baal Shem Tov, for example, while praying, took on the shape of a mountain on fire. His son who witnessed this miracle asked him why he appeared to him in this form. His father replied, "In this form I serve the Lord."²

Again, another luminous saint, the Sufi-Islamic mystic, Rabi'ya, who in her girlhood was spied upon one night by her master, won her freedom through a miracle of light. It seems that as she was praying, her master saw a lamp, minus a chain, hanging above her head, flooding the entire house with its brilliance. Next morning, terrified, he set Rabi'ya free.³

Similar tales about luminosity abound among Christian saints. For example, the light which habitually surrounded St. Ludwina of Schiedam is described in a biography written by her contemporary, Thomas a Kempis:

She [St. Ludwina] was discovered by her companions to be surrounded by so great a divine brightness that, seeing the splendour and struck with exceeding fear, they dared not approach nigh to her.⁴

Not unlike St. Ludwina's light was the light which some of Swamiji's brother disciples occasionally saw radiating from his body. Swami Turiyananda once entered Swamiji's "room

1. Swami Apurvananda, "Conversations with Swami Shivananda," *The Voice of India*, (May 1946), 299.

2. Harry M. Rabinowicz, *Hasidism, The Movement and its Masters* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1988), 35.

3. Margaret Smith, *Rabi'ya, The Mystic*, (San Francisco: The Rainbow Bridge, 1977), 7.

4. Herbert Thurston, S.J., *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (London: Burns Oates, 1952), 167.

while the Swami was lying on his bed, and beheld, in place of Vivekananda's physical body, a mass of radiance."⁵ Again, Swami Vijnanananda related some of his more unusual encounters with Swamiji at Belur Math. He said :

Swamiji is still in that room of his. That is why, when passing by that room, I do so with great care, so that I do not cause any great disturbance to his meditation. When he was living in his body, I had once seen him meditating in that room. At that time I was wonderstruck to find the whole room lighted with the radiance emanating from his body. Was he an ordinary man?⁶

Asked whether he still saw Swamiji, Swami Vijnanananda said, "Of course I do. I see him sometimes pacing this verandah or on the terrace and sometimes singing in his room, and in many other ways."⁷

Another fellow disciple, Swami Akhandananda, had a truly extraordinary meeting with Swamiji after Swamiji's death. In reply to a question, he said :

Yes, I have seen Swamiji after his passing away, as clearly as I see you now; otherwise I would not have lived. Separation from him was so painful that I was going to commit suicide, but I was prevented by Swamiji. He caught my hand as I was about to jump under a running train.⁸

To this day people still manage to catch sight of Swamiji now and then. But of far more consequence than these random sightings, is the fact that Swamiji actually makes himself a mighty fortress for souls who have thrown themselves into the battle for Self-knowledge or selfless service or abandonment to God, or other campaigns of pure religion. Most especially does he become the stay and guardian of men and women who enter into his own campaign of "man-making," the religion so near his heart.

5. Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda*, 85.

6. Swami Jnanatmananda, *Invitation to Holy Company* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980), 90.

7. Swami Apurvananda, *Swami Vijnanananda*, (Muthiganj, Allahabad: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984), 152.

8. Swami Niramayananda, *The Call of the Spirit, Conversations with Swami Akhandananda* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984) 61.

It goes without saying that in this particular function of sainthood—the saint's sacred and eternal trust to strengthen and transform human hearts and minds—Swamiji is revealed as a saint to his very marrow. Indeed, he said more than once that he would continue to work after death :

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work ! I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God!⁹

This declaration of Swamiji's may sound Promethean in its utterance, but Swamiji meant business. Signs of his after-death activities keep surfacing in all kinds of ways, some of them a bit exotic-seeming to lifelong students of Vivekananda. In New York, for example, there is a Vivekananda adherent who has no formal Vedanta-Society connection with Swamiji, but a direct one through spirit. This dedicated teacher is preparing bright, young, selfless men and women to serve, lead, and instruct the survivors of cataclysmic disasters slated to occur near the end of the century. He knows for certain that it is Swami Vivekananda who is guiding him in what he is doing, and he makes Swamiji's works and Sri Ramakrishna's teachings required reading for his students and followers. Not only does he find Swamiji's teachings to be nonsectarian, universal, and as unconfined as primordial space, but he says that Swamiji himself is still teaching people here on earth as well as on other, invisible levels.¹⁰

But long before the advent of the current "New Age," with its prognostications of global wreckage, Swamiji was carrying out his promise to work after death. No less a sage than Sri Aurobindo attested that in 1908 in the Alipore jail he received inspiration from Swamiji :

It is a fact, that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my

9. *Life*, 2: 661.

