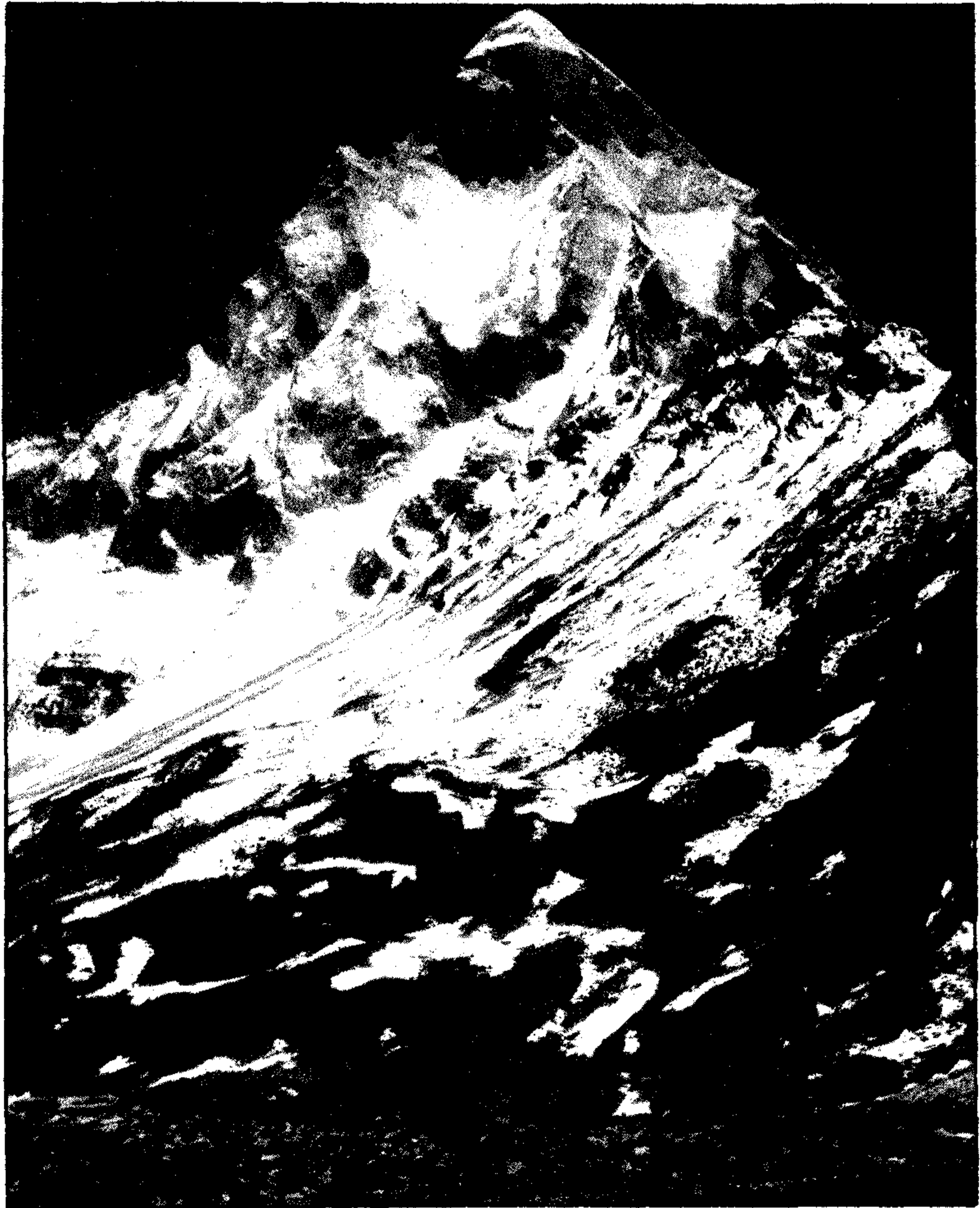


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the
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Arise! Awake!
And stop not till the Goal is reached.

Prabuddha Bharata

Or Awakened India

VOL. 96

MAY 1991

No. 5

The Divine Message

How long is the night to the watchman ; how long is the road to the weary ; how long is the wandering of lives ending in death for the fool who cannot find the path!

If on the great journey of life a man cannot find one who is better or at least as good as himself, let him joyfully travel alone: a fool cannot help him on his journey.

'These are my sons. This is my wealth.' In this way the fool troubles himself. He is not even the owner of himself: how much less of his sons and of his wealth!

If a fool can see his own folly, he in this at least is wise ; but the fool who thinks he is wise, he indeed is the real fool.

If during the whole of his life a fool lives with a wise man, he never knows the path of wisdom as the spoon never knows the taste of the soup.

But if a man who watches and sees in only a moment with a wise man he soon knows the path of wisdom, as the tongue knows the taste of the soup.

A fool who thinks he is wise goes through life with himself as his enemy, and he ever does wrong deeds which in the end bear bitter fruit.

For that deed is not well done when being done one has to repent ; and when one must reap with tears the bitter fruits of the wrong deed.

But the deed is indeed well done when being done one has not to repent ; and when one can reap with joy the sweet fruits of the right deed.

The wrong action seems sweet to the fool until the reaction comes and brings pain, and the bitter fruits of wrong deeds have then to be eaten by the fool.

A fool may fast month after month eating his food with the sharp point of a blade of *kusa* grass, and his worth be not a sixteenth part of that of the wise man whose thoughts feed on truth.

A wrong action may not bring its reaction at once, even as fresh milk turns not sour at once: like a smouldering fire concealed under ashes it consumes the wrongdoer, the fool.

And if ever to his own harm the fool increases in cleverness, this only destroys his own mind and his fate is worse than before.

For he will wish for reputation, for precedence among the monks, for authority in the monasteries and for veneration amongst the people.

'Let householders and hermits, both, think it was I who did that work ; and let them ever ask me what they should do or not do.' These are the thoughts of the fool, puffed up with desire and pride.

