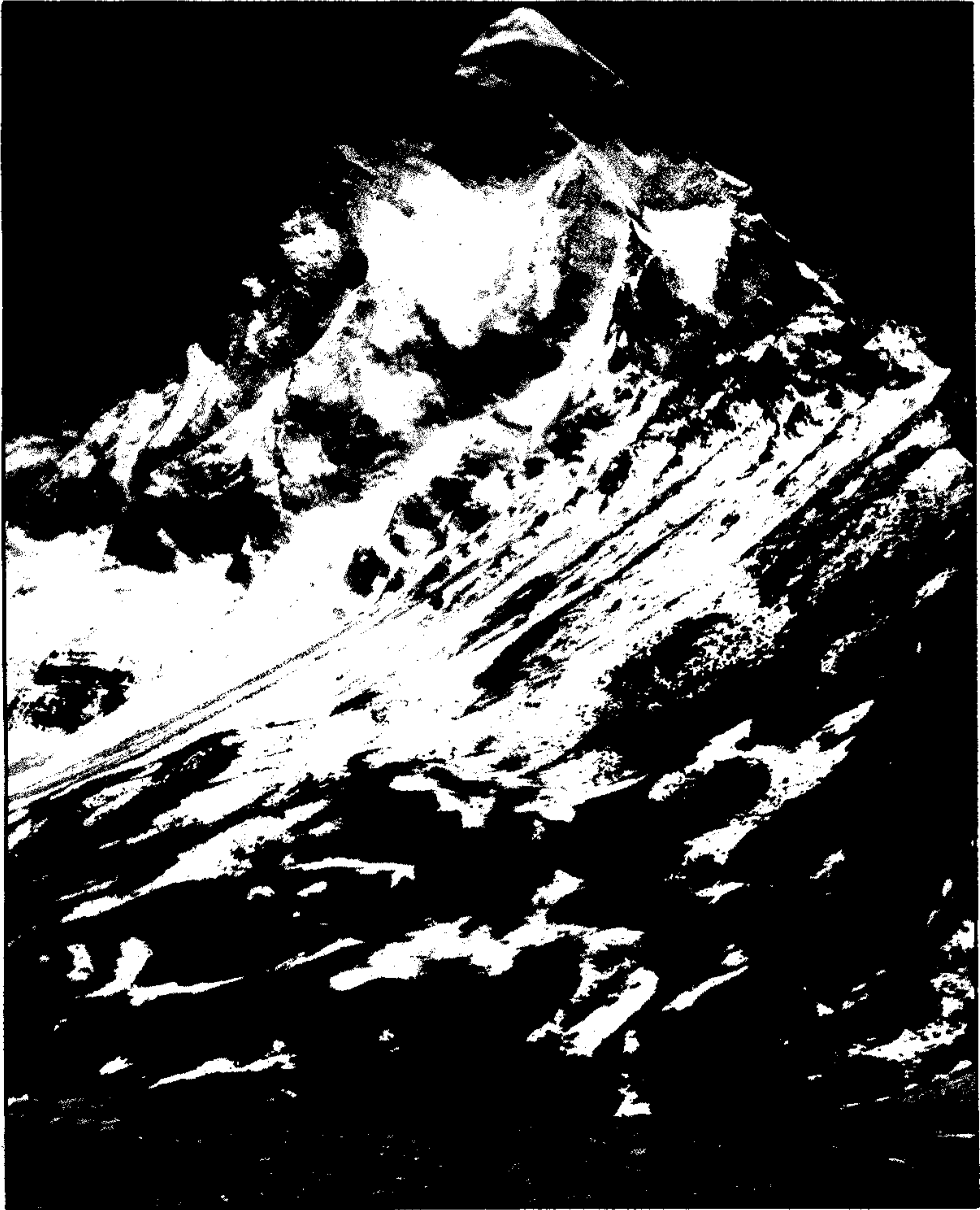


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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Prabuddha Bharata

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

Prabuddha Bharata

Or Awakened India

VOL. 96

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No. 4

The Divine Message

BUDDHA REPLIES TO THE DEVA

On a certain day when the Blessed One dwelt at Jetavana, the garden of Anāthapindikā, a celestial deva came to him in the shape of a Brāhman whose countenance was bright and whose garments were white like snow. The deva asked questions which the Blessed One answered.

The deva said: "What is the sharpest sword? What is the deadliest poison? What is the fiercest fire? What is the darkest night?"

The Blessed One replied: "A word spoken in wrath is the sharpest sword; covetousness is the deadliest poison; passion is the fiercest fire; ignorance is the darkest night."

The deva said: "Who gains the greatest benefit? Who loses most? Which armor is invulnerable? What is the best weapon?"

The Blessed One replied: "He is the greatest gainer who gives to others, and he loses most who receives from others without giving a compensation. Patience is an invulnerable armor; wisdom is the best weapon."

The deva said: "Who is the most dangerous thief? What is the most precious treasure? Who is most successful in taking away by violence not only on earth, but also in heaven? What is the securest treasure-trove?"

The Blessed One replied: "Evil thought is the most dangerous thief; virtue is the

most precious treasure. The soul can take away by violence not only on earth, but also in heaven, and immortality is its securest treasure-trove."

The deva said: "What is attractive? What is disgusting? What is the most horrible pain? What is the greatest enjoyment?"

The Blessed One replied: "Good is attractive; evil is disgusting. A bad conscience is the most tormenting pain; deliverance is the height of bliss."

The deva asked: "What causes ruin in the world? What breaks off friendships? What is the most violent fever? Who is the best physician?"

The Blessed One replied: "Ignorance causes the ruin of the world. Envy and selfishness break off friendships. Hatred is the most violent fever, and Buddha is the best physician."

The deva then asked and said: "Now I have only one doubt to be solved; pray, clear it away: What is it fire can neither burn, nor moisture corrode, nor wind crush down, but is able to reform the whole world?"

The Blessed One replied: "Blessing! Neither fire, nor moisture, nor wind can destroy the blessing of a good deed, and it will reform the whole world."

Nataraja—The Cosmic Dancer

The idol of Nataraja is worshipped mainly in South India. In northern parts the Śiva-liṅga—the aniconic form of Śiva—has been popular since ancient times. The images worshipped in the temples of the South are not all alike, but slight variations can be noticed among them. Each temple, however, has been dedicated to one or another of the seven popular forms of dance. They are: *Kālikā*, *Gourī*, *Sandhyā*, *Pralaya*, *Tripura*, *Urdhva* and *Ānanda*. The last one, viz. *ānanda tāṇḍava*, has been more widely popular than any of the others. The Chidambaram Temple in Tamil Nadu is famous for the majestic and blissful *ānanda* dance of the Lord. This intricate dance pose for which Nataraja is most famous is called *tribhangi* in the ancient dance treatise *Nāṭya Śāstra*. There are three delicate bends in the figure—one at the right knee, another at the hip and the third one at the neck. All the three bends—difficult for a dancer to perform simultaneously—are known as the *tribhangi*. The eyes are slightly opened but the vision is turned inward like that of a great *yogin*. This reminds one of the famous photograph of Sri Ramakrishna with eyes open but gaze turned inward. This *Śāmbhavī mudrā* is thus explained by the Master himself: “The mind of the yogi is always fixed, always absorbed in the Self....His eyes are wide open, but with an aimless look, like the eyes of a mother bird hatching her eggs. Her entire mind is fixed on the eggs, and there is a vacant look in her eyes.”

Nataraja's image also represents, surprisingly, the *Ardha Nārīśvara* aspect of Śiva.

In his left ear he wears a woman's earring—*patrakuṇḍala* and a man's *makarkuṇḍala* in the right. Similarly, the fingers of the left hand and toes of the left foot are more slender than those of the right. The impersonal Divine Principle becomes personalized as half-male and half-female. The underlying divinity in all beings is neither male nor female, but in manifestation multiplicity cannot be denied till one realizes the single unitary Source that transcends all appearances and conceptions. The lofty truth that there is one Fountainhead, the Creator of every form in this universe, is brought home through the image of *Ardha Nārīśvara*. This has been aesthetically expressed in the figure of Nataraja. Śiva in his eternal dance is sublime poetry and that poetry is incomparable. It is a consummate vision of mystical inspiration.

A pertinent question that arises here is, why the medium of dance has been chosen to describe the activity of the Cosmos? Creativity or expression involves movement. When Śakti or Cosmic Energy stirs, it vibrates. What is potential becomes kinetic. Life is motion and that motion is in rhythmic movement. There is orderly movement in the cosmos. In the womb of an atom, subatomic particles are performing an energy dance, and in the bosom of these particles, *quarks*, the invisible fundamental building blocks of matter are also dancing.

Quantum physics calls the 'pre-matter' phase, the quantum wave function. Quantum waves can move. In fact they can move faster than light. And all waves must have rhythmic movement. There is nothing static anywhere in the universe. Matter is changing into energy and that energy is being transformed into matter. This truth—that the world is in constant flux—gave rise to the

'doctrine of momentariness' of Buddha. The body and mind are incessantly changing. Medical science tells us that the human body is just like a building whose bricks are systematically and continuously being taken out and replaced. The whole universe is engaged in one such self-creating and self-destroying dance of the elements.

Sage Bharata, who wrote the *Nāṭya-Śāstra*, describing the details of dramaturgy, acknowledged incorporating a great deal from Vedic rituals. These Vedic elements have sprung mainly from the depiction of Śiva and Brahmā. Śiva appears in the Vedas and in the subsequent Purāṇas as the Lord of Dance—the Dancer Par Excellence. He is often referred to as *Nṛityapriya*—the Lover of Dance; *Nartakaḥ*—the Dancer, *Nityanartak*, the Ever-Dancing. In addition he is also called the Great Musician. In *Śiva Śatarudra* there is a description of Śiva as *Sunartaka*, an excellent dancer. Pārvatī, Himavat's daughter, went to the forest and performed *tapas* to win the Lord. Pleased with her severe penances, Śankara revealed His resplendent Form to her and asked what was her desire. She said: "O Lord of gods, if you have compassion for me, then be my husband! You should come to my father's house. First ask him for my hand in the guise of a beggar and then make known your celestial glory." Accordingly, Śankara went to the palace of Himavat in the guise of a dancer. He carried a horn in his left hand and a drum in his right. He danced gleefully in the courtyard, singing an enchanting melody. All the people of the town became thrilled by his enchanting dance. When the Queen, Himavat's wife, wanted to reward him with precious stones, he refused and asked for her daughter as alms instead. At this Himavat and his Queen felt insulted; they wanted to throw the beggar out. Then Mahādeva showed His infinite splendour and vanished,

We find in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* another depiction of the Tāṇḍava dance by the Lord. Darukā, a cruel demon, had achieved his prowess through *tapas* and was slaughtering the gods and pious Brahmins. When the gods could not stop his carnage—knowing that the demon could only be killed by a woman, they approached Śiva and prayed to Him to destroy the terrible giant. Then the Lord asked the help of Umā to slay Darukā. Pārvatī then entered the body of Mahādeva and made for herself another body from the poison that stood in his throat. The great Goddess, assuming the terrible form of Kālī, destroyed Darukā and all other



Nataraja

demons. Her rage knew no bounds and the whole world trembled at the fire of her anger. In order to quell it and win back her graceful form, Śankara performed a frenzied tāṇḍava dance accompanied by all his companions.

There are wonderful passages in the *Kurma Purāṇa* which unfold the profound significance of the Dance of Śiva. Once, after instructing the Yogis, the Lord began to dance in ecstasy in the sky, showing his transcendental nature. The Yogis watched the dance of the Universal Soul, who impels the world, and who is the source of universal Māyā or illusion. Sages and Brāhmins saw Śankara dancing in the sky, that Supreme Liberator Who instantly releases people from their ignorance, Who is kind and benevolent to the devotees, the Supreme Lord, with a thousand heads, a thousand feet, a thousand arms and forms, with matted hair, the crown of Whose head is adorned by the crescent moon, clad in a tiger skin, holding a trident in His hand, with the sun, moon and fire enhancing His splendour. He blazed forth like ten million suns. Thus the Yogis and Sages watched the dance of the Lord Who fashions the universe.

The Yogis reverently prayed to Him; "We all worship You, sole Lord, Primordial Person, Lord of Breath, Your Yoga is eternal; You reside in our hearts, are the atom, smaller than the smallest, and greater than the great. You are Everything. You are the Origin of all the *Vedas* and at the end of creation they will all come back to You. You are the Soul of Yoga, the Source of Consciousness, Who dance the celestial dance! We take refuge in You!" The *Purāṇa* drives home the truth of God's immanent and transcendental nature. And this Divine Dance of Śiva found its consummation in the exquisitely beautiful forms of Śiva-Natarāja.

The origin and growth of Indian dance drew its inspiration and nourishment from this mystical dance. It is said that Bharata was taught one hundred and eight modes of Natarāja's dance at the behest of Śiva. This tradition, which is more than two thousand years old, was an indispensable part of temple rituals. It was a sacred art performed with deep religious devotion, and accompanied by instrumental ensembles, captivated and elevated the minds of countless devotees who thronged the temples. Nurtured under royal patronage, reinforced by the admiration of enthusiastic devotees, and as a form of holy rite, dance not only effloresced into superbly beautiful and delightful art, but also was looked upon as a spiritual discipline and a means to enlightenment. The art of dance is not mere entertainment, but has spiritual efficacy. The end of the dramatic art, according to Bharata, is the moral improvement of those who witness it, not directly through sermons put into the mouths of performers, but indirectly by making the audience experience the goodness of the virtuous path through identification with the focus of the dramatic situation.