10. Ruth Montgomery, *Aliens Among Us* (New York: Fawcett Crest Book, Ballantine Books, 1985), 155-88.

solitary meditation and felt his presence. The voice spoke on a very important field of spiritual experience.¹¹

Years later Sri Aurobindo enlarged upon this episode :

It was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the Supermind. This clue let me to see how the Truth-consciousness works in every thing... He did not say 'Supermind.' 'Supermind' is my own word. He just said to me, 'This is this, this is that' and so on. That was how he proceeded—by pointing and indicating. He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore jail, and, until I could grasp the whole thing, he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the higher Consciousness—the Truth-consciousness in general—which leads towards the Supermind. He would not leave until he had put it all into my head...I had never expected him and yet he came to teach me and he was exact and precise even in the minutest details.¹²

Not many years after Sri Aurobindo's visitations from Swamiji, a young student named Jogesh Chandra Datta, of Sylhet in East Bengal (present Bangladesh), was taken in hand by Swamiji, and given both spiritual initiation and spiritual power. In recounting the opening episode of his lifelong discipleship to Swami Vivekananda he said :

During the afternoon I was meditating on the Divine Mother, Kali, as was my custom, when suddenly I felt that the presence of the Mother was replaced by the vivid presence of Swamiji. The change was quite sudden and very distinct, and immediately I began to feel that Swamiji was pouring his power and spirit into me. It was a definite and unmistakable experience. Just as you would put the mouth of a full jar against the mouth of an empty one, one above the other, and just as the contents of the first would pour into the second without reservation or obstruction, so his power poured into me. As I was about to lose consciousness, I pulled myself from that state. But the thing had been accomplished fully.¹³

Rational by nature, young Jogesh Chandra could not explain his bone-rattling experience by any appeal to reason, and so asked one after another, over a period of years, Swami

11. Swami Jyotirmayananda, ed., *Vivekananda, His Gospel of Man-making* (Madras: Swami Jyotirmayananda, 'Shakti', 1986) 239.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Swami Ashokananda, *Memories of Swami Shivananda* (San Francisco: Vedanta Society of Northern California, 1969), 4.

Premananda, Swami Turiyananda, Swami Brahmananda, and Swami Shivananda—all direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna—whether or not his experience had made him a true and actual disciple of Swamiji. Although they all said that it had indeed made him Swamiji's disciple, only Swami Shivananda was able to dispel his lingering uncertainty. In due course, Jogesh Chandra became a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, living and dying in a foreign land where he spread, preached, taught, and applied his great teacher's Religion of Man-making.

Now, at this juncture, with Swamiji's saintly attributes duly noted—any more visions, miracles, graces, or mercies would be overkill—the quiddity, essence, crux, or "whatness" of his and of all saints' sainthood begins to grow clear. First, it is self-evident that the aspect of the human personality which is peculiarly the saint's own, and the one in which the saint is perfected, is neither the luminous intellect nor the hurricane will, but the labyrinths of feeling and emotion. The saint is, after all, primarily the genius of love, and is also, therefore, master, arbiter, and example of love's various expressions such as sweetness, loving-kindness, affection, tenderness, nobility, beauty, sympathy, compassion, jollity, fellowship, and self-sacrifice. But second, because love, as one emotion among many, is also blood-brother of other, not so silken states of mind beginning with pride, hatred, anger, desire, avarice, envy, sloth, and jealousy—all of them endemic in the human personality—the saint must perforce be a lion-tamer. That is to say, he must have the hardihood to face these irrational beasts, his negative emotions, in very close quarters and teach them not to chew or maul him, but to jump through burning hoops, if he so insists, or play dead or even allow him to place his head in their mouths.

Third, although the metaphorical lion-tamer may become undoubted master of his peaceful beasts, he usually has to keep an eye out lest there be trouble. Some saints, for example, upon

reaching a stage in which they discover human or other beings to be divinely attractive, allow themselves to grow careless in their practice of detachment and, falling into states of infatuation, fall also, alas, out of God's grace. Others, like Lord's own Lucifer, allow pride to insinuate its way into their hearts, and like that rebel-angel are hurled into the pit. But there are still others such as Swamiji and his great fellow disciples, and even more dramatically, Sri Ramakrishna himself, who exercise such perfect mastery over their feelings and emotions that they do not have to pay attention to them anymore, let alone guard against them.

Fourth and finally, the difference between the saint whose lions need no watching and the saint whose lions do, is actually the degree of self-love, in the heart of the lion-tamer. The greater the self-love, the more fractious the lions; the less the self-love, the more docile the lions. Indeed, just as animals and birds quieted down in the presence of St. Francis, just as the Himalayan tiger padded away from Swamiji, and the charging bull halted in front of him, (while the Englishman ran for his life), just, indeed, as no beast, however ferocious, harms a man or a woman perfect in the practice of non-violence (*ahimsā*), so no ruinous feelings or emotions ever beset the man or woman in whom self-abnegation has become absolute. Crudely stated, there is simply no self-love left in the selfless saint which can either attract or be attracted to anything that does not smell of the Infinite. Constantly inundated, diluted, and dissolved in the bliss of the Infinite, the saint's emotions have, in every respect, become god-like, and his once-injurious, negative emotions turned into harmless cuttlebone on the sandy floor of the sea.

In the end what the quiddity of the saints comes down to is the pure and shining love which remains after every last bit of I, Me, and Mine has been filtered out of it. Love as immaculate as this differs in no respect from God's own love in His aspect of bliss. Further,

as this love floods back and forth in all its power, beauty, and brilliance between God and saint, it transforms the lover of God into a figure of extraordinary attraction and authority.