Bhagavan Buddha—*The Dhammapala*

Nataraja—The Source of Arts

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, a pioneer historian of Art, and foremost interpreter of Indian culture to the West, *Bhakti* and *Yoga* were the dominant motifs which governed early Indian Art. Sister Nivedita too voiced the same opinion. 'Great Art-epochs of history are great religious epochs—those historic moments at which the soul of man was most deeply smitten by the glory of Ideals. In accordance with this truth is the absolute agreement between Indian thought, and Indian Art...the fact that Art, like science—like religion—has her eyes upon the Unseen that transcends the seen; that the very crafts and industries of India are inspired and guided by the conviction that 'mind alone is, and matter but appears to be'.¹

There is a natural tendency in the Indian mind to make everything an approach to God, to the innate divinity that is hidden by bewildering multiplicity. Appreciation of beauty (*saundarya*) and aesthetic enjoyment (*rasāsvāda*) are not exceptions. Beauty then is the transcendental perfection in things, which transcends the thing itself and establishes a relationship with the Infinite. Beauty makes things fit to give joy to the spirit. However, aesthetic value is not an end-value, but only an instrumental value, a means for the Highest. The ultimate value is *Parama-Puruṣārtha*, or *Mokṣa*.

Mokṣa is the consummation of all the other human values—*Dharma* (the moral good), *Artha* (wealth), and *Kāma* (pleasure). Therefore, all Art forms address themselves to the task of manifesting this perfection and strive to lead human beings towards the ultimate Goal of freedom. The view that aesthetic experience is akin to mystic experience was advanced by the religious genius Plotinus of the third century A.D. Abhinavagupta of Kashmir held that the aesthetic experience at the highest level is the experience of the Self, the *Ātman* as pure Bliss. At this level of experience the duality in creation—of subject and object—disappears through intense introspection. This is also the 'Yoga of Ecstasy' according to Patañjali. All things endowed with beauty and glory are aspects of God Himself, says the *Gita* in the tenth chapter, *Divine Manifestations*, verse 41:

*Yad-yad vibhūtamāt sattvam śrīmad
ūrjitam eva vā
tad-tad evāvagaccha tvam mama tejomśa
sambhavam*

Sri Krishna says to Arjuna:

*Whatever glorious or beautiful or mighty
being exists anywhere, know that it has
sprung from but a spark of My splendour.*

Or, as the *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* mentions: The manifold universe is God Himself. *Puruṣa evedaṃ sarvam yad bhūtam yac ca bhavyam...* "The Cosmic Person is truly this whole world, whatever has been and whatever will be." (III, 15)

This guiding inspiration breathes life and freshness into all forms of Art—dance, music, sculpture, painting, architecture, and iconography. They all represent spiritual and religious idealism. A painting, a statue or a temple structure manifests a religious

1. Nivedita, *The Complete Works of*, (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) Vol. III, p. 48.

ideal to the devotee who contemplates it. It brings to the fore the object of devotion as if face to face with the Lover. It is only a means to visualization of profound spiritual truth. To the Indian mind Art is an effective expression of the Absolute. Nowhere in the world, perhaps, has the philosophy of Art been looked upon with such reverence or imbued with such lofty significance. The following fascinating classification attests to the transmundane nature of Art.

There are three schools of the philosophy of Art: (i) the *Rasa-Brahma-vāda* (poetry, dance, drama); (ii) the *Nāda-Brahma-vāda* (music); and (iii) *Vāstu-Brahma-vāda* (architecture). According to the propounders of these schools, Art represents the Infinite—the timeless dimension. Temple architecture specially embodies spiritual ideas relating to the yogic centres; and Indian grammar is also called the “treatise on *Śabda-Brahman*”.

Bharata makes a bold assertion in his classical treatise that the creation of art is possible to him who has mastered all knowledge and fully grasped the mystery of life and realized the oneness hidden ingeniously in the diversity. As the greatest authority on the art of dance and drama he assigns the supreme place to the *Nātya*. He says:

*Na tajnām na taccilpāṇi
na sāvīdyā na sākālā
Nāsau yogo na tatkarma
natye' smin yanna dṛśyate*

“There is no art or science, no craft or skill or knowledge that is not covered by the supreme art of ‘*Nātya*’ (dance).”

Bharata’s *Nātya Śāstra* enumerates one hundred and eight standard poses in the original dance of Natarāja. On the four walls of the entrance at the Chidambaram temple, Tamil Nadu, all these unique postures are depicted in stone sculpture. All

the dancing images of the Natarāja have certain common features. One of the right hands always is seen to hold the *damaru* (drum) and another is always in *abhaya-mudrā*, assuring His protection. In one of the left hands the Lord holds the fire, and with the other He appears in the dance movement known as the *gaja-hasta*, or the auspicious graceful sway of the elephant’s trunk. Lord Śiva seems to point to his left foot which in the *anugraha-mudrā* bestows His Grace and blessings on the world. The fire denotes the infinite *ākāśa* wherein the Lord draws back to Himself the cosmos at the end of time in the Great Dissolution (*pralaya*). Siva’s *damaru* also has another significance. It is sung by one of the Saiva saints thus:

“Thy hand, holding the sacred drum has made and ordered the heavens and earth and other worlds and innumerable souls.”

Is there a link between the sound of Śiva’s *damaru* and the sounds of the natural world, of speech uttered by man or of the science of Sanskrit grammar? What philosophies and Arts and Enlightenment have to do with the dry realm of Grammar proves to be a fascinating question.

It is pointed out² that enlightenment is a transcendental experience, and thus beyond words. Yet the ṛsis attempted repeatedly to clothe their experiences in words in order to lead mankind searching for ultimate Truth to the same experience. The well-thought-out, carefully constructed Grammar helps to make the language more precise, and aids in the comprehension of what the language is to express.