The rapturous dance of Krishna as cowherd, that of Sri Chaitanya and of Sri Ramakrishna stoke the fire of spiritual feeling in onlookers. "...but those who will not sing or dance, mad with God's name, will never attain God," said Sri Ramakrishna.¹ When *Bhāva*, or feeling reaches its deep intensity, it becomes *rasa*, divine love, unlocking the flood gates of the bliss of God. Therefore the *Śāṇḍilya Bhakti Sūtra* says, "*rasa* means Divine Love." The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* also says that ... "*having rasa, one becomes full of bliss.*" In dance and music this *Bhāva* quickly turns itself into *rasa* (Bliss) and profoundly affects the minds of

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 186.

those who behold it in others. Saints like Mīra, Rāmprasād, Purandara Dās, Tyāgarāja and Tulsidās were not only inspired poets but also great musicians. They danced while they sang. Extolling dance and music, Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, "If a person excels in singing, music, dancing or any other art, he can also quickly realize God, provided he strives sincerely."²

The art of dancing in India has a divine origin. It imitates the different dance postures of Śiva, or in its later development, of Krishna. A transcendent state of *ānanda* or bliss is its goal. The ultimate aim of human life is to realize that state of spiritual

beatitude. As all forms of art have their source and inspiration in God, their purpose or *raison d'être* is to lead again to Him. The fruition of art lies in the purification of the human psyche and in uplifting the human spirit to spiritual heights. Art and dance provide a fine medium for self-expression on the part of man to find his unity with the Cosmos and its Creator. In the words of Ananda Coomaraswami, one of the great exponents of Indian art, "The dominant motifs governing its evolution from the third century B.C. onwards, and up to the close of the eighteenth century, are devotion (*Bhakti*) and reunion (*Yoga*)."³

2. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

3. Ananda Coomaraswami, *The Dance of Shiva* (Bombay: Asia House, 1948) p. 49.

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Emerson's 'Brahma' in the Light of the Gita

DR. UMESH P. PATRI

Emerson's poem 'Brahma' reflects the quintessence of the Gita. The author, a teacher of English Literature at the D.A.V. College, Koraput, Orissa casts fresh light on the famous poem.

R. W. Emerson's poem 'Brahma' crystallizes many concepts taken from Indian sources. The poem was published in the first number of *The Atlantic Monthly* in November, 1857 and subsequently in the volumes of 1867 and 1876. It was a controversial poem from the very beginning because of what many took to be its anti-Christian attitude and its direct treatment of the Upaniṣadic mysticism. While discussing with his daughter about the controversy the poem had raised, Emerson said, perhaps in anger, "Tell them to say Jehovah instead of Brahma."¹ In 1876, when a selection of his poems was about to be published, Emerson's publishers asked him to change the title of the poem as it had aroused a lot of controversy. But Emerson refused to change it. Regarding the unchristian attitude of the poem—according to Robert L. White: "... 'Brahma' suggests that Emerson's most controversial poem is primarily anti-Christian but [is actually] addressed to his contemporary Christian audience in an attempt to explain his own personal rejection of the Christian dogma that the proper end of man is heaven."² The poem was not properly understood by critics because they were not familiar with the Hindu thought. Professor Brown, with evident bias, commented that "the poem is the greatest transcendental nonsense it had ever been his fortune to encounter."³ Even

a great writer like Carlyle described it as 'pale moonshine'.⁴ The poem could not be understood and consequently went unappreciated by Emerson's contemporaries (not by the Transcendentalists of course) because of their colossal ignorance about Hindu Philosophy. R. L. Rusk writes: "'Brahma' provoked the laughter of those who were ignorant of Hindu lore and they must have composed most of the readers of *The Atlantic*."⁵

Critics like W. T. Harris,⁶ W. S. Kennedy,⁷ F. I. Carpenter,⁸ A. Christy,⁹ L. Goren,¹⁰ and K. R. Chandrasekharan,¹¹ who have written about the poem are all almost unanimous in the view that the poem could not have been written without the influence of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagavad*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner, 1949) p. 396.

6. W. T. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism", *Concord Harvest*, ed. K. W. Cameron (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1970) I, pp. 187-90.

7. William Sloan Kennedy, "Clues to Emerson's Mystic Verse", *American Transcendental quarterly*, Part 3, (Winter, 1976), pp. 2-20.

8. Frederic Ives Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia* (New York: Haskell House, 1968).

9. Arthur E. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963).

10. L. Goren, "Elements of Brahminism in the Transcendentalism of Emerson", *ESQ*, (Supplement to No. 34, 1st Qtr., 1964) pp. 34-35.

11. K. R. Chandrasekharan, "Emerson's Brahma: An Indian Interpretation", *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4, (December, 1960) pp. 506-12.

1. Robert L. White, "Emerson's Brahma", *The Explicator*, XXI (April, 1963), No. 8, Item 63.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Charles Malloy, "A Study of Emerson's Major Poems" (Brahma), *American Transcendental Quarterly*, I, (Summer, 1974), p. 62.

Gītā. F. I. Carpenter says that 'Brahma' expresses the fundamental Hindu concept of God "...more clearly and concisely than any other writing in the English language—perhaps better than any writing in Hindu literature itself."¹² W. T. Harris is equally eulogistic. For him the poem is "a wonderful summary of the spirit of the Indian mind." He further says: "There is no subject farther from the thought of the average common sense of the modern European or American than the all-absorbing unity which the East Indian conceived under the name *Brahma*."¹³

I am giving below the full text of the poem so that when I analyse it in terms of its content of Hindu thought, the lines can be conveniently referred to:

BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.
They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.¹⁴

The title of the poem has created a certain amount of confusion. 'Brahma' (the Impersonal Absolute) has been often mistaken for

'*Brahmā*' (the creator god). F. I. Carpenter says that by 'Brahma', the impersonal creative force of the world is represented as the speaker.¹⁵ By this Carpenter understands 'Brahma' as 'Brahmā' (with long 'a'), the creator god of the Hindu trinity (*Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva*). This mistake has been rightly pointed out by K. R. Chandrasekharan.¹⁶ *Brahma* actually means the Universal Soul, the Absolute or 'Over-Soul'. The poem does not have any reference to *Brahmā*, the creator god, but it embodies all the attributes and qualities of the Impersonal Ultimate Reality beyond the gods and goddesses, *Brahma*. Chandrasekharan's observation that the proper title should have been 'Brahman' is not necessarily correct, for *Brahma* and *Brahman* are synonymous.

Emerson got the central idea for his poem from reading the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* which was included in the *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta, 1852). The following verse from *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* clearly forms the basis of the first few lines:

*Hantā cen manyate hantum hatas cen
manyate hatam,
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyam hanti na
hanyate.*¹⁷

If the slayer thinks I slay, if the slain thinks I am slain, then both of them do not know well. It (the soul) does not slay nor is it slain.¹⁸

Subsequently, Emerson noted down this

12. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 111.

13. Harris, "Emerson's Orientalism", p. 187.

14. *Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903) IX, p. 195 (Brahma).

15. Carpenter, *Emerson and Asia*, p. 113.

16. K. R. Chandrasekharan, p. 506.

17. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanisads* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968) 616, (*Kaṭha*, I: 2.19).

18. This translation is the original one which Emerson read in *Bibliotheca Indica* (Calcutta: 1852). See W. S. Kennedy, "Clues to Emerson's Mystic Verse", *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 3, (Winter, 1976) p. 6.

idea in his Journals in various contexts.¹⁹ This same Upaniṣadic theme has also been employed with a slight modification in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

*Ya enam veti hantāraṁ yaścainam
manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto nā yaṁ hanti na
hanyate.
Na jayate mriyate vā kadācin ..
nā yaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ.
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.*

He who holds Atman as slayer and he who considers It as slain, both of them are ignorant. It slays not, nor is It slain.

The Atman is neither born nor does It die. Coming into being and ceasing to be do not take place in It. Unborn, eternal, constant and ancient, It is not killed when the body is slain.²⁰

The phrase 'red slayer' is, however, Emerson's own coinage and refers to any slayer whose hands are gory with human blood. The image is a vivid one and brings before us the picture of a killer who is smeared with blood and consequently looks red. The image of the *Kṣatriya* warriors of old who were professional fighters may have prompted Emerson to coin the expression 'red slayer'. K. R. Chandrasekharan, however, gives a different interpretation to the words. He compares the 'red slayer' to Rudra, the god of destruction (another name of Śiva), which is not at all appropriate.²¹ Emerson puts these words into the mouth of the

19. Emerson, *Journals*, ed., E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1909.14) VI, 1844, p. 494; 1845, VII, p. 127.

20. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Tr. Swami Chidbhavananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1969) pp. 138-39, (II: 19-20).

21. Chandrasekharan, p. 507.

Absolute or Over-soul, who is the Supreme (Impersonal) Being, though it would have been more appropriate to have them from the mouth of the speaker of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Krishna. He being an immanent form of the Absolute (*Kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam*). Krishna Himself is God, or the Absolute. The poem is a justification of the transcendent ways of Brahman, or Over-soul, to man and expresses a higher truth which is not likely to be understood by an ordinary human being. Arjuna was puzzled because for him the slain and the slayer were different and real. This puzzlement arose out of his egoism, or subject-object duality. A man who is dominated by the ego would call himself a doer, but in the ultimate analysis there is no difference between the soul who acts and the soul who is acted upon. The slayer and the slain, the doubter and the doubt are one.

In the second stanza the influence of another Upaniṣadic verse is clearly discernible. In the Upaniṣads there are many paradoxical descriptions of Brahman. The Upaniṣads say that Brahman moves and does not move; He is far and He is near. The following verse declares the paradoxical nature of Brahman:

*Tad ejaṭi taṁ naijaṭi taḍ dūre taḍ vantaṭi
taḍ ontaraṣya sarvaṣya taḍ u sarvaṣyāṣya
bāhyataḥ.*

It moves and It moves not; It is far and It is near; It is within all this and It is also outside all this.²²

In the Supreme Being, the Brahman, the ordinary mental contrasts such as distance and nearness (which imply space), past and present (which imply time), light and darkness, shame and fame, victory and defeat, do not exist. All pairs of opposites and

22. *Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 571 (*Iśa*, 5).

conflicts vanish in It. The earthly differences which are relative in nature are all embraced by the Unity of Brahman. The concept of good and bad has its basis in human thought and reasoning; likewise all the other contrasting principles. Pleasure and pain, success and failure, life and death are dichotomies which are all, in the ultimate analysis, illusory notions. There is no such thing as an improvement from some position. If it is there, it is only apparent. Alan Watts, explaining the point, is worth quoting:

The illusion of significant improvement arises in moments of contrast, as when one turns from the left to the right on a hard bed. The position is 'better' so long as the contrast remains, but before long the second position begins to feel like the first. So one acquires a more comfortable bed and, for a while, sleeps in peace. But the solution of the problem leaves a strange vacuum in one's consciousness, a vacuum soon filled by the sensation of another intolerable contrast, hitherto unnoticed, and just as urgent, just as frustrating as the problem of the hard bed. The vacuum arises because the sensation of comfort can be maintained only in relation to the sensation of discomfort, just as an image is visible to the eye only by reason of a contrasting background. The good and the evil, the pleasant and the painful, are so inseparable, so identical in their difference—like the two sides of a coin.²³

The above explains clearly how the opposing principles such as good and bad are really illusory notions. A Zen poem says: "The conflict between right and wrong is the sickness of the mind." The fundamental idea of Buddhism is to transcend these

earthly opposites. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Sri Krishna has repeatedly talked about going beyond the world of opposites.²⁴ Modern physics has shown us that at the sub-atomic level the distinction between matter and energy disappears; there matter appears both as particle and wave. On that level force and matter are unified. The Brahman or Over-soul is such a unity where all distinctions disappear. Emerson, in his poem 'Celestial Love' describes this unity:

Where good and ill,
And joy and moan,
Melt into one.
There Past, Present, Future, shoot
Triple blossoms from one root;
Substances at base divided,
In their summits are united.²⁵

In another poem, 'Wood-Notes', he also expresses such a concept:

Alike to him the better, the worse
The glowing angel, the outcast corse.²⁶

The third stanza is clearly inspired by the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, wherein Lord Krishna gives a long catalogue of things in which he is present as the Supreme Being. The last line of the stanza is especially similar to the line in the *Gītā*:

Vedānām sāmavedo'smi... Of the
Vedas I am the *Sāma*; I am *Vāsava*
among the devas; of the senses I am the
mind and among living beings I am
consciousness.²⁷

(Continued on page 178)

23. A. W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (1957; rpt. England: Penguin Books, 1975) pp. 136-37.

24. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, II. 56-57.

25. *Complete Works*, IX, page 115 (The Celestial Love).

26. *Ibid.* p. 59 (Wood-Notes) II.

27. *Bhagavad Gītā*, X. 22.

The Gayatri Mantra Upasana

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

No other Vedic Mantra occupies an exalted place as that of the Gāyātrī. The author, a great scholar, gives us an indepth analysis and explains lucidly the profound import of this mystic formula. Swami Mukhyananda is the author of a number of valuable books in English. He is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order at Belur Math.

1. Introduction

A *Mantra*, generally, is a short mystic formula, consisting of a Prayer or divine Name, used for *Upāsana* (contemplation or meditation) or *Japa* (repetition) in spiritual practice, transmitted by a Guru or a competent spiritually evolved person. The Mantra becomes efficient and acquires spiritual potency (*Siddha-Mantra*) if it is transmitted in a *Dīkṣhā* (Initiation) ritual by one who himself/herself has been practising it for long, having received it traditionally. Sometimes long hymns (*Stotra-s*) and spirituo-religious texts, especially in verse form, are also considered as *Mālā-Mantra-s* (garland of mantra-s) and are used for holy recitation either daily, periodically, or on special occasions. These need not require traditional transmission, though one can learn from experts the art of effective and pleasing spiritual recitation or chanting. The entire *Samhitā* portion of the Vedas is also called 'Mantra', and these Mantra-s are used in Vedic rituals.

Etymologically, 'Mantra' is defined as '*Mananāt trāyate iti mantrah*'; i.e. that which saves (*trāyate*) one spiritually if it is contemplated upon (*mananāt*). *Upāsana* consists in intimate and intense contemplation on the meaning and significance of the Mantra and the Deity represented by it, keeping in view the purpose for which the Mantra is intended. Literally, *Upāsana* means sitting

(*Āsana*) or placing oneself (mentally) near (*Upa-*) to the object of contemplation or meditation. '*Yat dhyāyati tat bhavati*' (Whatever one intensely contemplates or meditates upon, that one becomes) is the psychological law. It is laid down in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (I.i. 10), "That which is done with faith, conviction, and knowledge, and understanding its inner significance, that alone acquires greater power and potency."¹ *Japa* of a Mantra consists in its repetition with *Niṣṭhā* (Earnestness), *Śhraddhā* (Faith), and *Viśhvāsa* (Conviction) "keeping in mind its meaning and spiritual significance"² *Japa* may be done independently or as part of the *Upāsana*.