In the case of Swami Vivekananda, the saint's powers of attraction and authority served as a counter-balance to other, even more potent forces at work in him. Specifically, they allayed, tempered, and sweetened the severity and harshness of that inestimably profounder authority which he wielded as Prophet, Founder, and Sage. When, for example, he let loose his denunciations of sloth, greed, jealousy, cruelty, or lack of heart, spine, vision, fellow-feeling, and the like, his fellow-disciples, personal disciples, countrymen, the West, and the world—as the case may be—did not collapse in a heap or take mortal offense or run for the hills, but took the full brunt, sensing the absolute love behind his unbearable truths.

Now, simply because Swamiji's saintly powers of attraction and authority have been tagged as counterbalances to other, more intense and portentous powers in his makeup, does not mean that he is *not* a real, honest-to-God quintessential saint, but only a saint incidentally. This makes as little sense as to say that because Janaka was a king and the father of Sita, he was *not* a real knower of the Absolute. Indeed, in the world of spirituality, a goodly number of great saints from many faiths can be classified as quintessential saints, and like Swamiji, although exceedingly gifted, can also be classified as quintessential other things as well. Spiritual geniuses with many arrows in their quiver, to repeat, shatter the saintly hearts-and-flowers stereotype.

At this point it is not out of place to consider the whys and wherefores of the passive saint-figure. To be sure, stereotypes are roughly compounded of one-part information, nine parts ignorance, and a mass of conclusion-jumping. But even so, they often get their start from a perfectly clear and laudable set of circumstan-

ces. Thus the saintly image in question took shape as the result of all kinds of people trying to imitate and live up to the words and examples of such world-teachers as Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus, and Lao-tse. All these god-men embodied and taught non-violent behaviour, passive resistance to evil, or no resistance at all; also, general love and goodwill toward everybody, unconditional kindness, and self-abnegation, to the point of giving one's life for others. In time, the ideals and redemptive power of these mighty teachers conditioned and energized entire cultures and civilizations which in turn, produced the saints so extravagantly admired, imitated, and emulated in days gone by.


Now Swamiji, as a true son of saint-rich India, shared in his nation's heritage of saintly passivity. This trait of his—to lie down now and then in green pastures—did not escape the active eye of Sister Nivedita. In her letters she once referred to it as "his curiously passive attitude to life,"¹⁴ and another time as "that irresponsibility of his," which albeit she called "glorious." By way of explanation she wrote:

Nothing is more enticing than to put oneself into the attitude of generalissimo of the forces—and make splendid plans, "compelling fortune" — but Swami just waits, and drifts in on the wave — and so on. I am just beginning to understand his bigness.¹⁵

As a matter of fact, with the exception of his Master, Swamiji's "bigness" defeated everybody. Because of it the world-at-large still does not know what to make of him, and even the shining world of saints holds its breath. He was, so to speak, a whole new world in himself, with many continents and many seas. Intrinsicly, he heralded a new pattern of human universality exemplified by his own personality, wherein the play of the spirit is fully as vital and identifiable as the play of the senses, mind, will and intellect. His own example was, of course,

new, matchless, and altogether daunting, but nonetheless unmistakable and complete.

Like a brilliant bird of passage Swamiji knew his way through humanity's massive ranges of arts, letters, and the sciences; moved like a whirlwind from one labour to another; and vented many non-saintly attitudes and opinions as he endured the shocks and perfidies of fitful fortune and human behaviour. But, as unselective as sunshine, he actively bestowed on innumerable persons, and also on races and nations, the ways, means, and redemptive power to save themselves from spiritual ignorance. However, to his everlasting, purely passive credit, let it be remembered that working against all his selfless, God-driven enterprise, like the ocean against a sea-wall, was his recusant craving for the windless cave and his own dissolution into the unpeopled Absolute. God deemed otherwise, but even so all was not lost.

That is to say, blocked from the Absolute, Swamiji had to perform his labours for the Lord from the tranquil level of the witness-Self. Thus, as the witness-Self he was simultaneously aware of the formless Infinite as well as of the world of name and form. Facing inwards, as the witness-Self, he was formless, timeless, infinite, one with God, and one with everything else on down. Facing outwards, as the  If masquerading as the ego, he was Vivekananda; and he was also the witness-Self, aware of watching himself as Vivekananda. One effect of all this witnessing and watching is that it can easily lead to prolonged stretches of outward idleness, as if an actor suddenly sat down to watch the play instead of performing his role. Now, whenever Sister Nivedita noted Swamiji's "curiously passive attitude towards life," she put her finger on his state of being the witness. Non-stop herself, she did not always find his passive interludes convenient. Thus, when Swamiji had to decide something, but kept putting it off, and thereby missed a passing boat or so, Nivedita had to

14. Nivedita, *Letters*, 1: 308.

15. Nivedita, *CW*, 1: 260.

resort to philosophy. But the real wonder is that Swamiji could manage to comport himself as a rational human being at all—what with his finite human self being held, as it were, in precarious suspension by the intrusive Infinite which was slowly undoing both the boundaries of his ego-sense, as well as its clarity.