Pāṇini, the most celebrated Sanskrit grammarian, of the fourth century B.C., as legend says, heard the pure *Nāda*, the sound

2. *Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (London: Rider, 1986) p. 265.

vibrations of Lord Siva's *damaru*, and out of them he saw flashing before the mind's eye fourteen verses of the *deva-bhāṣā* (holy language). These Pāṇini formed into the basis for the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, his famous *Grammar* considered even today as a standard work in Sanskrit.

Nandikeśwar Kārikā, a later commentary affirms this. The fourteen verses form the bedrock of Sanskrit, thus providing the foundation for the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The title (meaning a Work of eight chapters) was acclaimed as a stupendous effort and created a scientific and comprehensive system for grammar in the Sanskrit language. Later Patañjali wrote a monumental commentary on this Grammar of Pāṇini.

In India the study of grammar was looked upon as a spiritual practice from the earliest times. It is not strange that grammar, like the Arts, was permeated with spiritual fervour. It is not surprising that Vivekananda, who knew and represented the great religious spirit of the country significantly said: "Our sacred motherland is a land of religion and philosophy, the birthplace of spiritual giants—the land of renunciation where, and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man."³

Whether it was Yāska's (7th century B.C.) *Nirukta* (Etymology), or Pāṇini's *Vyākaraṇa* (Grammar), or Patañjali's *Commentary* (*Mahābhāṣya*), or Bhartṛhari's philosophy-grammar treatise, all were considered sacred books. Grammar was called an important *Vedāṅga* or auxiliary of the *Vedas*.

In the ancient days, when students acquired sufficient preparatory knowledge, then only were they allowed to commence study

of the *Vedas*. In the beginning of his *Nirukta*, Yāska in unambiguous terms states that 'Deity' and 'Self' are flower and fruit of Speech—*Devatādhyātme vā vācaḥ puṣpa-phale*. Enquiries into the genesis and ultimate nature of *Vāk*, the Power of Speech (also regarded as a Goddess), led them into a sublime region of bliss and divine consciousness. They visualized Brahman enshrined in the *Varṇamālā* (alphabet). The *Varṇas* (letters) are called *Akṣara* which denotes their eternal existence and imperishability.

The worship of the *Śabda-Brahman*, *Logos*, or Word which leads to mystical vision of the Absolute, was stressed by all the ancient grammarians. The words uttered by man (*Śabda*) are not the result of human thought and creation, but are the manifestation of divine Consciousness. Man has not invented words or speech, but words and speech are the outward expression of Consciousness, say the sages. Casting light on this, Swami Vivekananda said: "The idea that language was created by men—certain men sitting together and deciding upon words, has been proved to be wrong. So long as man has existed there have been words and language...Every idea that you have in the mind has a counterpart in a word; the words and the thought are inseparable. The external part of *one and the same thing* is what we call 'word', and the internal part is what we call thought. No man can, by analysis separate thought from word."⁴

On this profound Deity *Vāk*, or *Śabda-Brahman*, grammarians meditated and entered a dimension that lies beyond the confines of time and space, and there discovered that the Absolute Brahman is the Matrix of word or sound, and meaning. This '*Doctrine of Sphota*' marks the culmination of the mysticism of Grammar. Modern physics

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

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 217.

says that sound is the product of vibrations. The movement of the Spheres in the cosmos is said to produce a sound which can be heard by the Yogis contemplating the Divine Lord in deep meditation.

According to science, sound vibrations are the waves created by energy passing through a medium causing resistance. Many new discoveries are being made in the field of Ultrasonics, Supersonics and Infrasonics.

According to Tantra and Vedanta, sound or *śabda* is the cause of everything. The universe is the outcome of the Divine Sound. The vibratory states of sound, audible and inaudible, which science has put to use for human welfare in communications, medicine and so on, is a later or gross manifestation of the *Ādi-śabda* or Primal Sound. This *Sphoṭa*, or *Anāhata Dhvani* is uncreate and suprasensory. The Lord Himself first manifested as the Name or 'Word' and then as Form. Thus the visible universe came into being. Behind the visible universe is the inexpressible, eternal *Sphoṭa*. It is the eternal Mother of all ideas or names. Explaining this, Sri Ramakrishna once said: "It is a spontaneous sound constantly going on by itself. It is the sound of *Pranava*, *OM*. It originates in the Supreme Brahman and is heard by Yogis."⁵

During his Tantra *sādhana*, Sri Ramakrishna heard, arising naturally and unceasingly, everywhere in the universe, the *Anāhata Dhvani*, the great *Pranava* sound which is the aggregate of all the sound of the universe. At that time he could understand the meanings of the cries of all the animals.⁶

Bhartṛhari, the great philosopher-grammarian, was not only a *Vaiyākaraṇa* (grammarian), but was also an *Advaitin*, who believed in *Śabdādvaita* and *Sattādvaita*, that the 'Word' or Absolute is the Source of everything. According to him, all knowledge becomes manifest by virtue of its resting on the verbal matrix and is also illumined by words. All knowledge thus being linguistic, the distinctions of objects are traceable to distinctions among words. The view of metaphysical monism of words (*śabdādvaita*) holds that the one word essence appears as this world of names and forms because of man's imagination as explained by Śaṅkara's *Advaita*. In support of this, grammarians made use of the doctrine of *Sphoṭa* (that from which meaning bursts forth). They drew a distinction between the word and articulate sound, and made the word itself the bearer of meaning. Further, the grammarians were interested in pointing out that the phonemes or articulate sounds by themselves cannot constitute the word. Therefore, as bearer of meaning, the word is an indivisible entity, the *śabda-Sphoṭa*.

Each thought must have a word to express it, but words need not necessarily have the same phonemes or articulate sounds. Sounds vary according to different speakers in the world. They are produced within the spatio-temporal confines. But the 'Word' is indivisible and eternal and has no spatial or temporal relations. This Reality, the Ground of all manifestation, is called *Sphoṭa* or *śabda-Brahman* by grammarians and Brahman by Vedantins. Indian grammar as a distinct spiritual discipline was chiefly interested in establishing the 'doctrine of word monism'.