2. The Gāyātrī-Mantra

The *Gāyātrī-Mantra*, called also the '*Sāvitrī-Mantra*', occurs in its original form in the Vedas (*R̥g-Veda*, III, 62. 10), and is considered to be their very essence, or even their Mother (*Gāyātrī Veda-mātā*). When

1. "*Yadeva vidyayā karoti, sraddhayā upaniṣadā, tadeva viryavattaram bhavati.*" The *Gītā* also says: "*Yo yat sraddhah sa eva sah.*" (As one's *Śraddhā* is, so he becomes). Another significant spiritually didactic verse declares: "In regard to a Mantra, a place of pilgrimage, a sage, and a Guru, one attains results according to one's attitude."

2. "*Tat-japah tad-artha-bhāvanam*"—*Pātañjala Yoga-Sūtras*, I. 28.

later on OM was associated with it, (which is also considered as the Source of the Vedas) and the *Gāyatrī* was treated as its elaboration, OM was prefixed to the Mantra along with the three *Vyāhṛti*-s (Utterances of the Divine Creator) representing the Three Cosmic World-Planes—*Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah* (Cf. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, V. 14.1-8 and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, II. 23. 2-3; III. 12).³

The *Gāyatrī*-Mantra in full, repeated mystically, runs as follows:

OM BHUR-BHUVAH-SVAH
TAT-SAVITUR-VARENYAM
BHARGO DEVASYA DHĪMAHI;
DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT.

OM, We meditate (dhīmahī) on the adorable spiritual effulgence (vareṇyam bhargah)

3. Yogi-Yājñavalkya says: "At the time of creation, by the Self-Existent One Himself were uttered (*Vyāhṛtā*) with His Knowledge-body (*Jñāna-deha*) the words: '*Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah*', and the three World-Planes came into being immediately. Hence they are called *Vyāhṛti*-s." (Cf. in the Bible: "God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light.")

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says: "Prajāpati (the Vedic 'Lord of Creation'), at the time of Creation, brooded, (made *Tapas* or meditated) on the Worlds. From them, thus brooded, issued forth the threefold Veda (as their essence). He brooded on this. From this, thus brooded upon, issued forth the Mystic Syllables (*Vyāhṛti*-s) *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svah*. He brooded on them. From them, thus brooded upon, issued forth (as their essence) the Mystic Word OM. Just as all the parts of the leaf are permeated by the ribs of the leaf, so are all words permeated by the *OM-kāra*. Verily, the *OM-kāra* is all this—yea, the *OM-kāra* is verily all this." (II. 23. 2-3).

In course of time, the three *Vyāhṛti*-s were raised to seven, by sub-dividing *Svah* into *Svah*, *Mahah*, *Janah*, *Tapah*, and *Satyam*, corresponding to the five higher Worlds. Along with *Bhūh* and *Bhuvah*, these are used in the Mantra-s of the *Sandhyā* and other rituals. (Cf. the last para in the passage quoted from the *Mahānāranya Upaniṣad* later on).

of That Supreme Divine Being who is the Source or Projector (tat savituh devasya) of the three phenomenal cosmic world-planes—the gross or physical (Bhūh), the subtle or psychical (Bhuvah), and the causal or potential (Svah), both macrocosmically (externally) and microcosmically (internally). May that Supreme Divine Being (Tat, Yo) stimulate (prachodayāt) our (nah) intelligences (dhiyah), [so that we may realize the Supreme Truth].

The *Gāyatrī*-Mantra is the greatest prayer-mantra which incorporates all the ideas of the OM (AUM) symbolism (given here briefly) and prays to the supreme infinite Divine Being for the enlightenment of the intelligence (*Dhī*) of all human beings to enable mankind to realize the Supreme Truth. It is also known as the SAVITRI-MANTRA, since it is addressed to the Divine Person in the SUN, who is considered as the visible symbolic representation of the SUPREME DIVINITY, for He destroys darkness and promotes life, even as the Supreme Divinity destroys all spiritual ignorance, leading to Eternal Life or Immortality. The Deity in the Sun is also identified with the inner Self of man.⁴

Sāvitrī signifies that which is related to *Savitṛi* (*Savitā*); *Savitā* means the Sun as

4. In the *Isa Upaniṣad*, verse 15, the *Sādhaka* (Spiritual Aspirant) prays to the Sun: "Like a golden disc, Thy shining orb covers the Face of Truth. Remove it, O Sun, so that I who am devoted to virtue and Truth may behold It." In the next verse, continuing the prayer he affirms the identity of the Self within him with the Universal Self manifested through the Sun: "O Sun! the offspring of Prajāpati (the Lord of Beings), Thou lonely courser of the heavens, Thou controller and supporter (*Pūṣan*) of all, contract Thy dazzling rays. With Thy Grace, may I behold the most blessed and luminous (*Tejah*) form of Thine. I am indeed He, that Supreme Being who dwells there in Thee (*Yo 'sāvasau Puruṣah so-aham-asmī*)."

well as the Source or Originator who brings forth (*Sav*) the universe. The *Sāvitrī-Mantra* is composed in the *Gāyatrī* metre, and it being the best and most significant Mantra in that metre in the Vedas, it has become famous as 'The *Gāyatrī*'.

The *Gāyatrī-Mantra*, being the most universal, non-personal, holy prayer, can be used by any person belonging to any country, irrespective of race, religion or sex.⁵

In course of time, just as the *OM-kāra* was personified into *Gajānana* or *Gaṇeśha*, for personal *Upāsana* (*Saguṇa-Upāsana*),⁶ the *Gāyatrī* also was personified into the Goddess *Gāyatrī* (*Gāyatrī Devī*), as the Presiding Deity (*Adhiṣṭhāna-Devatā*) of the Mantra, for purposes of *Saguṇa Upāsana*. (See footnote No. 10).

3. *OM and the Gāyatrī-Mantra*

Since the *Gāyatrī-Mantra* is intimately associated with *OM* and is considered an elaboration of it—in fact *OM* is considered to be of such supreme importance that it is

5. In the *Sukla Yajur-Veda* (XXVI. 2), it is urged to spread the beneficent words (*Vācham kalyāṇīm*) of the Vedas to all the people without distinction of caste, creed, or sex, even to people of other religions:

(Just as I am speaking these blessed words to the people (without distinction), in the same way you all also spread these words among all men and women—the *Brāhmaṇa*-s. *Kṣatriya*-s *Sūdra*-s, *Vaiśya*-s and all others, whether they be our own people or aliens.)—quoted by Swami Vivekananda in his speech 'The Religion We Are Born In' (Cf. *Complete Works*, Vol. III. p. 457).

Now the time has come, as declared by Swami Vivekananda, that the Vedas and the *Gāyatrī-Mantra* must be propagated among all as before, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, or religion or race.

6. In regard to this personification of *OM* as *Gajānana* and also for a detailed treatment of *OM*, *Gāyatrī*, and *Sandhyā*, see the present author's book with this title published by the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004,

generally pre-fixed to all the other Mantra-s—, we may briefly throw some light on it here.

OM or *AUM* is the most comprehensive, universal, non-personal, holy sound symbol (*Logos* or *Name*) of the Supreme Infinite Divine Reality. This Divine Reality, which is Spiritual, is of the nature of *Ananta-Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Absolute Infinite-Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). It manifests as the Totality of Existence—from the external most Physical to the internal most Spiritual—on Four Cosmic Planes, Macrocosmic (Universal) as well as Microcosmic (Individual) viz.:

(A) *On the Macrocosmic or Universal Plane:*

1. Our empirical universe with its different types of beings, designated the *Bhūh* or *Bhūr-loka*; the gross or physical plane.

2. The intermediate regions with the *Manes* and other subtle invisible beings which are apprehended psychically, designated *Bhuvah* or *Bhuvar-loka*; the Subtle or Psychical Plane.

3. The several heavens (*Svah* or *Svar-loka*), (also spelt *Suvah*, *Suvar-loka*) with the different types of angels and gods, including the Highest Heaven, called the Abode of Truth (*Satya-loka*), with the Supreme Personal God, to be envisioned spiritually; the Causal or Potential Plane.

4. The above three Planes together constitute the entire Phenomenal Cosmic Universe, called the *Brahmāṇḍa*. Beyond *Brahmāṇḍa* is the *Noumenal non-Personal Absolute Spirit*, designated *Brahman* (The Infinite), which is *Supra-Corporeal* and is beyond all Worlds and Heavens (*Lokottara*).

That is the Fourth Plane, the Absolute (*Turiya*). It is Pure Infinite Spiritual Existence, the source of the other three, and not any Region or Person.

(B) *On the Microcosmic or Individual Plane:*

The Gross, Subtle, and Causal bodies of the individual and the Ātman within, transcending them, represent the Four Planes.

The sound-symbol AUM represents all the above Four Planes in a nutshell for meditation purposes to help visualize them in life. OM is also the Primeval Sound; hence it is called the *Pranava*, which also signifies (*Vāchaka*) Brahman (*Tasya vāchakah Pranavah*). OM is often referred to as *Shabda-Brahman*, Brahman in the form of the *Shabda* (Sound, Logos) or Word (Vedas).

The syllable OM consists of three letters. In Sanskrit when A (अ) and U (उ) are combined, it gives us the O sound as in *go*, and adding M (म) to it we get the OM. A + U + M are symbolic of the beginning, middle, and end of all the words, since we utter A (अ) when we open the mouth and M (म) is uttered with the closing of the lips, and U (उ) rolls through from the throat in the middle—and all our words are uttered between these three. Now, AUM is symbolic not only of all the words, *but of the Worlds (Loka-s)* as well, for meditation purposes. They represent the three Planes of *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah* and *Svah*. (See footnote No. 7) When OM is uttered mystically, the inarticulate humming sound that lingers (as when a gong is sounded) represents the *Absolute* beyond the Words and Worlds (*Lokottara*), the Fourth Plane (*Turiya*). Thus AUM is symbolic of entire Existence, phenomenal as well as noumenal. Hence OM is considered as the designation of the Infinite Supreme Divinity, and is held to be the holiest universal *Name*,

4. *Importance of Gāyatrī-Mantra*

Om and the Gāyatrī-Mantra have acquired such great importance that they are often referred to as '*The Pranava*' and '*The Gāyatrī*', respectively. In the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and the *Gītā*, and in later Sanskrit religious literature, there are numerous references to their holiness, importance, and significance. We shall give here only a few quotations, mainly regarding the Gāyatrī:

(a) *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. 12:

"Gāyatrī indeed is all this, whatever being exists. Speech indeed is Gāyatrī; for speech indeed sings and removes fear of all this that exists. ...Such is the greatness of this Gāyatrī."

(b) *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, VI. 2: (Also called *Maitreyī Up.*, *Maitrāyanī Up.*)

"These two, the Spirit within and the Sun, go forth toward each other; one should reverence them with the Word OM, with the Mystic Utterances (*Vyāhṛiti-s*) *Bhūr*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah*, and with the *Sāvitrī* (Gāyatrī) Prayed."

(c) *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, VI. 7:

Worship of the Ātman in the form of the Sun by the use of the *Sāvitrī Prayer*

"*Tat savitur vareṇyam* (That Adorable Splendour of That *Sāvitrī*—the Originator of the Universe);

"Yonder Sun, verily is *Sāvitrī* (a visible symbol). He, verily, is to be sought thus by one seeking Atman"—say the expounders of Brahman.

"*Bhargo devasya dhīmahi* (May we meditate upon That Splendour of the Divinity);

"*Sāvitrī*, verily, is the Divinity. Hence upon that which is called His Splendour do we meditate"—say the expounders of Brahman,

“*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt* (And may He inspire our thoughts);

“Thoughts, verily, are meditations. And may He inspire these for us”—say the expounders of Brahman.

(d) *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (Sections XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV):

“The One-syllabled OM is Brahman. (Of this Gāyatrī-Mantra) Agni is its Deity. Its Ṛishi is also Brahman. Its metre is Gāyatrī. Its application is for the union with *Paramātmān* (Supreme Ātman).

“May the Boon-conferring Gāyatrī (*Varadā Devī*) come to us (in order to instruct us about) the Imperishable Brahman who is revealed by the Vedas. May Gāyatrī, the Mother of Metres (Mantra-s) (*Chhandasām-Mātā*), favour us with the Knowledge of the Supreme Brahman alluded to.

“O Gāyatrī! Thou art the Vigour, Thou art the Stamina, Thou art the Strength, and Thou art the Brilliance in all. Thou art the origin and sustenance of Gods. Thou art the Universe and its duration. Thou art all that exist and their span of life. Thou surpassest everything. Thou art the TRUTH denoted by the Praṇava. I invoke Thee as Gāyatrī (Giver of Illumination); I invoke Thee as Sāvitrī (Giver of Life); I invoke Thee as Sarasvatī (Giver of Knowledge and Wisdom).

“*OM Bhūh, OM Bhuvah, OM Svah; OM Mahah* (the Region of Spiritual Light); *OM Janah* (the place of Origin of Universe); *OM Tapah* (the Region of Higher Knowledge and Meditation); *OM Satyam* (the Abode of Truth). OM, May we meditate on the Adorable Splendour of That Supreme Divine Source of All to quicken our Understanding. OM, It is the Causal Waters, Light, Bliss, Ambrosia, Brahman, and also the

Three Cosmic World-Planes. All these are verily OM.”

(e) *Vyāsa Smṛiti*:

“Gāyatrī is considered non-different from Brahman. As such one should contemplate ‘I am That’ (or ‘I am He’) (*So-aham-asmi*), as prescribed (with a sense of identity).” “She is called Gāyatrī because one who chants the Mantra is freed from all blemishes (*Gāyantam trāyate*).”