If the truth were known, Swamiji is probably the only saint whose largeness of being worked such hardships in him that by age thirty-nine, no longer able to function in and through finite instrumentalities, he abandoned the attempt and “spat out the body.”¹⁶ In this final, hair-raising act there was neither passivity nor lack of planning. He passed out of this world as cleanly, brilliantly, and silently as a shooting star.

However, Swamiji cannot be faulted for deciding to die when he did, by an act of will, inasmuch as the Lord Shiva at Amarnath had vouchsafed to him the power of dying whenever he desired; and Sri Ramakrishna himself had foretold that Swamiji would give up his body when he discovered his true identity. So, although in the manner of his death Swamiji may seem to have passed from the saintly behaviour of the passive witness to the not so saintly behaviour of the active doer, he was clearly behaving according to the will of God. Indeed, as in most other things, but most notably in his death, Swamiji was a sure-enough saint, but he was a saint with a difference.

There are, however, many varieties of saints about whom the same thing can be said—they were saints with a difference. Many of them, like Swamiji himself, never walked but strode. They were the heroic men and women who, as Swamiji’s brother-disciple, Swami Ramakrishnananda said, having put “Samadhi and all that ... on the shelf,” put their hands to the plough and never looked back.¹⁷ Such saints include

16. Nivedita, *CW*, 1: 260.

17. Swami Tapasyananda, *Swami Ramakrishnananda, The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the South* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1972), 247.

many of the world’s greatest religious apostles; missionaries, builders, preachers, teachers, founders, and defenders — all of them brave, tough, adventuresome, one-pointed, pioneer types.

Then there are saints — India, in particular, has always been knee-deep in them — who are out-and-out ecstasies, without a thought in their rapt, reckless, wonderful heads for anything except dying of love in God’s embrace. Often these ecstasies are without vows of any kind, being the freest of the free. Some are divinely mad, others have eerie powers, and a few have goodly followings.

In addition to these ecstasies, however, another class of bliss-prone saints also pass their lives in samadhi, but out of sight and mind of the populace. Swamiji’s great yogi friend, Pavhari Baba, was one of these, and so also the nameless saints and ascetics who continue to inhabit the planet’s remote and secret places, upholding the human world with the spiritual power of their unseen presence. Still other ecstasies such as the Hasidic Baal Shem Tov, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and “the great queen Mira Bai, who preached that the Divine Spouse was all,”¹⁸ came out of their seclusion to instruct the world in the love of God.

Then there is the class of saints who begin their search for God by pinning their entire faith on willpower and the ability to build up perfect control and mastery over themselves. These are the mighty ascetics who scare people to death without meaning to. But despite their steely wills and rugged persons, their hearts are often soft as butter. Filled with loving-kindness, their mere presence calms the fearful, weary, or heartbroken, bringing strength, peace and even joy. St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers were such saints, as were St. Ignatius Loyola, Heinrich Suso, and in recent times, Sri

18. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I saw Him*, (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1930, Appendix A, to Chapter I), ii.

Ramakrishna's great householder disciple, Sri Nag Mahashaya.

Still another class of saints love books next to God. Glorifying in the endless richness of God as world and idea, they leap like salmon up the fish-ladders and waterfalls of the intellect to the divinity of pure knowledge at its source. Here, the bookish saint exists in bookless bliss, his intellect having proved every bit as effective as the ascetic's will in getting him to God. Saints of this persuasion include Plotinus, Augustine, the Sufi scholar al-Ghazali, the Jewish physician Maimonides, the Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas, Jnanadeva, and the great modern poet-sage of Bengal, Sri Anirvan.

From time to time throughout his life Swamiji had spells of behaving in ways peculiar to one or another of these different saintly categories. One London summer, for example, he described his madcap-ecstatic condition to Mr. Francis Leggett, whom he called "Frankincense":

Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything... I am in one of these moods now, dear Francis.... I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here, and that Love Infinite that brought me into being has guarded every one of my actions, good or bad, (don't be frightened) for what am I, what was I ever, but a tool in His hand?—for whose service I have given up everything, my beloved ones, my joys in life. He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe! What reason binds Him? He the playful one is playing these tears and laughs over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He — the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood — a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

I have learnt a thing or two: Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the "Love", the "Beloved". Ay, Sake, fill up the cup and we will be mad.¹⁹

19. CW, 1978, 6: 366-7.

Just as plainly Swamiji displayed in his behaviour other saintly types, a fact which needs no elaboration. For his own part, Swamiji did not hesitate to call all kinds of people saints. Heading his list were Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples, most notably Swami Brahmananda, for whom he had supreme veneration, but whom he nonetheless included when he scolded them for being "all saints for nothing."²⁰ But of all the Master's disciples, the one who never ceased to bring him up short was the great householder, Sri Nag Mahashaya, "One of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahansa."²¹