In the realm of music the splendid theory of *Nāda-Brahman* casts illumination on the mystery of sound. The tradition of musical art goes back to the *Sāma Veda*. It is said that the system of music expounded by

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 416.

6. Swami Saradananda, *The Great Master* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) p. 232.

Bharata in his *Nāṭya-Śāstra* evolved out of the *Sāma Veda*. In Indian music the sound is not a mere sign of thought, feeling or emotion, but is an independent medium. Authorities on music say that music is the apprehension of *Nāda* (Primordial Sound) which is in the heart, and the *Śrūtis* are only the medium through which it is expressed. *Śrūti* is nothing but a manifestation of *Nāda-Brahman*. The relationship between *Śrūti* and *Nāda* is that of the actual with the potential.

Melody and rhythm of music have the power to elevate the mind to sublime heights and ultimately to lead one to the Supreme Realization. *Nāda* issues forth from the Absolute. This perpetual sound is grasped in deep meditation. Therefore *Nādōpāsana*—worship of music is *Yogopāsana*—the practice of Yoga. Both have a similar approach and aim. Music of pleasant sound easily brings under control the tempestuous mind and helps in concentration. As Henry Longfellow said, "Music is the universal language of mankind." It is God who manifests Himself as beauty in all things, as the greatness in human beings, and as the melody of music.

The *Damaru-Nāda* of Lord Śiva creates the universe and all beings. This is seen in

the highest mystical experience. Dakṣa's prayer to Śiva in the *Mahābhārata* reflects the epitome of the Lord's unsurpassed glory as an Artist and the Fount of all Arts:

*Śilpikaḥ śilpānām śreṣṭhaḥ sarvaśilpapra-
vartakaḥ*
"Lord, You are that Artist, the greatest
of all Artists and the Promulgator of all
arts."

The *Gītā* explains this profound concept in one of its wonderful verses:

*Urdhva-mūlam adhaḥ-śākham aśvattham
prāhur avyayam...*
"The scriptures speak of the eternal
Aśvattha, the World Tree, whose roots
are in the Most High..." (XV. 1)

The truth of this finds an apt illustration in the magnificent image of the dancing Śiva. The image is not a product of the poet's rich brain, but is a supramental vision of Reality, seen by the ancients, and seeable by mystics of the modern age as well. The cosmic dance of Natarāja is a marvellous synthesis of *Dvaita* and *Advaita* and may also be regarded as a confluence of *Bhakti*, *Jñāna*, *Karma* and *Yoga*. Therefore, it is no wonder the idol has been appreciated and adored by saints, devotees, artists and even scientists down the ages.

Anyone who had the good fortune of being with the Mother for any length of time, would have witnessed how she did all her work untiringly and lived in the world without any self-centredness and external compulsions. The only compulsion she felt was the desire to relieve the sufferings of all.

—Swami Saradananda

Unpublished Letters

The following letters of the disciples and admirers of Swami Vivekananda are coming to the light of the printed page for the first time. During the Swami's lifetime and for long afterward, the devotees retained a wonderful reverence and loyalty for the great Swami. Going through the letters readers are moved to sense the profound spiritual relationship they had with the beloved Guru.

For long years these unpublished letters have lain in the archives of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A. We are grateful to the authorities for making them available to us for publication in this Journal.

From Christine Greenstidel (1148 Beaubrin St., Detroit)—to Mrs. Betty Leggett

August 18, 1917

My dear Mrs. Leggett,

When your telegram came I remembered that from someone, somewhere, sometime ago I heard that you were in this country. In the infinity of the last few months, it, together with other things, quite escaped my memory.

When Frank Alexander came to Detroit a year ago last May, he was ill. He had had congestion of the lungs in California from the effects of which he never recovered. He was in no condition to work but there was nothing else to be done. He got back his old position on the "Free Press" and not only did the regular work but three nights a week worked overtime. He developed tubercular trouble. He hoped to get help from Christian Science and was treated by his old friend Dr. Carr and others. He grew steadily worse, and in April being unable to continue work, he returned to his friends the Rhodehamels in San Francisco. Mrs. R—tells

me that he had several severe hemorrhages as well as constant night sweats. He decided to come back to Detroit but they knew that his days were numbered. He had been in Detroit only a day or two when he developed appendicitis. He was taken to the hospital and operated upon but from the first there was practically no hope. He had no resistance and the fact that he lived a week astonished the doctors. He had no pain whatever from first to last. For this he was so grateful. He was conscious to the very end and *knew*. Three days before he told me that Swamiji was calling him, gave me some directions, sent messages to his friends and said goodbye. "Death is only re-birth," he said. He was not afraid. Never had I seen him so calm. Several times during the year he told me that when he left India, he knew. In speaking of his Indian experiences, he always said, "I have *lived*. What does it matter whether this body goes now or later?" He became master of himself in a most marvellous way. I could not have believed it had I not seen it. He was in very truth Swamiji's child. Had he lived ten years longer he would have moved the world—spiritually, of course I mean. What Swamiji began, he would have carried forward. What a tragedy it seems to be!

He was always so grateful for the oppor-

tunities you gave him and his personal feeling for you was deep.

Are you likely to pass through Detroit? I should so much like to see you.

Ever sincerely yours,
Christine Greenstidel

* * *

*From Romain Rolland to
Swami Shivananda*

Villemeaux, (Vand)
Swami Villa Olga
Sept. 12, 1927

Dear and respected Swami Shivananda:

Allow a Frenchman who profoundly admires Sree Ramakrishna to address himself to you, who had the good fortune to be his personal disciple.