5. *Gāyatrī-Mantra in Sandhyā-Upāsānā*

We have already stated that OM is regarded as the *Śhabda-Brahman* (Brahman in the form of the Word or Logos), representing the Vedas, and the Gāyatrī-Mantra is considered as the elaboration of OM and ‘Boon-conferring Mother of the Vedas’ (*Varadā Veda-Mātā*), the Vedas being held as further elaboration of the Gāyatrī.⁷

⁷. The sound OM is produced by the combination of the three sounds: A (अ); U (उ); M (म). These are the three *Mātrā*-s (Moras or phonetic components) of OM; further there is the *Ardha-Mātrā* (half-mora) or A-Matra (non-mora), the light inarticulate humming sound which still lingers even when the audible sound dies away (like on the sounding of a gong), and which can be detected only by fine perception and concentration. This sound is spontaneous and primeval and is designated ‘Un-created’ or ‘Unstruck-Sound’ (*Anāhata-Dhvanī*), which represents the Absolute.

OM, the Sound-symbol of Brahman, being the Logos, is considered to be the first sound emanating at the beginning of creation. From the three *Mātrā*-s of OM came out the three ‘feet’ of the Gāyatrī. (The *Sāvitrī*-s in Gayatri metre and the ‘feet’ refer to its parts. Since this Mantra in the Gāyatrī metre was considered very holy and became famous, it has become well known as *The Gāyatrī*, just as Gita means ‘song’; but since the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became very famous, it is referred to as ‘*The Gītā*’, while there are more than 30 other *Gītā*-s.) And from its three ‘feet’ came out the three Vedas and the three *Vyāhṛti*-s, *Bhūr-Bhuvah-Svah*, representing the three Cosmic World-Planes. From A (of OM), came out ‘*Tat Savitur Vareṇyam*’,

Because of its supreme spiritual significance, the *Japa* and *Upāsana* of the Gāyatrī-Mantra has been incorporated as the essential part of a daily prayer-ritual known as *Sandhyā*. The Gāyatrī-Mantra is addressed to the Supreme Divinity with the Sun as the symbol, and so is the *Sandhyā* Prayer-ritual. Yogi-Yājñavalkya says: "That which is the *Sandhyā*, that verily is the Gāyatrī—existing in these two forms (ritual and contemplation)." The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* says: "By performing the *Sandhyā*, meditating on the rising and the setting Sun intensely with esoteric knowledge that He is the symbol of Brahman, a wise devoted person attains all that is good and auspicious (*Sakalam bhadam aśhnute*)."

Being in the nature of contemplation, the *Sandhyā*-ritual is classed as *Upāsana* or spiritual contemplation. This *Upāsana* is prescribed to be performed thrice a day at the conjunction (*Sandhi*) times of the night and dawn (*Pūrvāhna*), forenoon and afternoon (*Madhyāhna*), and evening (sunset) and night (*Sāyāhna*), lasting 48 minutes at each conjunction. (Those who cannot do in *Madhyāhna* can drop it in modern times.) Because the *Upāsana* is done at the conjunction times (*Sandhyā*), it is designated as the *Sandhyā-Upāsana*. It is also called *Sandhyā-Vandanā* (adoration or worship), and often merely *Sandhyā*, for short.

which expanded itself into the *R̥g-Veda* and the Cosmic Plane *Bhūh*; from U, 'Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahī', which expanded itself into *Yajur-Veda* and the Plane of *Bhuvah*; and from M, 'Dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt', which expanded itself into *Sāma-Veda*, and the Plane of *Svah*. The first *Veda* is *Stuti-para* (devoted to Devotion), the second is *Kriyā-para* (devotion to Work), and the third is *Jñāna-para* (devoted to Knowledge). So by the meditation upon the different Mātrā-s different ends are attained according to the significations of the Mātrā-s. But when the mind is concentrated upon the A-Mātrā, the Transcendental Supreme Brahman is realized.

Why is the *Sandhyā* or conjunction time chosen for this *Upāsana*? Man as a Micro-cosm comprises all the four aspects of the Total Existential Reality. His body, mind, and intellect are parts and parcel of the phenomenal Nature. Hence the external conditions in nature affect his constitution also. When external nature is quiet, the internal nature also tends to be so. Therefore, in all spiritual practices advantage is taken of the propitious external conditions in nature, including manifestation of special astronomical phenomena such as newmoon and fullmoon days, eclipses, etc., for fixing the times of prayer, *Upāsana*, meditation, rituals, etc. For instance, if one's boat goes along with the tide, taking advantage of it, it advances quickly without much effort. Hence, the *Sandhyā*-ritual is fixed at the conjunction times, when significant changes occur in external and internal nature. Psychologically too, if we are properly attuned, the great changes in nature make us think of the cosmos as a whole and contemplate on the glorious Spiritual Sun within, rising above our usual parochial circle of individuality and ego.

The Sun is the Great Agent of these changes in the lives of the people. He is the 'Eye of the World' (*Jagat-chakṣu*) and the 'Witness of Activities' (*Karma-Sākṣī*) of all beings. He causes day and night on earth, but Himself remains ever luminous, unaffected by them, and shines equally on all without distinction—the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner, the learned and the ignorant, and the living and the non-living. Man's physical life on earth is regulated by the apparent movements (positions) of the Sun in relation to the earth. Thus, He reminds man of the Spiritual Sun, who shines within all as Consciousness (*Chaitanya*) and regulates their inner life as the *Antaryāmin* (Inner-Controller). He is the Inner-Witness (*Antahsākṣī*) of all the thoughts and actions of man, and of the three states of his cons-

sciousness—waking (*Jāgrat*), dream (*Svapna*), and deep-sleep (*Suṣupti*)—, and yet remaining ever transcendent, unaffected by all these.⁸

The Sun above, the Giver of Life (*Pūṣan*) and Light (*Tejas*), (Cf. footnote No. 4), is the great visible symbol of the Infinite Spiritual Sun, the source of all consciousness, the substratum of the entire cosmic universe, and the Inner-Self (*Antar-Ātman*) of all entities and beings in all the worlds of the cosmic universe. Man is a part and parcel of this cosmic universe, and within the 'Supreme Space' (*Parame-Vyoman*) or 'Sky of his psychic Heart' (*Hṛidaya-Ākāśaḥ*) (Cf. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. i. 1 and I. vi. 1) also is indwelling that Spiritual Sun reflected in the lake of his mind as the *Jīva* or Soul, the centre of individual consciousness. The Sandhyā-Upāsanā, with the visible sun in the sky as the symbol, is a *Sādhanā* (spiritual practice) to bring about the conjunction (*Sandhi*) of the individual Self with the Cosmic Self to realize the unity of both. (See footnote No. 4) Sandhyā, therefore is a form of Yoga-Sādhanā for the union of the individual with the Supreme Reality, and the Sandhyā-ritual incorporates the elements or features of all the four main types of Yoga—*Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Dhyāna*, and *Jñāna*.

Our physical sciences deal only with the natural or physical (*Ādhi-bhautika*) aspect of Reality, cognized through the senses. But, according to Yāska's (Vedic etymologist and commentator, earlier than 7th century

B.C.) work, *Nirukti*, the Vedic Mantra-s and events described therein are to be interpreted, depending on the context and purpose, in any of the three ways: (1) *Ādhi-Bhautika* (natural or physical); (2) *Ādhi-Daivika* (mythico-theological—i.e. in relation to the Divinities or Divine Forces presiding over or controlling cosmic functions); and (3) *Ādhi-Ātmika*, or *Ādhyātmika* (spiritual—i.e. in relation to oneself and the Spiritual Principle within). For instance, man is treated by Medical Science as a living body; by Psychology as mind-cum-body; and by Religion and Mysticism as a *Soul or Spirit* in the body. Hence, a performer of the Sandhyā, in using the Vedic Mantra-s has to gradually advance from the sensual physical conceptions to the mental and theological ones, and, finally, to the intuitive spiritual conceptions, which reveal themselves to him when his mind becomes refined, pure, and serene and is filled with Faith (*Śraddhā*), Conviction (*Viśvāsa*), and Earnestness (*Niṣṭhā*). This principle is applicable to all the other forms of Upāsanā and Japa as well.

We use many artificial physical instruments and devices for our scientific investigation of the external world and for our secular development. Similarly, several effective artificial psycho-physical instruments in the form of rituals, Japa, meditation, etc. are needed for our investigation of the internal world and spiritual development. All evolved religions prescribe the necessary means, which include rituals, for spiritual development and God-vision or Self-realization. Swami Vivekananda characterized religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. Āchārya Śaṅkara has stated: "*Śāstra-āchārya-upadeśa śama-damādibhiḥ susamskṛtam manah ātmadarśhane karaṇam.*" (The mind which has been well disciplined and refined by the instructions of the Śāstra-s and the Āchārya as well as by the six spirituo-ethical disciplines such as *Śama*, *Dama*

8. Cf. *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (VI. 11): "The One Effulgent Divinity is hidden in all beings. He is all-pervading, and is the Inner Self of all creatures. He presides over all actions, and all beings reside in Him. He is the Inner-Witness (*Sākṣī*). He endows all with consciousness (*Cheta*), and He is the Absolute (*Kevalah*), free from the three *Guṇa*-s or phenomenal characteristics of Nature (*Nir-guṇa*)."

(control of the mind and the senses), etc.⁹ is the instrument for the perception of the Ātman).

In the Sandhyā-Upāsanā, the entire personality—body, mind, soul and Spirit—is involved, and we proceed gradually from the external to the internal. Though Sandhyā is in the form of a ritual, it is not a *Kāmya-karma*, i.e. an optional ritual to be performed occasionally by one who wishes to attain some worldly desire (*Kāma*). It is a *Nitya-karma*, i.e. an obligatory daily ritual to be performed to purify oneself of all egoistic tendencies and keep the mind attuned to the Cosmic Reality. One must live one's life in the context of the universe. In worldly life, we strive to acquire by our varied activities external wealth and fulfilment of desires (*Artha* and *Kāma*). But in spiritual life, the effort is to acquire the internal wealth of Spiritual Freedom (*Mukti* or *Mokṣa*) and Absolute Bliss (*Ānanda*) by transforming the ego-centred personality into the Divine-centred one through ethical virtues (*Dharma*) such as non-violence (*Ahimsā*), truthfulness (*Satya*), love (*Prema*) of all beings, and unselfish service unto them (*Sevā*).

Swami Vivekananda defined the nature and goal of religion in these very profound and significant words:

“Each soul is potentially Divine. The Goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or

⁹. The others are: *Titikṣā* (Forbearance), *Uparati* (Withdrawal from sense enjoyment), *Śraddhā* (Earnest Faith), and *Samādhana* (Concentration of the mind constantly on the object of meditation—Ātman-Brahman). Cf. *Vivekachūḍāmani* of Acharya Shankara for the definition of the six ethical disciplines and the *Sādhana-Chatuṣṭaya* (Four qualifications of an Aspirant)/indispensable to succeed in realizing the Self (Ātman/Brahman).

more or all of these—and BE FREE (MUKTA). This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.” (See *The Complete Works*, Vol I. page 257).

In the elaboration of the Sandhyā-ritual this main purpose of spiritual elevation and the visualization of the union of the individual and the Universal is always kept in view, which is the aim of the Gāyatrī-Mantra. In the beginning, the mind is more impressed by concrete rituals than abstract thought. Hence ritualistic procedures are devised for the removal of the physical, mental and psychical obstacles within to enable one to rise mentally step by step above the ego-centred life to the divine consciousness. Each part of the ritual is meant to give expression externally to an internal mental attitude and spiritual feeling or mood (*Bhāva*). The main item in the *Sandhyā-Upāsanā*, of course, is the repetition (*Japa*) of the Gāyatrī-Mantra and meditation or contemplation on it, the other aspects coming in only as auxiliaries. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the “Sandhyā merges in the Gāyatrī, and the Gāyatrī in OM.”

6. Gāyatrī-Upāsanā

First the Divine Gāyatrī is invoked as the source of the Vedas and then the different Worlds and the Supreme Divinity are located in the various limbs of one's body by touching them while uttering the Gāyatrī-Mantra, along with the *Vyāhṛiti-s* (*Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah*). This process of locating the Cosmic entities in one's limbs to evoke Universal feelings, since man is a Cosmic Microcosm built on the same plan as the Macrocosm, is known as *Aṅga-Nyāsa*. This is followed by the Japa and Meditation of the Gāyatrī-Mantra for as long as one can do conveniently, fixing however, a fairly

decent minimum number of times for the Japa. For Meditation, Gāyatrī is conceived in the form of a luminous Goddess illuminating the Heart and removing all darkness of Ignorance.¹⁰

OM ŚĀNTIḤ, ŚĀNTIḤ, ŚĀNTIḤ

[I adore the Goddess Gāyatrī, the

10. The following verse is repeated in adoration as a *Dhyāna-Śloka* (Invocatory Meditational Verse):

Muktā-vidruma-hema-nīla-dhavalā-cchāyāih
Mukhāih-tryakṣaṇāih
Yuktām indu-nibaddha-ratnamukutām
tattvārtha varṇātmikām
Gāyatrīm varadabhayankusa-kasam
subhram-kapālam gadām
Śankham-cakram-athārvinda-yugalam
hastāih-vahanīm bhaje

embodiment of the Varna-s (letters of the alphabet, or here OM) signifying the Supreme Truth, with Her five benign faces reflecting the hues of pearls, corals, gold, sapphire, and snow—each face studded with three eyes (denoting omniscience), whose head is adorned with a jewelled crown crested with the crescent-moon, whose two hands (out of ten, representing omnipotence) are in the pose of bestowing boons and fearlessness; and who in Her other hands holds the goad, the whip, the white-skull, the mace, the conch, and the disc (as symbols of the three functions of creation, protection, and destruction of the universe), and a pair of lotuses (as symbols of purity, love, devotion, and detachment).] Cf. also *Devī-Māhātmyam* or *Caṇḍī*: I. 73-74; IV. 10).

EMERSON'S 'BRAHMA'.....