Swamiji also called the Vedic scholar, Max Muller, a saint, and two Americans, Mrs. Ole Bull and Mr. Francis Leggett. It is certainly possible that in some cases the saintliness which Swamiji beheld was actually in his own eye, for his tendency was always to magnify even a shred of virtue into its complete and ideal form. Be that as it may, his spontaneous feeling about the nature of saintliness popped out in one of his spirited talks on the *Gita* in San Francisco:

There is only one sin. That is weakness. When I was a boy I read Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The only good man I had any respect for was Satan. The only saint is that soul that never weakens, faces everything, and determines to die game.²²

On the other hand, Swamiji's own personal saint of saints according to Sister Nivedita, was Shuka Deva, an ancient paramahansa boy, the son of the great sage Vyasa. Why he loved Shuka Deva so much is not hard to deduce from Sister Nivedita's account of one of his talks in Almora:

"He [Shukadeva] is the ideal Paramahansa. To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that one undivided Ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—existence, knowledge and bliss absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the shore.

20. CW, 1977, 8: 469.

21. Nivedita, CW, 1: 129.

22. CW, 1986, 1: 479.

A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of it. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss !

"Shuka was indeed the Swami's saint. He was the type, to him, of that highest realization to which life and the world are merely play. Long after, we learned how Sri Ramakrishna had spoken of him in his boyhood as "My Shuka." And never can I forget the look, as of one gazing far into the depths of joy, with which he once stood and quoted the words, " 'I know, and Shuka knows, and perhaps Vyasa knows—a little,' says Shiva."²³

What Shiva and Shuka knew, Swamiji told to the world at large. Indeed, if he had his way, he would have tipped the entire human race into Shuka's Ocean and let everybody drown in immortal bliss. As it was, he left way stations here and there, equipped to handle the traffic of truth-seekers making their way along the highways of the universe. Swamiji could do this, because he was an exceedingly mighty saint, and promised that he would be here to help—invisibly of course. How this can be true, and not mere froth, may be gathered from one of his explanations of divine grace:

Grace means this. He who has realized the Atman becomes a storehouse of great power. Making him the centre and with a certain radius, a circle is formed, and whoever comes within the circle becomes animated with the ideas of that saint, i.e., they are overwhelmed by his ideas. Thus without much religious striving, they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. If you call this grace, you may do so.²⁴

One of the implications of these words is that whoever avails himself of Swamiji's way stations to God, should be able to reach his des-

tinuation safe and sound, and certainly sooner rather than later.

In no way, however, does Swamiji's view of grace mean that he recommended to God-seekers a slavish adherence to himself or to the personal side of any saint, sage, or prophet under the sun. Swamiji made no bones about such nonsense. He once told his disciples at Thousand Island Park that, "Great saints are the object-lessons of the Principle. But the disciples make the saint the Principle, and then they forget the Principle in the person." (CW 7:21) Since he was, first and last, the new universal man—many-sided with saint writ large—Swamiji could easily identify every kind of mischief which supervenes when people prefer to cleave to the humanity of their prophet rather than to become one with the universe.

Now certainly Swamiji's warnings against the dangers of cultish exclusiveness highlight his own exceedingly free and open religion, but even more they show his sainthood to be rooted in the truth of "the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist."²⁵ This Self which appears as man is the supreme vision which he wanted to bring within reach of common humanity, because "then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but it is the veritable God Himself."²⁶

23. Nivedita, CW, 1: 297-8.

24. CW, 1986, 7: 242-3.

25. CW, 1983, 2: 250.

26. *Ibid.*, 286

Reviews & Notices

MAHATMA GANDHI AND ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI by Rev. Anthony Elenjittam (alias Ishabodhananda), Published By Aquinas Publications, Mt. Mary Road, Bandra, Bombay-400050 : 1985, Pp. 304.

The world has witnessed many saints and saviours from time to time. But there are very few names which could be recorded as universally popular and meaningful for all times to come. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) are undoubtedly two names which are of everlasting popularity. They have been meaningful to various generations in the past. But they are more meaningful to human society of the present decade as it experiences emancipation from the threat of nuclear holocaust. Although there is a gap of seven centuries between the Saint and the Mahatma, the lives of both of them emanated rays of Truth and Non-violence which illuminated not only Italy and India but the entire globe. The recent understanding between the two major power-blocs is undoubtedly the result of the message of spirituality of such saints, which was predicted by the noted historian Arnold Toynbee. Mankind has started breathing in a less terrifying atmosphere. The unification of the German state and global togetherness to foil the sack of the small gulf nation of Kuwait show a strong will of mankind today to live up to the ideals of the saint and the Mahatma.

The title under review is authored by Reverend Elenjittam (b.1915) a man of social concern. He has widely travelled throughout the country and abroad. His contributions to the Welfare Society for Destitute Children are noteworthy. He is the author of several dozen books in English and Italian on themes pertaining to religion and society.