A year ago, my sister Madeleine Rolland and myself read the "Life of Sree Ramakrishna" and the other publications which have been dedicated to him by the Advaita Ashrama. I want to make known to the West that Divine Source of Love and Light. Nothing is more necessary to the humanity of our time, than this revelation of the harmonious unity of all religious faiths, than this communion with God manifold in form and yet Himself without form, who is the Being of all living beings.

But it is an extremely delicate task to translate (that is to say transpose) into a western book a personality so fundamentally Indian as that of Sree Ramakrishna. For certain of his religious experiences would be incomprehensible to almost all the European public and will ever run the risk of concealing the most essential qualities of his life and thought, which could be a powerful benefit (assistance) to it. That is why I am proceeding slowly; I am waiting until there appears in myself a living and true harmony of the work which I wish to write.

It is very precious to me to be able to

communicate directly with you, who saw with your own eyes this extraordinary man. Our epoch, too intellectualistic as it is, has a tendency to doubt the human existence of all the superhuman personalities of history. Even when it pretends to respect the lofty ideals of which they were the torches, it sees in them only symbols created by the spirit of a race and of an age; one sees today those who deny that Jesus or Buddha had ever existed. It will not be slow in doing the same for Sree Ramakrishna, if his living witnesses do not leave in writing the proof of his life amongst them on the earth. I should like to make known to the European public your direct testimony.

I wish also to ask you some enlightenment on an important question: the problem of suffering with Ramakrishna. I have read lately an excellent article in the Prabuddha Bharata on the question of "Service" with Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, in which it was maintained that the great disciple had only drawn out the consequences of his Master's teaching—of his "adoration of the divine in man" & that there was no disagreement between them. But it appears to me that the more essential feature of the personality of Vivekananda was the mournful and heroic obsession of universal suffering and of evil to fight against or to console. Is it not the (same) central idea, quite different from the universal divine vision, which filled Ramakrishna with an ecstasy of joy and with great faith in the Eternal?

What was his attitude with regard to the cruel injustice of nature and of society of unfortunate people and of those who oppressed or persecuted? Was he content simply to love them? Did he not seek to help them? and has he not precisely destined his great disciple Vivekananda to do that work?

Believe me, dear Swami Shivananda

Yours affectionately,
Romain Rolland

The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

Based on the author's talks delivered at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, readers here become familiar with another intimate perspective of the life of Sri Sarada Devi 'Refuge of all beings'. The Swami is Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math and is a senior monk of the Order.

It was forty years ago at the lonely cottage of the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Kishenpur—a wintry morning, about seven o'clock. The golden rays of the December sun were just beginning to shed their pleasant warmth. At a distance the Shivalik ranges could be seen as if lost in meditation, and all around were many blossoming shrubs and trees. Somewhere in the ravine below a brook could be heard rushing noisily past the ashrama. Some Himalayan songbirds were singing out an aubade. The birthday of the Holy Mother was only a day or two away. Seated on a carpet inside the cottage was Swami Jagadanandaji, a senior monk, Vedanta scholar and disciple of the Mother. Another one was seated on the carpet too, a young newly ordained sannyasi, eager to learn Vedanta from him. The young monk began:

“It is possible to grasp, to understand a little of the immense spirituality of Sri Ramakrishna. It can at least be inferred to some extent. But in the case of the Holy Mother, we are unable to form an idea of her depth, however much we ponder on it. How many scholars and savants used to go to Sri Ramakrishna! And Dakshineswar where he practised so many spiritual disciplines, what a wonderful place it was! But Mother attained all her spiritual realization in such a silent, unobtrusive and natural way, even while bearing the burden of so many household responsibilities and chores. Really,

Sir, it is something mysterious, unprecedented, incomparable!”

“Right you are!” exclaimed Jagadanandaji. “It is not possible to understand Mother. How great she was, how deep she was, who indeed was this Mother—it is not possible for us to know. All we know is, she is Mother.” While he was talking thus about the Mother, the venerable old Swami was overwhelmed with emotion, and tears started rolling down his cheeks. Observing how even a man of knowledge, well established in Vedanta, looked upon the Holy Mother, we think none but a foolhardy person would attempt a simplistic portrayal of her life and greatness. But then, our Mother is of such nature that every one of her children thinks that he knows his Mother well. Not only this, he thinks that nobody else knows her quite so well as he does! Mother also never rejected anyone as her child, so even the foolhardy feel encouraged. In her house an ignoramus has as much right as a learned man. She herself said once: “I am the Mother of the virtuous and the Mother of the wicked. I am the Mother of the good and the Mother of the bad....Whoever addresses me as ‘Mother’, I am his or her Mother. I am the Mother of all.” Now let us see how this great Mother of the Universe, who herself behind the veil of modesty, appears to an ordinary mind limited by ignorance.

Hindu mythology and epics have given a high place to the ideal of chastity in marri-

age, in the sense of one-pointed devotion to one's husband. Sita's accompanying her husband to the forest, Sāvitrī's devotion to Satyavān and her victory over the King of Death, and Vishnupriya's embracing the ascetic life after Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's ordination into *sannyāsa*, are all well known examples of wifely chastity. Then there were the spiritually illumined women exemplified by the *Brahma-vādinīs* (Knowers of Brahman) of the *Upaniṣads* and the saintly nuns in Christianity and Buddhism. But, we think, in the history of mankind the *Ideal of Motherhood*, universal motherhood, was really originated and fully expressed for the first time by the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi.

Of course, everybody knows of the love, devotion and sacrifice of an ordinary mother for her own children. And how precious it is to us, but that expression and unfailing example of motherly love towards all—approaching perfect universal motherhood—is unique and *non-pareil* in the life of Sarada Devi. The ideal of 'God of all' has been exemplified in the lives of Krishna, Christ and others. But the Ideal of 'Mother of all' is a startlingly new phenomenon in the world. How many types of relationships an ordinary individual has to enter into every day—as father or mother, husband or wife, son or daughter, master or servant, doctor or patient, shopkeeper or customer, and so on! But has ever a woman demonstrated perfect equanimity and same-sighted motherhood for all creatures of the universe as did Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother? Rarely, can one ever find her likeness even in the whole history of religion and spirituality.