(Continued from page 169)

The fourth and concluding stanza is once again inspired by the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The 'strong gods' are perhaps *Indra* (the king of the gods), *Agni* (the god of fire), *Yama* (the god of death), *Varuṇa* (the god of the seas), *Kubera* (the god of wealth). The 'sacred seven' refers to the seven *ṛṣis*: *Kratu*, *Pulaha*, *Pulastya*, *Atri*, *Angira*, *Vasiṣṭha* and *Marīchi*. These *ṛṣis* preside over the *manvantaras* or epochs of time. The last two lines emphasize the Upaniṣadic dismissal of rituals and sacrifices whose aims were the attainment of heaven. One who is bent upon realizing the Brahman could not stop at the promises of heaven. Heaven is not a permanent abode of peace. After the exhaustion of one's own *karma-phala* (fruits of labour), one is thrown from heaven. According to the *Gītā*: "Having enjoyed the vast world of heaven, they return to the world of mortals on the exhaustion

of their merits; thus abiding by the injunctions of the three *Vedas*, desiring objects of desires they go and come."²⁸ Emerson puts this idea forcefully in the last line of the poem: "Find me, and turn thy back on heaven."

A true spiritual seeker always turns his back on the so-called heaven. Both the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* have avowedly declared the uselessness of action as a means to liberation and have emphasized knowledge as the only means for attaining *mokṣa* or salvation. Emerson subscribes to such a view in his last two lines. Besides 'Brahma', the other poems which are profoundly influenced by Hindu concepts are 'Hamatreya', 'Wood-Notes', 'The Celestial Love', 'Sphinx' and 'Spirit'.

28. *Ibid.*, IX. 21.

God in Man

S. K. KAR

Man in the cycle of his evolution discovers Truth, Beauty and Goodness spring from one common fount—God. This brings the realization that He is the Ground and Goal of life—writes Sri S. K. Kar. The author is Deputy Accountant General (Fund.), Calcutta.

Man today claims himself the highest, the final and best triumph of biological evolution. He has come to this point after passing through many stages.

In pre-evolution, man was identified with primordial Nature, the unmanifested Seed which was essentially Uncreate, but Potential. It is for this that Matter is regarded as *Prakṛti*, the Mother, from which the whole universe was produced.

A second evolutionary stage saw the manifestation of life, or *Prāṇa*. Commensurate with the existence of abundant carbon, hydrogen and oxygen on the surface of the earth at a certain primeval time, there was suitable condition for the appearance of life and vital organisms. This evolution of life was not due to matter alone, but matter infused and grounded in God or Spirit.

In a third stage there was mental and intellectual development, quite distinct from mere existence as a vital organism. A higher plane of organic regulation and co-ordination was born. The fourth period witnessed the possession by man of a more developed mind. Intelligent will and reflective self-consciousness came into being. This, bearing the vestigial marks of his origins on his complex organism and fragile body, limited life, and bounded mind, the human being evolved into full powers.

Today he has come to dominate nature throughout, and is master of the world. While his physical frame is more powerful, his movement quicker and his instincts and intuition sharper than those of other animals, it is man's intelligence which enables him to adapt and adjust to all new and varying situations. Above all man is capable of realizing the Spirit within, which can neither be defined nor understood by objective thinking. It is something which cannot be seen, but can be felt. What can be said about the Spirit is that it is not the physical body, the vital organism, the mind or will, but something that underlies them all and sustains them. It is the basis and existential ground of human being. Thus, it cannot be said that man is simply the animal gone up, or that the animal is man gone down. There is a deep mystery and a gulf between the two, not to be explained by any amount of scientific observation and intellectualizing, but which can only be sensed in the heart as something extraordinary. The greatest observable difference between the man and animal, however, is that man is rational. His rationality distinguishes him from the animals. He eats to live, but does not live to eat.

The purpose of his life is something more and greater. He has got his brain to think, heart to feel and conscience to will. In other words, his developed mind consists of thinking, feeling and willing—all for the sake of

discovering Truth. He *thinks to search for truth, feels in search of beauty, and wills for goodness and morality*. These being inseparable and interdependent, however, one cannot stand without the others. Man's search for truth is demonstrated by his development of science and philosophy; for beauty, by the existence of art and literature, and goodness, by his unselfish work for the benefit of others with an ethical and moral sensitivity. It is this ethical sense which enables man to think, 'Work is Worship'.

While striving to comprehend the law that sustains the universe, man uses his intellect-reasoning. The root of all thinking does not, however, lie in mere reasoning, but in life itself. The highest range of mental life is an intuitive life and the great scientific discoveries have been possible not merely due to laborious processes of intellect, but due to the intuitive understanding of creative minds. What labour of intellect gives us is mere precise measurements and detailed demonstration of theoretical data about natural phenomena. It is the inventive genius of the creative thinkers which has been at the root of the great discoveries that have made modern science so wonderful. A scientist occupied with intense and unwavering interest in a problem, with the help of intuition, suddenly becomes aware of a new perspective, application, or even a new truth, hitherto unseen or unheard of. Of course, these new findings are not miracles, but depend on the scientist's previous training and carefully cultivated knowledge. While the spark of genius lights the fire, intellect supplies the necessary tools.

What has been discussed here is applicable not only to physical sciences, but also to metaphysics, or philosophy, which is an insight into Reality. A philosopher, in search for internal and subtle truths which cannot be revealed by physical experiments, keeps

his mind undisturbed by the senses and dry intellect. Unless he develops an intuitive side and goes beyond the strong hold of logic he cannot grasp truth or reality. Philosophy should not be merely intellectual discipline dealing with highly abstract concepts beyond or without relevance in life. On the other hand, it aims at finding out truth which is ever relevant to life's struggle and purpose.

Man yearns to reveal the beauty that is veiled in nature. He attempts this through art as well as science. The artist experiences the deeper reality of things and tries to give an expression to it. An aesthetic appreciation is not possible by logical understanding or analysis. A higher insight is required to truly see it and truly express it. To the artist, the visible world is not only composed of outer appearances, but includes something more. He discovers something of the Spirit behind, which underlies the veneer of things. What he discovers is the very heart of the object itself. It is in this sense that an artistic truth is a discovery and not a creation. It is a discovery of the inner beauty that cannot be measured, but can only be felt by the heart and understood by intuitive insight.

The cognition, the aesthetic and ethical sides of human life, already discussed, are no doubt vital and significant. Despite this, they are only facets and not the whole. It is the religious who includes them all. The essence of religious striving is a holistic realization. Truth, Beauty or Goodness in isolation cannot bring about religious insight. While combined, they are not the mere sum total of their parts, but something greater. The religious man with a combination of these three—Truth, Beauty and Goodness, finds his mind filled with light, his heart filled with bliss and his soul filled with love. It is at this final stage that man becomes cons-

cious of the Spirit in him. He realizes that Spirit in the Supreme Light. He becomes a genius with his intellect inspired by this light, and becomes an embodiment of love with the Light permeating his heart.

At this stage the son of man becomes the son of God, as he has become capable of tracing the value of truth, goodness and beauty to a common background—God, seen as light, love and life. He realizes that God is the Ground, Guide and Goal of human life. God is the ground of creation, guide of operation and goal of perfection. Man feels that the object of his life is not a mere unity of truth, beauty and goodness, but God, who not only includes these, but transcends them. As he becomes spiritual, he exemplifies a new quality of life. He realizes that it is the One Spirit which is present in all minds, lives and bodies. He becomes a superman, the master of his life. He not only realizes what the Spirit is, but also enters into conscious possession and acts according to his supreme realization.

To have the knowledge of God it is necessary to hear His voice in the depths of one's heart. Only the Seers can give us the power, with the help of which we can know, love and appreciate the world in a new and meaningful way. It is through the aid of the Seers that we acquire awareness of the true meaning of life. The reality of the spiritual world can be realized by means of our acquaintance with the saints. The truth is revealed through their lives and hence cannot be refuted by words. As they speak of what has not only been experienced by themselves, but by others before them, they compel our reverence.

As God is the Ground, Guide and Goal of our life, He is always working in our hearts to draw us towards Him. While the redemptive function of God is an incessant

activity, it becomes more manifest when the moral order is disturbed and new adjustments are required to be brought about. God incarnates Himself in a human form, which may be called His highest temple. This is a special revelation, called the Avatar in Hindu mythology and philosophy.

The attempt in modern times to explain everything scientifically has undermined credibility of the subtle truths of religion. While seventeenth century men of science thought of the world as a great machine and imagined that the mechanism was contrived by God and worked according to laws also created by Him, eighteenth century scientists refused to include God in their explanations of the universe.

India felt the waves of these intellectual movements in Western thought. Perhaps due to her vulnerable weakness having been sapped of strength by colonization and misrule, Occidental achievements held great sway for some time. Though a land of hoary traditions, India felt the influx of atheistic and materialistic ideas from the West. Occidental achievements held a sparkling glamour which lured the Indian mind.

By the middle of the nineteenth century India's instinct for self-preservation was awakened, however, and some social and religious movements were born to react. The efforts and idealism of the new leaders, however, could not seem to capture the imagination of the conservative elements. What became evident therefore was that a complete renaissance of Hinduism would be needed if India's culture was to survive. There was need for a superman to be born whose spiritual personality could focus the attention of Self-forgetting Indians on the fact that their own culture and religion not only could compete in the modern world, but also had vitality enough to contribute greatly to the

rest of the world. The call of the age was fulfilled with the fortunate and auspicious birth of Sri Ramakrishna in a poor but orthodox Brahmin family of Bengal. He came down to earth to show man how to realize God.

Sri Ramakrishna practised intense religious austerities for twelve long years, and having the vision of God before him established once again, and taught the validity of all religions as legitimate paths to Truth. Most truly it can be said of him that he was the Great Harmonizer of conflicting faiths and opinions, for he practised all religious faiths and realized all religious truths in the course of his *sādhana*. Devoting his whole life to religious practices, he waited anxiously for someone who could carry his message to the world, specially to the West. He was in search of someone who represented the spirit of the modern age—unwilling to accept even the highest truth of religion without verification, as with the spirit of modern scientists.

Seemingly pre-arranged by divine plan, Sri Ramakrishna's coming down to the earth was followed by the descent of one of the Seven Sages. Narendranath, later to be known worldwide as Swami Vivekananda, was, before his birth one of the *Saptarṣi*, seated in the transcendental realm, lost in profound and eternal meditation, surpassing even the gods in knowledge and purity. When, as a college student, Narendra came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna he seemed to embody all the doubts and skeptical spirit of the modern world, shaken as it was by scientism and materialism. But one of Narendra's outstanding qualities was a burning zeal for the truth. Ultimately, by the magic touch and association of Sri Ramakrishna, little by little Naren was led from doubt to beatitude, from the darkness and anguish of the skeptical mind to certainty

and bliss, from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of universal oneness.¹ He could gradually realize that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. This realization prompted him to direct all his future activities to the service of man and he determined to proclaim this grand truth before the world at large. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Naren, subsequently known as Swami Vivekananda, actually translated the ideas of the Great Master into action. He made the *Ideal of Service* one of the fundamental principles of the new brotherhood of monks known as the Ramakrishna Order, its motto being, 'For self-liberation, and for the well-being of humanity at large'.

While carrying the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the world, Swamiji exposed the old myth that religious truth has a lesser validity than scientific truth. According to Vivekananda, religion grasps the truths of metaphysical reality, just as chemistry and other sciences deal with the truths of matter in the physical world. The difference is that while scientists read the book of outside nature, the sages read what man is within—the inner nature and essence of the Self. The sages of religion have all come to agreement about the oneness of existence. Religion is based on analysis of the human nature and soul. The teachings of Swamiji are, that man, while he possesses a lower nature that obeys nature's laws and is subject to scientific analysis, also has an inner higher nature which is pristine and divine and which can be known and manifested with more and more purity. "Religion is this realization," he said; "It is not mere hearing or acknowledging, but being and becoming—the whole soul becoming changed into what it

1. *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) Vol. I, p. 80.

believes.”² His teachings were clear that nature exists for the education of the soul, that the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Religion has existed all through eternity and will ever exist, expressing itself in various countries in various ways. It is evolving a God out of material man. The best way to aid in the development, Swamiji said, is to worship God by serving man. Ultimate Truth, the divine ground of man and the universe is One ; God is the inspirer of all.³

The spirit of universality and broadmindedness in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda on religion, coupled with the depth of his Advaitic vision, has captured the imagination of all.

He once said on the subject of ‘a universal

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. II, p. 396.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 18.

religion’: “If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ...and Mohammed alike, and will...embrace in its infinite arms...every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage to the highest man, towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance ...and will recognize divinity in every man and woman...whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.”⁴

The result of the contact of Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath, was the Swami Vivekananda, who became the heart of a New India, with her ancient spiritual perspective “heightened, widened and strengthened to include modern learning; old ideas assimilating the new, the intense activity of the West to be combined with the deep meditation of the East.”

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 19.

The mind is purified by good and noble thoughts, holy company and good deeds. Then only does it become quiet and become one-pointed in Japa and meditation. As the reflection in a dirty mirror is not clear, so, if the mind is impure, it is not able to grasp divine thoughts and ideas. For this reason, spiritual practices and prayers are essentially necessary. In the beginning one has to force oneself to do these, even if the mind be disinclined for them. As you go on practising, you will find that you are developing a taste for them, and you will like them. If the patient does not want to take medicine, he has to be persuaded or forced to take it. But there are such patients also who spit out the medicine, even when it is put into their mouths. Then how can their disease be cured ?

—Swami Virajananda (*Towards the Goal Supreme*)

Swami Vivekananda and National Integration

DR. A. R. MAHAPATRA

A new impulse towards national integration is the only remedy for the many crises that have been plaguing the nation in recent times. India can come out of the seeming impasse if she only heeds the thundering message of Vivekananda. Dr. A. R. Mahapatra, D. Litt., in his essay discusses the practical steps suggested by Swamiji. The author served as Reader in the Department of Philosophy, D.A.V. College, Koraput, Orissa, and has written a number of books in Oriya and English.