In the present work Reverend Elenjittam compares the two noble figures of Assisi and Porbandar. He deals at length with the Mahatma, partly because of his native origin, and partly since he himself has been personally in touch with the Faqir of this land. The chronological proximity, of course, further justifies his leaning toward Gandhi. He finds the life of

Gandhi as the standing proof of the great truth that the spirit of war and violence cannot be conquered with more violent war and greater violence. He also finds that the history of Christianity, as distinct from 'churchianity', confirms the truth that violence will never be quenched with violence. Universal benevolence towards all creatures under all circumstances is the only lasting solution. And Saint Francis epitomises the best of Christianity after Jesus, especially of the Catholic tradition. In the anecdote of 'Perfect Joy' the Saint repeatedly asserts that if we could bear the pains and crosses taking them as instruments of the trial of our faith, that is Perfect Joy. The Mahatma also took suffering as the grace of God. The sympathetic understanding of the pains of others qualifies one to be a Vaishnava. The author finds the two personalities as wedded to Lady Poverty. And the wedding is voluntary, not forced, hence no possibility of a divorce. Both of them were humanists as well as naturalists. They preferred the eloquent Voice of Silence that dawns in a heart fully attuned to the lullabies of Nature and Heaven. Through silent example and living out perfect peace under all circumstances the two spiritual giants taught us to locate the divine within us. This would lead to individual well-being and global harmony. This might result in the formation of a successful World-State.

The reading of the book is stimulating. The work is worth procuring.

Sri S.P. Dubey
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Jabalpur

SADGURU SHRI LALITA MAULI by Viuay Kumar. Printed And Published By Sri Gurudas V. Masurkar, B/31 Gajanan Society, Ltd., Dilip Gupte Road, Mahim, Bombay 400-016. 1990. Pp. 6 + 43; Rs.7/-

This is a short biography of a woman saint—now an octogenarian who cherished a strong love of God from her childhood. The author has narrated her life story with much devotion and also rendered some of

her devotional songs and poems. They are full of divine wisdom. Maauli's life will certainly inspire the aspirant to march forward towards the Goal Supreme in all the circumstances of life.

Swami Brahmasthananda
R.K.Math, Hyderabad

SELF AND NON-SELF : *The Drig-Drisyā-Viveka*, attributed to Sankara Translated from the Sanskrit with a commentary by Raphael; Published by Kegan Paul International Limited, P.O. Box 256, London WC IB 3SW, England; 1990, Pp. 3 + 197; £. 15/-.

The book under review is an English translation of the Italian version of *Drig-Drisyā-Viveka*, attributed to Sri Sankaracharya. It was published in Italian by Asram Vidya in 1977 with a translation and commentary by Raphael, the founder of the Asram Vidya Order. The present book has been translated into English by Kay McCarthy and has a foreword by A.J.Alston.

An enquiry of the Self, transcending the barriers of non-self by discrimination, and realizing the non-dual Consciousness within and without is the central theme of Advaita Vedanta. The *Drig-Drisyā-Viveka* is a short treatise of forty-six Sanskrit verses which analyses the illusory perceptions of names and forms in the states of dreams and waking as well. In effect, it reveals the real nature of the perceiver as infinite consciousness—Existence-knowledge-Blis Absolute. The commentator has given the scientific explanation of the meaning which helps the reader to discriminate and separate the observer (*drk*) from the observed objects (*drśya*).

The self—the Atman is by its own nature pure and perfect, but on account of intrinsic power of *Maya*, the self is deluded and is identified with the world of names and forms which are themselves illusory. The commentator explains the nature of *Jīva* in terms of scientific concepts such as 'electronic particle' and 'atomic nucleus', and proceeds further with the text, how *Jīva* attains the higher states of *samadhi* and knows its real nature in the highest realization, viz. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, transcending the realm of mind and intellect. The true *Jīva (Atman)*, an observer (*drk*), recognizes its identity with *Brahman*, and is real as the witness without being identified

with the world of phenomena, whether objective or subjective. (p.61)

The scholarly commentary, ranging in its reference from Western savants such as Plotinus, St. Augustine, Pascal and Sir James Jeans, to Indian scholars and sages such as Swami Nikhilananda, Swami Siddheswarananda, gives us insights into the depths of discrimination which enable us "to recognize the essential nature of our true being". He also draws on the definitive texts such as the *Mandukya* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisads* as well as Sankaracharya's *Vivekacudamani*.

As regards the authorship of the Sanskrit book, the translator has taken the views of Swami Nikhilananda from his book *Drig-Drisyā-Viveka* published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore. The transliteration of the Sanskrit text and the elaborate bibliographical appendix at the end inspire the reader to know more about the *Vedanta*. This work contrary to the jacket though, is not the first translation into English of *Drig-Drisyā-Viveka*.

The book is, however, a valuable addition to the Vedanta literature available in English and will surely awaken enquiry and discrimination in the minds of many readers.

Swami Brahmasthananda
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THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD AND THE AGAMA SASTRA, by Thomas E. Wood, University of Hawaii Press, 2840, Kolo Walm Street, Honolulu, Hawaii-96822, Pp.240, \$14.00

In spite of its cardinal importance, the *Mandukya Upanisad* is not traditionally treated as an independent treatise; it is usually found embedded in the twenty-nine aphoristic verses which form a commentary on it. These twenty-nine verses form the first of four *prakaraṇas* (chapters) constituting the *Āgama Śāstra*. These *prakaraṇas* are attributed to Gaudapada, who is regarded as the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara. Shankara is reputed to have written a commentary on the *Āgama Sastra*, the *Āgama Śāstra Vivaraṇa*.