The lowly grass and the mighty tree—both have their origin in the earth. The thorny cactus and the fragrant jasmine—both sprout from the ground; there they all grow. Hence the earth is called 'Mother-Earth'. She gives birth and sustenance to

all living beings without any distinction. She rejects none.

God incarnates Himself on earth as the *Avatār*. There is a special manifestation of divinity in the *Avatār*. The scriptures declare that the coming of the *Avatār* is to protect the virtuous and punish the wicked. That means, the *Avatār* functions on the basis of acceptance and rejection.

In Hindu philosophy God's Incarnation is always associated with *Śakti*, the Divine Power. God comes to Earth in various forms in different countries at different periods in history and incarnates Himself. In some forms the *Avatār* reveals the terrible aspect of Godhood, in some forms He reveals God as the Teacher of mankind. All these manifestations are within the ambit of *Śakti*. The *noblest* manifestation of *Śakti*, however—Universal Motherhood, had never been popularly associated with the *Avatār* previously. It was only in this most recent Avatarhood, of Sri Ramakrishna, that we find His much acclaimed association with the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy of the Universe.

When we turn to the life of Sri Sarada Devi, we find that she was nothing else than the Mother of All. It is well known that she did not care for any other attribute, and never wanted anyone to look upon her in any other way except 'as Mother'. The *Avatār's* consideration of virtue and vice, or acceptance and rejection, was practically absent in her life. Besides, most amazingly, she was utterly unencumbered by any of the splendour found associated with *Avatār's* or other great figures in religion. She had also no need to take birth under the compulsion of historical circumstance, as the *Avatār's* had. But she was the Fountain or Source of the Universal Creative Power. Where there is creation, where there is birth, there is motherhood. Motherhood itself is the

First Cause. There is no cause beyond that. The Divine Mother is the uncaused Cause of the Universe.

It was this divine Motherhood of God that Sri Sarada Devi revealed in her artless statement: "If any child of mine gets covered with dust or dirt, I myself have to wash him and take him on my lap." She had totally transcended all the polarities of life—virtue and vice, good and bad, knowledge and ignorance, purity and impurity. She had no need to undergo any austere discipline to attain this, for it was natural to her. She Herself is the Creatrix of all diversity! Sri Sarada Devi is the fullest manifestation of Mother Power. The *Avatār* may accept certain people and reject certain others. But the Mother accepts all—including those rejected by the *Avatār*. She is ever ready to take anyone onto her lap. No need of fear of punishment from her, she gives only protection and indulgence to everyone.

Mother-Power is eternal and universal. Differences in birth and caste do not affect its universality. On the contrary, it mellows the harshness of contemporary social rules and customs. The flow of Mother's love breaks down all walls of separation. On her lap Swami Saradananda and Amjad were alike—two sons. In her arms and at her feet 'Gopal's mother' and the 'mad aunt'; the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda and the drunk Padmavinode, all are equal.

Although the Holy Mother treated all as her children, she did not ignore anybody's temperament or basic attitude towards life. Sri Ramakrishna used to follow certain customs and traditions of orthodox Hinduism. The Mother also observed them in her worship of the Master. Once when she was getting down from a bullock-cart, some sweets which had been brought for the Master's worship fell down and so could not be offered. The Mother remarked then,

"The sweets have been polluted by the touch of people belonging to other castes. The Master could not eat such things. That is why they fell down. There is no need to grieve over the loss."

The Holy Mother used to tell her children: "At the time of your death I will be there with you. But if you want to live in peace right now, do what I ask you to do." The embodiment of purity that she was, she was eager to purify them before they finally went to her.

Sri Ramakrishna himself established her in the all-embracing, all-forgiving universal Motherhood. This was remarked upon one time by the Mother herself: "The Master had the attitude of mother towards everybody in the world. It is to spread and glorify that attitude that the Master has left me on earth this time." Was it because he looked upon her as the Mother of all that he offered the last oblation of his austerities to her?

Sri Ramakrishna was very particular about purity in personal conduct and could not bear the company of immoral persons. Once he noticed a woman who had led a rather loose life in her youth frequenting the room where the Holy Mother stayed. He asked the Mother: "Why is that woman here? She is a public woman. Why talk with her?" The Mother simply said, "She now talks only of God. What is the harm in that?" She continued to allow the unfortunate woman to visit her as before. Can a mother reject her child who has sought the refuge of her lap? There are numerous such touching incidents in her life.

When people brought gifts of fruits, sweets and other things to Sri Ramakrishna, he would usually send those things to Holy Mother who would promptly distribute them to the women devotees and others who stayed with her or who visited. One day the Master wanted to caution her about this

'thrifless habit'. But the Mother walked away with such a grave expression on her face that the Master felt uneasy and sent somebody to pacify her. She could never brook any interference with her motherly affections toward the devotees or to unfortunate ones.

Didn't the Mother reprimand or punish anyone? Of course she did—but only to set right the behaviour or purify the minds of those children who had erred. When Harish, whose brain had been deranged by poison administered by his wife, became threateningly aggressive, the gentle and bashful Sri Sarada Devi assumed that terrible aspect of the Divine Mother known as *Bagalāmukhī* and dealt with him severely. But the drubbing that Harish received that day at her hands cured him of his madness. He afterwards went to a holy place and spent his time in spiritual practice. As one famous Sanskrit hymn by Saṅkara puts it, 'There can be a bad son (*kuputra*), but there can never be a bad mother (*kumātā*).' A mother may scold or punish, but will never curse her children. It is only her love that gives the mother the authority to punish her children. When she punishes, it is only for the child's good.