National integration is basically a concept of national unity. Practically speaking, national integration means the active co-operation and constructive contribution of the people towards the national unity, integrity and development. To Swami Vivekananda, the sense of national integration is "a unity in variety and individuality in universality"—most valuable for development of the society. He also said that there is oneness behind all creation, only we should be conscious of it.¹

National integration is not a perfect assimilation. No society is ever perfectly integrated, but some amount of integration is a requisite for the very existence of a nation, and this it experiences all through its life span. The integration of the country does not entail the loss of social identity by any of its cultural sub-groups.

Swami Vivekananda had a profound conception of integration. For him all came through love of God and humanity. The love of his country was part of his love for humanity, and love for humanity was part of his love for God. He who truly loves God loves humanity as a whole and also

loves his country. Though we see divisions, in actuality, according to Swamiji, India's many peoples and cultures are already integrated and unified on a very sublime level. Only our duty is to re-discover and to acknowledge it in our thoughts and actions and make it viable in our day to day life.

Since national integration is in essence spiritual it is therefore free from all narrow ideas of regionalism, provincialism, casteism, inordinate attachment to a particular language or other forms of fanaticism. Swami Vivekananda loved all the people and desired their happiness and welfare in all the parts of India, irrespective of caste or creed. He looked upon all Indians as his brothers and sisters, without considering whether they were Bengalis or Punjabis, Maharashtrians or Tamilians, or Oriyas or Biharis.

In our country people of various language groups, religions and sub-cultures are living together. But according to Swami Vivekananda, "...to the Indian mind there is nothing higher than religious ideals. The Indian mind is first religious, then anything else."² Yet, the religion which Swamiji preached is universal in its spirit, comprehensive in its scope and practical and concrete in its application. Religion alone can secure

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. VI, p. 114.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 287-88.

deeper integration for a nation like India. The religion of universality and spiritual brotherhood, including men of all faiths, affirms the unity of existence, the fundamental oneness of reality (*Aitad ātmayam idam sarvam*). It also asserts the divinity of man in his essence. Things are one in their essence, though they appear as many in their manifestations.

Religion is universal. All religions try to define one and the same indefinable Reality. Swamiji affirms that religions are all alike in that their ultimate purpose is the same. Sri Ramakrishna, Guru of Swami Vivekananda, practised the precepts of the different faiths and saw that all are pathways to God. In his spiritual realization he disclosed that ultimate Truth and the God of different religions is One. The spiritual quest is Godward and the same for all.

As a patriot nationalist, Swamiji loved India very much and he believed that it has a message for the world and can give spiritual help to the world. He was proud of India's spirituality. His call to the nation is highly remarkable, wherein he declared: "Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother. The Indian is my life, Indian gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age. The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good."³

Swamiji awakened the slumbering nation with the lion-roar, "Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!" The Vedanta,

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 480.

the Upaniṣads, exhort us to overcome sloth, idleness, inertia, weakness and faintheartedness. We need strength. Real strength is the spiritual power of the Self. Swamiji said. "...no negativism, all positive, affirmative. I am, God is, everything is in me. I will manifest health, purity, knowledge, whatever I want!" He also advised emphatically to have faith in ourselves—"all power is in you, be conscious and bring it out...Say, I can do everything. Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it. Beware! No saying 'nay', no negative thoughts! Say, Yea, Yea, *So'ham*—'I am He! I am He!'"⁴

Swami Vivekananda's conception of India's nationhood and national vitality is very comprehensive. For him nationalism did not mean merely love of our motherland stretching from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, but also means that we should love our religion and culture, our spiritual heritage and scriptures, and should feel proud of them. It also means that we should have love and reverence for all the great men and women in our history and revere their memory. At the same time we should love the poor, the downtrodden, the helpless and miserable who are with us.

A fully integrated society is not practically possible in India unless the condition of poor and miserable people is improved. Swamiji always held that their uplift is the basic pre-condition for building up the great India of the future that he in his fervent patriotism visualized. He said that no amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.⁵

Indians in general are fond of calling Swami Vivekananda a 'patriot-saint'. What

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 274-76.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 222-23.

is usually implied is that Swamiji combined in himself the fiery national spirit of a patriot and the spirituality of a saint. Though Swamiji himself was never directly involved in Indian politics, his utterances about India's great future kindled a fierce national spirit in the hearts of the youth and workers in society seeking to bring about change.

They believed that if India awoke to the realization of Its deep cultural unity, to the call of integrity, sacrifice, strength and selflessness, political freedom was sure to come. This is what Swamiji accomplished by his electrifying message to the Indians. His object was to produce men in the true sense of the term so they would not only achieve freedom for the country, but would be able to preserve it. That is why Swamiji emphasized 'man-making religion' and man-making in education.

Swami Vivekananda advocated the practical Vedanta. The Vedanta holds not only that all men are one in spiritual brotherhood, but that the last word in religion is man's realization of his essential oneness with the entire universe. The central teaching of the Vedanta—the Upaniṣads—is how to realize this oneness. In the sense of spiritual oneness alone comes love and fearlessness; separation leads us to hatred and fear.⁶ Swamiji also taught that "...oneness is the secret of everything and everywhere we are one."⁷ He wanted a twofold application of Vedanta in our practical day to day life—one, for awakening man's faith in himself and his own strength, and two, selfless work in the spirit of serving all men in the spirit of serving God. Swamiji says, "Look upon every man, woman and everyone as God. You cannot help anyone. You can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the

Lord Himself if you have the privilege. You may invent an image through which to worship God, but a better image already exists, the living man. You may build a temple in which to worship God and that may be good; but a better one, a much higher one already exists, the human body. Man is the highest being that exists and this is the greatest world. We can have no conception of God higher than man, so our God is man, and man is God."⁸

The writings and lectures of Swami Vivekananda have contributed a great deal to the strengthening of the moral foundations of Indian nationalism in theory and in practice. At a time when India was seized with apathy, inertia and despair, Swamiji thundered the gospel of patriotism and urged people to be strong and united. Unity and strength were the political testaments of Vivekananda to the Indian nation. He had tremendous love for the nation and was a patriot of patriots. He went further than all others.

Urging all Indians to do away even with narrow nationalism, he reminded them of the need to place and judge all problems with an international perspective. He exhorted Indians to work for education and uplift of the masses, and national integration so that India could take her leading role in the community of nations. His call to the people was to be strong and help others, be strong, and to have faith in their own goodness. Three things, he used to say, are necessary for making an individual or a nation great: (1) Conviction of the power of goodness, (2) Absence of jealousy, and (3) Being and doing good oneself and helping others who are trying to be and to do good. Thus he showed us the way to build the nation on a sound and rational foundation. For Indians religion will be the greatest

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 24, 129.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 299, 466.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 30.

help, and everything should be done through religion.

According to Vivekananda, understanding and cherishing, practising and teaching the values of our religion and culture is the greatest act of patriotism. Expansion is life, he used to say, and inertia, contraction and selfishness is death. Religion and culture lies at the very soul of India and is in the life blood of the nation. Therefore, the highest act of patriotism and the greatest good we can do to ourselves is to cling fast to the universal principles of true religion, practise them and propagate them. Always Swamiji reminded us that our religion is the most rational and scientific one and recognizes the divinity in every man, the unity and oneness of God, and the harmony of all religions.

Today India needs more practical integration and a greater faith in our spiritual unity because in the different states like Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Assam is being created destabilizing communalism, separatism, and these are challenging our national unity. A new approach is badly needed to solve the problems presented by these divisive forces. Returning again to Vivekananda for advice would be the wise policy as the great problem is one of harmonizing. In this he was the great Teacher,—how to harmonize and unify without destroying the individuality and true aspirations of any of the various elements.

Swami Vivekananda suggested four working principles as both ends and means to a

better future, viz. to throw off the struggle between religious ideologies and emphasize our basic agreement; to establish our unified foundations of unity; and deepen every individual's love and desire to serve the country through following the path of renunciation and intense activity. To some of his disciples Swamiji wrote, "Let India be your God."

Some great men were highly influenced by Swami Vivekananda. Mahatma Gandhi said, "I have gone through his works very thoroughly and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold."⁹ Tagore said, "If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative."¹⁰ Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, "He laid the greatest stress on character building. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet."¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru said, "He was, I think, one of the great founders of the national modern movement of India...I pay my homage to this great son of India who was instrumental in putting a new life in our people. His writings are as fresh and as valuable today as when they were written. I am sure that they will continue to inspire not only the present, but coming generations."¹²

9. *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1963; p. 170.

10. *World Thinkers on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture) p. 34.

11. *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 1932, p. 352.

12. *A Bridge to Eternity*, p. 211; and *Prabuddha Bharata*, Feb. 1963, p. 46.

Action and Contemplation

DR. CYRUS R. MEHTA

Dr. Cyrus R. Mehta, Associate Professor of Biostatistics at Harvard University School of Public Health, U.S.A., in this interesting short paper, writes that meditation leads to proper actions and greater efficiency. But the converse is also true—that work done with unselfish motives also helps meditation.

One of the great themes pervading the *Bhagavad Gita* is the apparent conflict between the "Secular and the Sacred", or, "Action versus Contemplation". We tend to keep our outer and inner lives in separate compartments. The outer is the worldly life of being a Provider, a Mother, a Husband, a Professor, or a Socialite. The inner is the life of introspection, of asking why we behave the way we do, what is right, what is wrong, how can we be better people, and sometimes even more fundamental questions like, who are we, why are we here, is there a God, is there an after-life, and so on. We lose our peace of mind when our inner and outer lives are not in harmony with one another.

For Arjuna, the great hero of the Mahabharata battle, which is the setting for the *Bhagavad Gita*, the dilemma was particularly excruciating. He and his brothers had been wrongfully deprived of their kingdom. He was a warrior by profession, and in this capacity, his secular duty lay in fighting a battle against injustice, for the good of his people. Many depended on him for protection. Many had committed themselves to fighting on his side. It was rather late in the day to have second thoughts. Action, in his case meant that he pick up his weapons and fight. And yet, at this crucial hour, the contemplative side of his nature began to assert itself. The dilemma he faced was the nature of the enemy. For, arrayed against him in the opposite camp were his relatives, his beloved teacher, and even his own grand-

father. "Was it right", he began asking himself, "to resort to violence against his own kinsmen?" Would it not be better to forgo the battle, concede his kingdom to the enemy, and retire into the forest for a life of contemplation? Should he risk losing his soul, for the sake of gaining a kingdom? Would he enjoy a kingdom, gained at the expense of slaying his cousins and grandfather?

Through Arjuna's dilemma, the *Bhagavad Gita* forces us to face an important question. Are our worldly responsibilities inevitably in conflict with our spiritual goals? Are the secular and the sacred at odds with one another in some fundamental way? Is our choice bound to be either Action or Contemplation? If we choose a life of Contemplation, are we abrogating our responsibilities? If we choose a life of Action, are we gaining the world at the cost of losing our soul? On the surface it certainly seems to be that way. Active people are busy being successful in their professions; in their pursuit of science, or law or medicine, or parenting. They rarely express the need for a contemplative life though they may possibly feel an inner urge for it. On the other hand the contemplatives are prone to discount worldly life as a nuisance and a distraction. "The world is temporary," they say, "it will end in death. Let us look within and find that which is permanent. Why should we waste our time on mundane temporary things like family life, professional life, or the pursuit of science. God is within us. Let us look

for him there." And so, any form of worldly enjoyment is rejected, in favour of a difficult inner quest at which few succeed.

But the *Gita* advocates a middle path that reconciles these two extremes. It states in effect that action and contemplation go together, each one sustaining the other. For it states in verse one of Chapter six:

"It is the man who performs his duties (Actions) without caring for their fruits (i.e., in an unselfish way) who deserves to be called a Sannyasin (contemplative), not he who merely keeps no fire" (i.e. who abandoning his responsibilities, attempts instead to lead an exclusively contemplative life).

In other words abandoning one's obligatory actions in hopes of utilizing one's time for a "higher" (contemplative) purpose is not an automatic qualification for becoming a contemplative. An active responsible person performing obligatory duties unselfishly may far more appropriately be considered a contemplative. Thus verse three of Chapter six of the *Gita* says:

"For one who desires to ascend the path leading to the heights of spiritual communion, detached work is the means. For one who has ascended it, quiescence (or serenity) is the means." In other words, we evolve to a higher state of inner consciousness through work done in a proper spirit. And having attained that higher state, we do not abandon the work at all. Far from it. Now we continue on as before, but are calm and serene in all our actions.

Is the *Gita's* assertion that Action and Contemplation go together, each sustaining the other, really true? The best evidence

is our own experience and reason. Contemplation does indeed aid Action. We do know from daily experience that a period of quiet meditation, alone in the morning say, concentrates the mind and helps us to function with greater efficiency, better judgement, and more alertness all through the day. But the key question is, what about the converse? Can we assert also that Action performed in the right spirit aids Contemplation? The *Gita* certainly asserts it. What is our own experience? Proper action keeps the conscience clear. It frees one from worries. And to a greater or lesser extent, it frees one from material wants. All these are crucial preliminaries to meditation. There can be no meditation if the mind is full of fear or brooding or worry about where the next loaf of bread will come from. Finally, there is one very important lesson that active work done in the right spirit teaches. This is the value of unselfishness. In any organization, the leader must forget his or her petty goals or wishes in favour of what is best for the whole organization. Working in a responsible position (be it as a parent in a family, or a classroom teacher, or an office supervisor) teaches one this great lesson. One learns to think of others, to put oneself in their shoes, to view the world from their standpoint. This is the greatest lesson that the Active life can give. It teaches us to forget the individual ego in favour of the collective ego. And this lesson carries over into the inner contemplative life. Petty thoughts, desires, the whims of the mind, and the ego, all these are obstacles to meditation. To the extent that experience with the outside world causes us to broaden out from the narrow individual ego to the broad all-encompassing group ego, Action has come to the aid of Contemplation,

The Twenty-four Gurus

A. VISWANATHAN

The Bhagavata stories, which are always a source of inspiration, are retold in an arresting way by Sri A. Viswanathan. The author is an engineer and at present the Dean of the Training Institute of Indian Railways in Secunderabad.

Sages tell us that Mother Nature is indeed the wisest of all God's creations, and fashions each creature with brilliant skill, precisely to suit its own individual circumstances. Mother Nature has much wisdom to offer us, if we study It closely.