The author of this scholarly work questions many of these commonly accepted views and adduces his reason for his stand. In his considered view, Gandapada is not the author of the whole of the

prakaranas, especially the *Alāta-Śānti*; Gaudapada need not be the Parama Guru of Acharya Shankara; it is doubtful if such an individual was a Mayavadin at all; Shankara is not the author of the *A.S.Vivarana*. The writer cites from a number of Advaitic texts evidence in support of his conclusions.

One important question he discusses in detail is whether verse five in the *Mandukya Upanisad* relating to *Isvara* is a continuation of verse five dealing with *Suṣupti*, or it belongs to verse seven which describes the Self. He examines the two interpretations: associating *Isvara* with the state of sleep and therefore with the realm of Ignorance; treating *Isvara* as synonymous with the Self. He is convinced that the ascription of *Maya* to *Isvara* was a later development, possibly under the influence of Buddhism.

Speaking of *Maya*, he writes: "In the *Upanisads* *maya* means a unique power (*Śakti*) by which *Brahman* transforms Itself into the apparent multiplicity of the world, rather than a principle of ignorance or illusion... *Maya* does not mean 'illusion'; it is instead a power (*Śakti*) of transformation." (p.153)

Further, he observes: "We cannot have an Absolute without *Isvara*, for *Isvara* is essentially the active power which connects the Absolute with the phenomenal world which we experience through our physical senses — and the reality of this phenomenal world cannot sensibly be denied." (p.160) He cites from *Maitri Upanisad* (7.11.8) a significant passage: "The great Self (*Mahatman*) has dual nature (*dvaitibhāva*) for the sake of experiencing the true and the false."

It is indeed possible to controvert the author's conclusions and he is aware of it. But his approach and analysis are stimulating and throw a helpful light on the controversial subject of the *Āgama Prakaranas* and their position in the development of the *Vedānta*.

The appendices contain transliterated texts of the *Mandukya Upanisad*, *Āgama Prakaranas*, *Vaitathya*, *Advaita*, and *Alāta Śānti Prakaranas*. Elaborate notes and an accurate glossary add to the value of the work.

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LONGING FOR DARKNESS, TARA & THE BLACK MADONNA - *A Ten Year Journey in Search of the Female Face of God*. by China Galland. Published by Random Century, London; 20 Vauxhall, Bridge Road, London, SW1V 25A. 1990 £.16.99

The author makes clear some way into her book that the longing for darkness is a deeply felt human need that cuts across, goes beyond, and at the same time includes issues of ethnicity. Like light, darkness also has a wide range of symbolic meanings. It can be the darkness of ancient wisdom, of the shadow of the Most High or the stage (in Tibetan Buddhism) just before enlightenment. To say one is "longing for darkness" is to say that one longs for transformation.

China Galland grew up in a conservative family and always tried to do the conventional things, to be proper and timely. Without much savvy or preparation she married while very young, had soon two children, and then woke up to awful reality. One thing came after another — marital incompatibility, her own alcohol problem and addiction to prescribed medicines. Separation from her husband followed, then another marriage, another child and another divorce. The author began to search for some way back to normalcy. One thing she felt sure of though, that was she had had enough of men, male society and masculine religion. She became an idealist and a feminist, and began her search for the "female face of God".

Ms. Galland started an earnest study and practice of Zen Buddhism. One day at the Buddhist Centre in northern California, someone told her about a female Buddha in the Tibetan tradition. The deity was called Tara. Tara Devi had taken a vow aeons ago that in spite of opposing and dominating male opinion she would achieve enlightenment only in a woman's body, and she kept her vow. Buddha Tara was a very strong feminist. Galland pursued her study of Tara and found that the Hindu Saint Ramprasad (18th century Bengal) had worshiped Kali, Tara and Durga as one and the same Divinity, and regarded them all as the Supreme Being, God Himself/Herself. Could this be the Goddess also worshiped by the Christians as Mary, the Madonna, the Mother of Jesus? The author set out on a world tour that lasted ten years to find some answers she was looking for. In the beginning her quest led her to Nepal where Buddha Tara is

held in special reverence by many people, and then to India where His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama lives in exile. Subsequently the author travels also to Switzerland, to Czestochowa (Poland), to France and to Yugoslavia to see if she could find out the elusive connection between all the female deities. Everywhere she notices — even in Czestochowa, Texas, the dark complexioned Divine Mother revered and worshipped. Always the question haunts, "Are they all one? Whether in Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity? Is God really the Mother of the universe also?"