One day Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small cot and Sri Sarada Devi was sweeping the floor of his room. Unexpectedly she stopped sweeping and asked, "Who am I to you?" Without a moment's hesitation, the Master replied, "You are my blissful Divine Mother." Sri Sarada Devi had become 'Mother' to Sri Ramakrishna! A husband looking upon his wife as mother!—this is almost an inconceivable thing. On another occasion, Holy Mother was massaging the Master's feet. She asked him, "How do you regard me?" Again, his reply was at once forthcoming: "The Mother who is in the (*Kali*) temple, the Mother who gave birth to this body, the same Mother is now

massaging my feet. Really, I see you as the true form of the Blissful Mother."

Sri Ramakrishna never addressed the Holy Mother by using the familiar pronoun 'tui' (thou), but always used the more respectful word 'tumi' (you). The Master discharged all the normal duties of a husband to his wife, and yet they both lived immaculately pure lives. Their relationship never descended to the physical level. Sri Ramakrishna's performance of the *Soḍaṣī* worship, in which he regarded his wife as the Deity, was in fact a ritual transfiguration of Sri Sarada Devi into the Divine Mother of the Universe. With that, Sri Ramakrishna brought her to equality with himself, put the seal on her divinity, and she has remained the Blissful Mother ever since.

At Jayrambati, the mother of Holy Mother, Shyamasundari Devi, had a special affection for her eldest daughter. It is customary for Hindu mothers sometimes to address their own daughters as 'Ma' (mother). Shyamasundari Devi also used to do that. But she thought of her daughter not as an ordinary mother, but as Goddess Lakṣmi Herself. One day she asked her divine daughter: "Who indeed are you, my darling? Will I ever be able to understand your true nature?" And she used to say to the Holy Mother, "May I have you as my daughter again!" (meaning in her next birth). Mother's younger brother, known to her devotees as 'Uncle Kali', reminiscing about the love and care with which she looked after him and his other brothers in their childhood, used to say, "Our sister is Lakṣmi (Goddess of Fortune) incarnate." Her nieces and sisters-in-law, some of whom used to give much trouble to Mother, even after they were grown up, were nevertheless conscious of her divinity. Even distant relatives, some of whom were older than the Mother, used to look upon her as their own Mother.

Once during the worship of the Goddess Jagaddhatri at Jayrambati, a pious Brahmin, Rambriday Ghoshal, of a neighbouring village entered the place where the Goddess was enshrined. There he saw the Holy Mother sitting completely quiet, absorbed in meditation. He kept his eyes fixed on her for a long time, for, as he told later, he could not make out who was the Deity and who was the Mother! A pious woman of Jayrambati, who was one of the Mother's companions from her childhood, known to the devotees as Aunt Bhanu (*Bhanu Pisi*), had a vision of the Holy Mother as a goddess with four arms. There was another poor woman, 'Mrigendra's mother', who used to prepare popped rice (*mudī*) and do other odd jobs in the Mother's home at Jayrambati. She used to see now and then Holy Mother in a celestial form. She regarded Holy Mother as the Goddess Rājarājeśvarī.

Members of Sri Ramakrishna's family as well, at Kamarpukur, used to revere Sarada Devi as the Mother. The Master's young nephew Shivaram was Mother's godson. One morning he suddenly appeared at Jayrambati just to see the Mother. In the evening Mother asked him to return to Kamarpukur as he was supposed to do worship there, but Shivaram, after going a short distance, returned and fell down at Holy Mother's feet crying, "Mother, tell me what will be my lot!" Though the Mother tried to console him, he wouldn't be pacified. "You have to take over my burden," he insisted, "and tell me that you are *what you had earlier told me you were.*" On an earlier occasion Mother had admitted to Shivaram that she was the Divine Mother Kālī. Now, unable to bear the earnest entreaties of Shivaram, she placed her hands on his head and declared in a solemn voice, "*Yes, that is so.*" This sent a thrill through Shivaram.

He lifted his head and, kneeling before her, chanted the well-known 'Salutation Hymn' of the *Chandī* beginning: "*Sarva-mangalamangalye...*" He went away fully convinced that the Holy Mother was the wielder of people's destiny. Shivaram's elder sister's name was Lakṣmī. A widow from her childhood and an advanced adept in the Vaishnava mode of *sādhana*, spiritual practice, she always looked on the Master and the Holy Mother as non-different from each other.

Orthodox Hindu widows are prohibited by custom from wearing ornaments, red-bordered saris, and so on. But the Holy Mother wore them in obedience to the Master whom she saw several times in visions after his passing away. This was regarded by some of the people of the village as a breach of law, and many gave in to the temptation of malicious thoughts and idle gossip. Holy Mother was then staying in the village after the Master's passing away and felt wounded when some of those remarks reached her ears. But Prasannamayi, the much respected daughter of Dharmadas Laha of Kamarpukur, the friend and benefactor of the Master's father, came to her rescue. Prasannamayi silenced the scandal-mongers by declaring, "Gadai (the Master's childhood name) and Gadai's wife are divine beings." Dhani, the poor blacksmith woman who was Gadai's nursemaid, and her sister Shankari also held the same view. Gadai's classmate Ganesh Ghoshal once came to see the Holy Mother. When she proceeded to bow down before him, he protested vehemently that it would be inauspicious for a son to be saluted by his mother. Saying so, he himself fell on his knees and saluted her. It is obvious that almost everyone in Kamarpukur recognized the divine Motherhood of Sri Sarada Devi in some form or other.

(To be concluded)

Sri Ramakrishna Touched Them

—Navachaitanya Mitra

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Continuing his series of articles, the resourceful author tells us more about yet another of the lesser known personalities who came into close contact with Sri Ramakrishna and whose names are mentioned in Sri Rāmākṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta. Swami Prabhananda is Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math.