The sacred text of the *Bhāgavata* carries many eternal lessons. In the eleventh Skandha, is the description of the twenty-four Gurus, all derived from Nature. These are—the Earth, the Air, the Sky, Water, Fire, the Moon, the Sun, the Dove, the Python, the Ocean, the Moth, the Honeybee, the Elephant, the Honey gatherer, the Deer, the Fish, the Courtesan, the Osprey, the Infant, the Maiden, the Forger of arrows, the Serpent, the Spider and the Wasp. Now let us consider the lesson conveyed by each Guru.

Mother Earth is verily the embodiment of patience and forgiveness. One may cut trenches and delve deep into the bowels of Earth, for robbing it of precious stones, minerals and so forth. But Mother Earth is uncomplaining and continues to provide sustenance to the very man who injures Her person for his own selfish ends. To a discerning devotee, Mother Earth is the emblem of patience, forgiveness and a sacrificing nature. In places, Mother Earth rises in the shape of mountains which serve to inspire man as symbols of maturity, stability and permanence, and which provide direct links with climates, and help to sustain life.

A breath of Air goes through various lands and various climes. Passing over offal

it picks up a dirty smell, but passing over a flower bed shortly thereafter, it replaces this dirty smell with pure fragrance. As far as Air is concerned, itself remains entirely unattached to the bad smell, or to the fragrance, both of which it picks up and discards readily. A devotee who is rooted firmly in God, remains totally unaffected by his circumstances from time to time. The only permanent condition is his firm attachment to God.

The Sky is everywhere and in every thing, but yet attached to nothing. It is deep, and is transparent. A Devotee need not withdraw from the world. He may be everywhere and in every thing and yet be attached to nothing. Like the sky, he should sustain deep faith in God by keeping transparent innocence.

Water is a noble creation of God that sustains life in all living creatures. It absorbs impurity from other things, and returns purity to them. It is everywhere, but exists separately. It is revered by all, but is attached to nothing. A true Devotee too should sanctify his surroundings. With selfless spirit of service he should absorb impurity and return purity. Though he may become an object of reverence to his fellow beings, he should not be attached to society.

Fire burns neither incense with enthusiasm, nor a corpse with reluctance. Sometimes hidden and sometimes manifest, it is an ever-shining example of *Tapasyā*. It performs with the same dedication all its duties both

pleasant and unpleasant. It purifies and sanctifies whatever comes into contact with it. A Devotee has this to learn from Fire.

Shining bright on a full moon day, the Moon gradually wanes until it vanishes on new moon day, and then it waxes back into its old glory and beauty on the next full moon night. The moon is always there. The wane and wax are only our own perceptions of the moon, and not the moon itself. Even so, a Devotee who has planted himself firmly in God, becomes immune to growth and decay, or to prosperity and calamity, which are merely outward perceptions.

As we are aware, the Sun is in many ways the Causator of various activities in this world. If the Sun does not rise, these activities come to a stop. But the Sun itself is not attached to any activity, nor derives benefit therefrom. It is merely a witness to the activity. Even so, the Devotee immersed in God knows his deep inner being to be a mere witness to what goes on all around, totally unattached to any action or fruit thereof.

Once upon a time, on a tree there lived happily a dove and its consort. In due time many precious offspring came forth to give them delight. A hunter saw them, knew his opportunity, and spread his net around the tree. One day, the offspring ventured out, and fell into the net. The hunter was delighted. The mother dove who by then had returned with morsels of food for her young ones, was riven with grief. Deciding that life without her offspring was not worth while, she also entered into the net of the hunter. Shortly thereafter the male dove also came along. Understanding the situation and stricken with grief, he too willingly courted death by dropping into the net of the hunter, to keep company in death with

his consort and offspring. A man surely courts death, who knows not the real aim of life, and immersing himself in domestic affairs, confuses domestic bliss for permanent happiness. The net spread around the tree of life is the net of death. The only way to escape it is to know it for its impermanence, the links with every day matters of the world.

The python remains stationary for days together. Making no effort, it waits patiently for long, knowing fully well that its due prey will certainly come its way. And when the prey comes, the python seizes it. After a meal the python remains satiated for days. If another prey comes its way, before due time, it does no harm. A true devotee will spend only limited energies in seeking daily sustenance, drawing from the world no more sustenance than he needs, and expending his energy in no pursuit but that of God.

The Ocean is deep, transparent and unbounded. Even so, a seeker of God should be deep in his intellect, transparent in his conduct and unbounded in his knowledge.

And then we have the Honeybee which indefatigably collects honey until its hive is full. Then, along comes the hunter who drives away the bees with a flaming torch, and proceeds to rob not only the carefully collected honey, but even destroys the hive itself and the young ones too. The same experience awaits a person who foolishly garners this world's wealth for himself and his offspring. The great Sankaracarya has said that man who worships wealth, has to be afraid of even his own son. Like in the case of the Honeybee, a person's accumulated wealth is often the very cause of his own death and destruction.

Irresistibly attracted, the Moth rushes foolishly towards the attractive flame. Even

before it knows, its wings are singed, and it falls to its death in the burning fire. Even so, a foolish person surely rushes to his destruction who feels irresistibly attracted towards unreal things like '*kāminī-kāñcana*'.

A wild elephant in the forest is foot-loose and fancy-free, and with no other creatures to dare challenge it. Its happiness is complete until the moment when it perceives a she-elephant, and rushes madly towards it. Losing all awareness of its own precious freedom, in this mad rush it falls into a cunningly prepared pit. For a moment's loss of self-control, it pays a heavy price, and loses its freedom forever. The person whose mind is planted in God has to be continuously alert against even a moment's lapse. Too often, there are many thorns concealed in plants along with a wealth of honey deep inside beautiful flowers. Frenzied by the fragrance, a Honeybee takes no note of such dangers, and in the mindless rush, gets impaled on the thorn. A person who loses all discretion in his pursuit of pleasure will suffer the same fate. It is considered that the Deer is fond of music, and when it hears good music it stands entranced. This is the exact instant of time when the hunter kills it. A fish, greedily rushing to grab the morsel at the end of the fish hook dangling in the water, is really rushing to its own destruction.

Once there was a courtesan; waiting in vain for visitors, she spent an anxious night thinking of all the missed attention and rich presents from clients. Almost the whole night passed. Early in the morning the courtesan fell into introspection, and she realized that she had been hankering after illusory fruits of pleasure, when she could have spent her time immersed in the permanent and worthwhile thought of God. When this realization dawned on her, in the intensity of her remorse, she sat down and

entered into meditation of the Lord. In the short interval before sunrise she attained *Mokṣa*, spiritual liberation. The man whose heart is planted in God will know that absolute *Vairāgya* is the only desirable state, and that worldly disappointments are indeed the stepping stones for release from worldly bonds, into eternal salvation.

Once an Osprey picked up a nice bit of meat and flew up into the sky. Immediately it was surrounded by many other birds which tried to snatch away the meat. Continuously warding off these attacks on its precious possession, it became tired and finally dropped the morsel from its beak. At once all the birds rushed away to catch the dropping meat, and the Osprey began suddenly to experience a singular peace and happiness. If one holds on to something that is coveted by others, that is the surest pathway to danger, and to renounce it, the easiest way to peace and happiness.

An infant at play is innocent and happy, and without the burden of a thought it is secure in its mother's love. Even so, a devotee is happy and unburdened in mind, who surrenders himself to God and is secure in His Love.

Once some guests came, and as her parents were away, a young girl had to entertain them. After comfortably seating the visitors, she came away into another room to prepare food for them. As she was pounding some rice, a few bangles on her hand shook together and made much sound. Feeling shy that the guests might hear the sound of the bangles and know what she was doing, she took them off from her hand, one after the other. As she took off each bangle, the sound became less and less. When only one bangle was left, there was no sound at all. Even so, a devotee should know that solitude is essential for attaining concentration and

Śaktipāta worked on Sukadeva when King Janaka told him—“*Mithilāyām pradīptāyām na me dahyati kiñcana*—Even if the whole of Mithila burns, nothing is burnt to me.”

Śaktipāta worked in Maitreyi when she posed a resounding question to sage Yājñavalkya, her husband, while he was renouncing: “*Yenāham nāmṛtā syām kimaham tena kuryām?*—That which cannot give me immortality, of what avail is that property to me?”³³

It worked in Nāma Deva of Maharashtra when he ran after the dog who had taken away his bread. The saint ran after the dog saying, “O my Gopāla! just stop and let me

33. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.*

apply butter to the bread so that you swallow it with ease.”

This is how *Śaktipāta* works.

In the end I again quote Ramana Maharshi, who gave a practically useful prescription for aspirants to follow:

Retreat ever within thine own self, seek the source whence the restless mind spins out an unceasing web of thoughts, brush aside the springing thought, concentrate at the root of thought and take repose in that stillness and quietude. So much is thy effort. What next is one for inner (experience) realization and does not admit of exposition in words.”

Peace be to all
on this earth, in the sky
and beyond.

MEMORIES OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

(Continued from page 169)

ashramas at different places, made us understand that Maharaj was, as it were, the life behind those institutions. He used to keep with him detailed information about their lands, buildings, and activities, and after considering and discussing, would administer them and send help in the form of money and manpower. He kept a vigilant eye so that all the ashramas were spacious and delightful to the mind, clean and productive of plenty of fruits and flowers. He also used to encourage the local devotees to help the ashramas. We heard from the elders at Varanasi Sevashrama that at the time of purchasing the land for the Sevashrama, Maharaj was specially thinking about the

future acquisition of more land for the hospital. Of course the authorities of the Sevashrama in those days could not dare to do it, but later on much of the land desired by Maharaj was acquired. In the case of the Kankhal Sevashrama too, due to the enthusiasm and help of Maharaj, the work was nicely established. Varanasi and Kankhal are both important centres for the monks. Maharaj stayed at both the places, mixed familiarly and intimately with the other monks of the traditional Orders and made the Ramakrishna Order one with them in spirit.

(to be continued)

Not a Mere Piece of Cloth

JASBIR KAUR AHUJA

Jasbir Kaur Ahuja describes the evolution of the Indian National Flag and the deeper meaning of its several colours and symbols. She stays in Patiala, Punjab and has translated into Punjabi many works of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

The National Flag, the National Emblem and the National Anthem symbolize India's sovereignty, the very Soul of the nation, the oneness of various religious and language groups, tribes and culture and sub-cultures which are found in this vast country of ours. They are a source of inspiration to the diverse elements to remain united and to lay down their lives to safeguard the freedom and unity of the nation.

The National Flag, the most visible among these symbols, is not just a piece of cloth—it is a sacred symbol of the ties which bind the people together from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari. It is our sacred duty to respect it and preserve its honour at all costs.

ORIGINS

The evolution of the Indian National Flag represents a part of the history of our freedom struggle. According to certain scholars, the national flag was first hoisted on August 7, 1906 in Calcutta. Then in 1907 it was hoisted by Indian revolutionaries in Paris. The third flag was hoisted by Dr. Annie Besant and Lokmanya Tilak in 1917 during the Home Rule Movement. The first tricolour was hoisted at Vijayawada (Andhra) in 1921 when Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront of the freedom struggle. A committee was set up to suggest a suitable form. It recommended a plain saffron flag with a *charkha* (spinning wheel) in the extreme left corner. The suggestion was changed, and in 1931 the tricolour—deep saffron, white and dark green—with a

charkha in blue on the white portion was declared the National Flag by the Indian National Congress.

In 1947 (July 22) the Constituent Assembly adopted the tricolour with the Ashoka *Chakra* as the National Flag. The *charkha* was replaced by the *Chakra* (wheel signifying dharma). It also decided that the colours should be in equal proportions and the flag should be made out of pure hand-woven *khadi*. The size was also fixed. It was this pattern of the National Flag which was hoisted on the midnight of August 15, 1947.

Before the hoisting of the first national flag in 1906, discussions on a suitable design for the flag were going on. The year 1905 is a memorable landmark in the history of our freedom movement. The whole country was against the move to partition the Bengal province, including a large number of supporters of Lord Curzon who, ignoring all protests, made the announcement on July 20. The announcement shocked the country, particularly the Congress leaders who felt insulted, humiliated and tricked. A big protest meeting was organized by the Congress on August 7 in Calcutta.

In her diary Sister Nivedita wrote about that protest meeting as “the black shadow”. The announcement strengthened the movement that was already in its full swing at that time and deepened the national sentiments. Nivedita described the movement as “*a tapasya and dharma*”.

IDEA IS BORN

At this juncture, the idea of a national banner expressing the unity of India suggested itself to her. "A banner," she wrote, "is at once a benison and a penance, a consecration and a rallying cry. It is an altar, at whose feet, whether for assault or defence, men's lives are freely offered up. Generations come and go, new combinations arrive and vanish but that, for which the national symbol stands, for which people fight, is remembered forever. It is steadfast as eternity."

Nivedita desired the *vajra*, or thunderbolt as the national emblem on the flag, as, according to the ancient Indian tradition, it signified "sacrifice, honour, purity, wisdom and a source of energy". The great sage, Dadhichi, sacrificed himself and gave his bones (to be transformed into a divine weapon—*vajra*) for the welfare of humanity.

Referring to the significance of the *vajra*, Nivedita said: "The selfless man is like the thunderbolt. Let us strive only for selflessness, and we become weapons in the hands of the gods. It is not for us to ask: How? And why? For us, it is only to lay ourselves down at the altar foot. The gods do the rest. It is not the thunderbolt that is invincible, but the hand that hurls it. Let not fame, or gain or pleasure have dominion over us. Be thou the sunlight, we the dew, dissolving in its heat."

In February, 1905, Nivedita wrote: "We have chosen a design for the national flag—the thunderbolt—and have already made one."

This flag was displayed in the exhibition organized by the Indian National Congress in 1906. Eminent persons like Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose supported its adoption. In

1909 the question of a national flag was discussed in the Press. An article on the "*Vajra*" as the national flag, together with pictures, was published in *The Modern Review*.

The National Flag as it emerged from adoption in the Constituent Assembly is horizontal tricolour of deep saffron, white, and dark green in equal proportions with a wheel in heavy blue on the white portion.