Longing for Darkness, then, is both an interesting spiritual biography of the author and a travelogue—very attractive. Formerly the author had regarded Kali (Tara) Devi, in the downward spiral of alcoholism and drug addiction, as a wrathful destroyer. Now she intuits the sweet, loving and healing power of the Mother Goddess. She began to understand the oneness of Tara, Durga and the Black Madonna. Tara and the Black Madonna, she writes, are the carriers of a new awakening feminine psyche. We are just seeing the dawn of a much needed recognition of God as Mother. God can be worshipped as Mother with no loss of advantage to the human psyche, and this is as vital to men as to women. China Galland describes how this awareness came upon her during her travels.

About Mary, the author feels urgently, "Mary belongs to everyone." We all need her. Humanity needs God as Mother... "I long to liberate Mary from the Catholic Church..." Only if Mary is disassociated from the confines of doctrine and dogma can she really evolve into a Goddess in her own right—for all humanity.

The author visits the Black Madonnas at Jasna Gora (Poland), Einsiedeln (Switzerland), Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (France), Medjugorje (Yugoslavia), and discovers her roots in Roman Catholic tradition. In doing so she also finds that Mary has already turned somewhat into a Universal Mother. She has tremendous power in eastern Europe. Ms. Galland visits Lech Walesa during the climactic phase of the Solidarity Movement in Poland and finds that the whole nation, including Lech Walesa, is being inspired by the Jasna Gora Madonna to work for peaceful and nonviolent change towards a fully democratic society. Complete adherence to nonviolence in

thought, word and action with unswerving steadiness in truth and right conduct is, the author believes, the real genius of leaders of Solidarity, and of the Dalai Lama, as it was of Mahatma Gandhi in India.

The very important, if not the outstanding point of *Longing For Darkness* is this very urgent social message that cuts across all national and cultural barriers. "Who" or "What" God is, known only to the few and to the mystics is not enough for our present age. Their insight and inspiration... "needs to become our common understanding. Without it, we fall too easily into polarization, duality; we imagine that there is an 'other'. It is our mistaken notion of the *other* that threatens to destroy us as we imagine ourselves separate from and different than the world of nature, and from each other as beings who together share this fragile planet's fate." To the author this understanding can come to humanity better through God the Mother. She quotes the Dalai Lama in her closing pages: "Violence is unstable... Revolutions may overthrow an existing system by force, but they have very little to offer as a new meaningful way of life. The reason is clear. Revolutionary movements that use violence mainly come from hatred, not from love. Such force is unstable. It cannot last over time, it only generates more of itself. In the long run, the only motivation that creates stability, lasting change, is loving kindness, compassion, nonviolence, and the altruistic desire to help others. These are the answers.

"Each individual must take responsibility for the human family. If we cannot eliminate, we can minimize the misfortunes and sufferings of others. Our individual salvation is just that, individual, but society's salvation is everyone's. A genuine altruistic attitude is the seed of a happy future. We must have patience."

China Galland is not a *Bhiksuni* or a saint. She is courageous and energetic and has presented a youthful view, somewhat self-conscious. At the same time her book is a hopeful, powerful suggestion that humanity is one, and together we can solve all problems. Love and truth, if practised, triumph. In so many societies round the world these will be good medicine.

Swami Shivaprasadananda

Practical Spirituality

The Logos of God is called flesh not only in as much as He became incarnate, but in another sense as well. When He is contemplated in His true simplicity, in His principal state with God the Father, although He embraces the models of the truth of all things in a distinct and naked manner, He does not contain within Himself parables, symbols and stories needing allegorical interpretation. But when He draws near to men who cannot with the naked state, He selects things which are familiar to them, combining together various stories, symbols, parables and dark sayings; and in this way He becomes flesh. Thus at the first encounter our intellect comes into contact not with the naked Logos but with the incarnate Logos, that is, with various sayings and stories. The incarnate Logos, though Logos by nature, is flesh in appearance. Hence most people think they see flesh and not the Logos, although in fact He is the Logos. The intellect — that is, the inner meaning — of Scripture is other than what it seems to most people.

The initial stages of learning about religious devotion are naturally related to the flesh. For in our first encounter with religion we come into contact with the letter and not the spirit. But as we get nearer to the spirit and refine the materiality of words with the more subtle forms of contemplation, we come to dwell — so far as this is possible for man — purely in the pure Christ.

In Scripture the Logos of God is called and actually is dew, water spring and river, according to the subjective capacity of the recipient. To some He is dew because He quenches the burning energy of the passions which assails the body from without. To those seared in the depths of their being by the poison of evil He is water, not only because water through antipathy destroys its opposite but also because it bestows a vivifying power conducive to well-being. To those in whom the fountain of contemplative experience is continually active He is a spring bestowing wisdom. To those from whom flows the true teaching about salvation, He is river copiously watering men, domestic animals, wild beast and plants. That is to say, those who have remained human are uplifted by the conceptual images they have been given and are so deified; those made like domestic animals by the passions are restored to the human state by being shown the exact character of the virtuous way of life and so they recover their natural intelligence; those made like wild beasts by evil habits and actions are tamed by kind and tender counsel and return to their natural gentleness.

It is not the man who worships God with words alone who glorifies God in himself but he who for God's sake bears hardship and suffering in the quest for virtue.

The Philokalia