SIGNIFICANCE

The topmost panel in the Flag is in deep saffron colour. It signifies courage, sacrifice, purity and renunciation. This is the colour of the *sādhus* and *sannyāsis*. Rajput soldiers and the brave followers of Guru Govind Singh wore saffron dress while marching to the battlefield. Sivaji too had the saffron flag.

The white in the centre stands for purity and truth—truth in words, deeds, and thought. It also signifies peace, love and friendship.

The green is the symbol of life, abundance and prosperity. It is the colour of nature, which is full of warmth and love for humanity.

The green in the base panel represents rich soil and plentiful water resources—the basis of all human life. That is why it has been put at the base. To live, we need good food. The green is meant to tell us that we should make the best use of natural resources through hard work and the nature will reward us suitably.

Only when we are assured of life that we think of "good life". That is why the colour above the green is white, which stands for truth and knowledge. This is meant to tell us that our conduct should proceed from knowledge and should be guided by truth.

From "good life" we mature into a

“spiritual life”. The saffron is a symbol of renunciation. This colour is meant to tell us to develop the moral and spiritual sides of life, to become bold and courageous in speech and conduct.

Ashoka's *Dharma Chakra* has two parts—the crest and the motto. In the crest there are lions. The lion is a symbol of majesty, discipline and strength. Below the lions is the abacus—a flat slab which bears a wheel in the centre, a bull on the right, a horse on the left and outlines of two chakras at the extremes.

On the other part of the emblem is the motto: *Satyameva Jayate*.

Pandit Nehru and Dr. Radhakrishnan used to stress that colours of the Flag had no sectarian religious significance and spoke about them in philosophical terms. The orange colour, Dr. Radhakrishnan once said, denoted “renunciation or disinterestedness”. The white in the centre represents “light” for guiding our conduct, and the green shows our deep relation to the soil and the plant life on which all other kinds of life depend.

The Ashokan wheel is the “Wheel of dharma”. “*Satya* or truth, *dharma* or virtue,” he said, “ought to be the controlling principles of all those who work under this Flag.”

The Wheel denotes motion. Movement is life, stagnation is death. The Wheel, therefore, represents the dynamism of peaceful change. So the deviation from Ashoka's wheel is not a revolt against the original idea of the spinning wheel.

“The blue is the colour of the sky and the sea. There is nothing on Earth as high as the sky and nothing as deep as the sea.

The sky and the sea are symbolic of unlimited expanse. Hence the Wheel in blue is to exhort people to carry the message of the Wheel to its highest, widest and deepest extent.”

The diameter of the wheel is approximately equal to the width of the white panel. The wheel is shown on both sides of the Flag. It has twenty-four spokes and is an exact reproduction of the wheel of the Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath. The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag is two breadths to three breadths.

The National Flag should be used in a most respectful way. No flag or emblem should be placed either above the National Flag or to its right. All other flags are to be placed to its left if they are displayed in a line. When it is carried in a procession or parade, it should be on the right or in the front of the centre of the line if there is a line of other flags. When these flags are raised, the National Flag must rise the highest.

Normally, the National Flag is flown over important Government buildings like the High Courts, Secretariats, or Commissioners' offices, Collectorates and jails. But on occasions like Republic Day, Independence Day, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and on the days of national rejoicing, it is used on a wide scale. But even on these occasions, it must not be displayed on vehicles. It should always be brought down in the evening.

While hoisting the National Flag, proper rites are observed. The occasion demands dignified ceremony. Since it is a symbol of the nation's freedom, unity and honour, citizens should be ever ready to sacrifice their lives to uphold its sanctity.

News and Reports

—: SYNOPSIS OF THE GOVERNING BODY'S REPORT FOR 1989-90 :—

The 81st Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday the 23rd December, 1990 at 3-30 p.m. Swami Bhuteshananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the chairman of the proceedings. A synopsis of the report of the Governing Body for 1989-90, placed before the members, is as follows:

Amidst the important developments during the year, the installation of a computerised printing unit for producing books in braille language at Coimbatore, the inauguration of a mini jute mill for providing training facilities to rural youth at Kamarpukur and the opening of new centres at Viveknagar, Tripura and Toronto, Canada deserve special mention.

Relief and Rehabilitation: In the year under report the Ramakrishna Mission did extensive relief and rehabilitation work spending a sum of Rs. 29.33 lakhs. Besides, relief articles worth about Rs. 6.19 lakhs were distributed.

Welfare Activity: The Mission spent a sum of about Rs. 42.54 lakhs by way of help to poor students, patients and aged and destitute men and women.

Medical Service: The Mission did commendable work through its 9 hospitals and 80 dispensaries including mobile ones. It served more than 45 lakh patients spending a sum of about Rs. 6.50 crores.

Educational Activities: True to tradition the academic results of our educational institutions were excellent. The Mission conducted 1,561 educational institutions which had a total students' strength of 1,32,831. A sum of Rs. 21.32 crores was spent for this purpose.

Rural and Tribal Welfare Work: The Mission did extensive work in several rural and tribal areas of the country involving an expenditure of about Rs. 2.22 crores.

Foreign Work: Our overseas centres were mainly engaged in spiritual ministrations.

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur the Mission and Math had 77 and 75 branches respectively, in India and abroad.

Ramakrishna Mission
P.O. Belur Math, Dist. Howrah
West Bengal 711 202

Truth alone triumphs, and not untruth. Through truth alone the way to the gods lies. —*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE WHEEL OF LIFE AND DEATH, by Philip Kapleau. Published by Rider, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Rd., London. 386 pages. £ 8.95.

Zen teacher Philip Kapleau addresses mainly the universal problem of death and dying, why we fear death and how to cease being anxious and start preparing for it. Pointing out that the problem of fear of death has grown to alarming proportions in the West, he quotes from "The Strange Agony of Success", a feature article written by D. Goleman in the New York Times, 24 August 1986: "Tens of thousands of young people, are finding that in achieving business success today, they have distorted their lives and fallen into emotional turmoil..." The author notes also that the innocent suffer: "Fear of death", writes Kapleau, "especially haunts the young, many of whom have come to believe that they may not live out their lives in our age of potential nuclear holocaust, mass executions, and imprisonments, wars of annihilation, rebellions, and world-wide terrorism."

The author says that the sacred texts and modern commentaries in his book, if carefully studied, can help the dying achieve peaceful deaths, can even liberate them from painful bondage of birth and death, and can hearten the living by making them realize that death, like life, is also transitory. The book is based mostly on a workshop on 'Death and Dying' Mr. Kapleau conducted a few years ago, but is drawn also from his experiences over many years as a teacher and lecturer. Handsomely bound and printed, the book is divided into five main parts on Death, Dying, Karma, Rebirth and Supplements. Some of the subdivisional topics are Death, the concept; Facing death; What it is that dies; and different case histories of death and dying. The deaths of Socrates, Duncan Phyfe, 'Leah' (1933-87), Sengchao, Sri Ramana Maharishi, and Gautama the Buddha are depicted. The following are some of the main points of *The Wheel of Life and Death* which have struck the reviewer as remarkable:

First is the author's compassionate approach to people. His aim (as he states) is to help the reader learn to live fully with life at every moment and die serenely with death—not like someone about to be dragged kicking and screaming to the scaffold, but like someone about to embark on an enticing adventure.

Second is the author's point: (said first perhaps by Gertrude Stein), "You have to learn to do everything, even to die." One may keep in mind a candle burning. Its life and its death are inseparable. If the candle should begin to yearn for its 'life' and regret the wax that is being burnt, then you can imagine the confusion! So it is the 'ego' of the human being that dies. If we are strongly attached to the 'things' of life, our death and even the thought of it will be hard to bear. But, on the other hand, if we are of a 'giving nature' and truly love life, death will have no terror for us. Modern people who live in affluent societies, says the author, tend mostly to live for themselves and have well-developed individualities or egos. They consequently fear death which they conceive (rightly) as the loss of all their worldly treasures. For them even life itself becomes a kind of sickness. The author agrees with Charles Peguy, whom he quotes:

When a man lies dying
he does not die from disease alone,
He dies from his whole life.

On the other hand, when the overinflated individual ego, or 'I' identifying itself with so many objects and emotions, gets reduced, then the transition of death also loses its pain. He who lives painfully has also to pass away in that fashion. But as Zen master Bunan put it:

Die while alive
And be thoroughly dead
Then do what you will,
All is good.

The *third* remarkable thing is that Kapleau says that *dying to the I*, means freeing oneself from attachments, from clinging to people, to wants, to hopes, to fantasies, even to ideals—(Poisoning the real with the ideal, as D. H. Lawrence put it). The author explains that "...birth and death are simply convenient labels we cling to because of our dualistically ensnared minds...The world we perceive is intellectually reconstructed and is not the real world. ...Therefore by training ourselves to live fully with life and die wholly with death at every moment, we are able to transcend both...We need to stop clutching at the momentary aspects of life and let go our preconceived notions of how things should or should not be. Only then can we be

awakened to a whole new world—greater, freer and more beautiful than the old ego-dominated one.”

In the Workshop, the **HOMEMAKER** (housewife, Ch. I) asks: “What is a dignified death?” And the author responds that it lies in being able to yield in the final moment to the inner mysterious force operating in the universe that takes over when all human self-striving ceases. It takes preparedness.

Fourthly, Philip Kapleau offers the practical wisdom of the East that death is not the end-all of existence for the individual. The denial of death so common in our culture, inevitably strengthens the fear of death. In fact, however, this denial is based wrongly on our common belief in an end of existence. But as there is no end of existence, there is no truth either in this concept of death. The author points out the advantage in accepting the Doctrines of *Karma* and *Rebirth*. He quotes journalist John Walters:

“Acceptance of the theory of karma and rebirth will settle many problems regarding life which previously seemed insoluble. It brings a reasonable explanation to circumstances and events, to the tragedies and comedies of life that otherwise would make the world seem one vast madhouse or the plaything of a crazed deity. Belief in karma and rebirth results in a lasting sense of calm and understanding. Life ceases to anger and surprise us, death loses its terrors. No longer do we despairingly utter those useless words, ‘Why does God let such things happen?’ When misfortunes strike us, we realize that payment is being made

for wrong actions in a previous life. The debts are being wiped out.”

“And after all,” said the great Frenchman Voltaire, “it is no more surprising to be born twice than it is to be born once!”

Fifth, and lastly, the author attempts to respond to all the often naive and childish questions, fears and doubts of ordinary people who seldom think analytically or deeply about death or put philosophy into practice. His answers are effective, warmly put and unequivocal. The sections and chapters on ‘How to Face Death’; ‘Advice to the Terminally Ill’; the discussions on cremations or burials, and the dilemma of pain, suicides and mercy deaths are satisfying and interesting. Of absorbing interest are the documented chapters on cases and evidence supporting rebirth and reincarnation. These are persuasive, and the author claims, a part of the truth of the whole phenomena of human life and existence. All kinds of evidence for rebirth are discussed—from the life of Edgar Cayce in Kentucky at the turn of the century, to the vivid accounts from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, depicting what are accepted as universal truths of the death-to-rebirth transition.

Readers familiar with the *Lives and Teachings* of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda will surely mark that there is nothing offensive or contradictory in *The Wheel of Life and Death*. Only there will be found differences in emphasis and religious terminology. Philip Kapleau’s book is interesting and easy, and will be widely read. Many will find it stimulating and thought-provoking.

Swami Sivaprasadananda
Mayavati.

Even those engaged in worldly activities, such as office work or business, should hold to truth. Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga (this age). —Sri Ramakrishna

and list of important terms in the *Kārikās* with meanings given by Shankara, and Buddhist texts.

Dr. Dave draws discriminately from other authorities, old and new, and leaves no objection unanswered. An authentic and exhaustive edition of the *Māṇḍūkya* and the *Gaudapāda Kārikās*.

M.P. Pandit
Pondicherry

BHAGAVAD GITA FOR THE LAY READER, by R. I. Easwaran and Ardhendu Sekhar Ghosh. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay—400-007; 1986. 61 p. Rs. 15/-.

The authors of this small book are to be congratulated for their commendable effort.

Bhagavad Gita For The Lay Reader is no doubt written for easy comprehension by those not long familiar with the Gita, and the lay readers who are just taking up their study; but the authors' deep insights and elegant phrasing will make this small book delightful and stimulating reading for anyone who chances to come across it. Written in a charming and lucid manner, it touches on many salient topics of spiritual life. The present reviewer felt rewarded while reading under the headings: "Detachment and Objectivity", "Brahman", "Karma and Naishkarma", "Variations of Knowledge", and "Supreme Realization" in the Chapter "*Journey To Fulfilment*".

The authors quote extensively from the Gita and also from other Vedantic scriptures to give the layman a good account of what religious life and spiritual practice is all about. It will never make anyone shy away from the subject, but rather arouse more interest. An appendix at the end of the book gives a letter written by the author on some of his personal experiences in the

spiritual path. It is an interesting testimony to the truth of spiritual life and the power of Swamiji, who is working in the world for human uplift. The Introduction and the other two chapters—"Yajna, Dhyana, and Bhokti", and "Illumined Life" are also well written.

Gita For The Lay Reader will be a worthy acquisition for any library.

Sivaprasadananda
Mayavati

THE STORY OF SRI KRISHNA FOR CHILDREN: PART II, 42 pages; Rs. 15/
(ii) MAHABHARATA FOR CHILDREN: VOL. I, 43 pages; Rs. 15/-. Both by Swami Raghaveshananda. Published by the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600 004.

The above two books are in the series of books for children being published by the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

The story of Sri Krishna starts with Krishna's training under Sandipini, and ends with his exit from this earth. *The Mahabharata* starts with the interesting episode of how Lord Ganesha consented to become scribe to Vyasa. It is followed by the story of Bhishma's birth and continues up to the burning of Khandava forest.

Both the books are written in simple English and can be easily understood by children. The books have been brought out very elegantly and with attractive covers. They are also profusely illustrated with very beautiful pictures, for which the artist, Padmavasan, needs to be congratulated.

These books are a very good introduction to children of Indian epics and mythology.

Kamala S. Jaya Rao
Hyderabad