It is not known exactly when Navachaitanya Mitra of Konnagar came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. It might have been in the last part of 1878 or the early part of 1879, and it was at Dakshineswar. Rather tall in height and fairly strongly built with sharp features, Navachaitanya had worked for the British Government almost half his sixty years when he met Sri Ramakrishna. Till then Navachaitanya knew little about the Master. Crossing the Ganga one day by country boat, he came to Dakshineswar to see the Saint. There he found a middle-aged calm figure, an intelligent face beaming with joy, a man confident in his realizations and with unbounded faith in God. That was Sri Ramakrishna around 1878. Gazing intently at the Master, Navachaitanya could hardly assess the strange man sitting in front of him. Nevertheless, he realized he was in the presence of a flood of divine love, the profundity of which he could barely surmise, but he was captivated. Also, he felt a tug at his heart strings. Mystical yet rational was the Saint's demeanour; charged with loving concern for others were his words and actions; rather inexplicable but compelling was the atmosphere that surrounded Sri Ramakrishna. Navachaitanya's soul was stirred.

Navachaitanya Mitra, later endearingly called Nabaichaitanya, or simply Nabai by

Sri Ramakrishna, belonged to Konnagar's Mitra family renowned for its piety, charity and progressive outlook. His father, Pitambar, owned some landed property and was engaged in a clerical job under the British Government. After several assignments in different towns of the then United Provinces, he was transferred to Calcutta. Born some place in the U.P., Navachaitanya had his school education in some of the towns where his father served. His childhood was happy and secure in the middle class household where he grew up sharing the values of his God-fearing parents. Following the footsteps of his father he joined in the Government service and worked at Rawalpindi, Lahore and Lucknow. Finally Navachaitanya secured a suitable government job at Calcutta and settled there. By his humility, soft temperament and concern for others Navachaitanya endeared himself to all. But strong-willed and sincere in his faith and practices, he always appeared as somewhat uncompromising in his attitude to religion.

He married Satyabhama, a devout lady, known for her simplicity and generous heart. They had two sons, Atulkrishna and Pratulkrishna and four daughters, Suhasini, Subhasini, Pramodini and Amodini.¹ Self contented though he was, Navachaitanya

1. Most of the information about the family has been furnished by Amarendranath Mitra, a great grandson of Navachaitanya Mitra.

experienced several swings of domestic happiness—lost some and recovered some—typical of a middle class Bengali family. He survived Satyabhama by about two decades. Against this, particularly after settling at Konnagar, Navachaitanya distinguished himself over the years by his musical talent and his devotion to spiritual practices.

At a tender age Navachaitanya became attracted towards the family deity, Gopinath Jiu, encouraged by his devout mother who showed deep passion for serving the Deity. As an adult he developed a strong desire to have direct communion with Him. His great grandfather, whose name was Ramdas Mitra, had earlier lived at Barisha in the outskirts of Calcutta and had once gone to Vrindavan on receiving some instruction in a dream. Taking the cue from the dream, Ramdas searched out the stone image of Radha-govinda he had dreamt of, and returning home he installed the image in a newly constructed temple in the southern part of Konnagar. (The temple is still extant and now is at the address 11 & 12 Amritalal Banerjee Street.) Before this Ramdas had purchased three acres of land with two ponds and constructed a three-storied building there. With this building many memories are associated with the Saint of Dakshineswar. After the installation Ramdas renamed the Deity Gopinath Jiu. This occurred in 1055 V.S. (during the 17th century A.D.). By planting trees and scented flowers Ramdas created a pleasant atmosphere around the place. Also he erected a *Dolmanch* and *Rāsmanch* (sites for festivals to Sri Krishna and Sri Chaitanya) at the north-west corner of the temple. To enable the offering of cooked food to the temple Deity Ramdas, according to scriptural injunctions, dedicated the temple in favour of the family priest. Later, to ensure uninterrupted worship of the Deity in future, Ramdas executed a Devottar Deed for the land and building he possessed at Konnagar

and also for the two plots of land, one of twenty-six *bighas* at Lakshmikantapur, and another of twenty-four *bighas* at Uttarpara Chanditala, which he endowed for the purpose.² Devoutly attached to Gopinath Jiu, Navachaitanya tried to earn the favour of the Lord through singing of devotional songs. In this he was a great adept.

Sprawling across more than 4.33 sq. kms. of land, modern Konnagar lying on the western side of the Ganga, is now dotted with chimneys of industries and residential quarters. In early days however it was a prosperous village, mentioned in Bipradas Piplai's *Manasa Mangal*, composed in A.D. 1495. As a seat of learning its celebrity reached its peak during the days of Anandachandra Bhattacharya Sarvabhauma in the later half of the 17th century. The Christian missionaries of Serampore opened over a hundred elementary schools throughout Bengal, including one at Konnagar during 1817-18. Sivchandra Dev founded the Konnagar High School as early as 1855. With the growth of European trade and industry Konnagar rose to prominence. Early in the 19th century there was a dock where small ships were built. A number of industrial undertakings based on jute, cotton, iron, etc. turned the quiet village into an industrial town. In the course of its urbanization it formed a ward of Serampore in 1865 and earned the status of a municipality in 1944.³ The twelve Siva temples, arranged in two

2. On 27 January 1864, Amritalal Mitra, Navachaitanya Mitra, Nandalal Mitra, and Navinchandra Mitra—all the four descendants of Ramdas Mitra, executed a deed of partnership before the Deputy Registrar of Deeds, Serampore, T. W. Bray, with the stipulation that every one of them would be legally and morally bound to worship the Deity, Gopinath Jiu, so long he continues to enjoy the property of land and building dedicated to Gopinath Jiu.

3. Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, Hooghly, 1972.

groups on either side of a broad *ghat* leading to the Ganga, is famous. The Vaiṣṇava influence culminated in the setting up of a *Haribhaktipradāyini Sabha* in 1870. Among the luminaries of the 19th century which may be mentioned are Raja Digambar Mitra (1818-79) and Dinabandhu Nyayaratna (1819-95). But the most significant event was the visit of Paramahansa Ramakrishna (1836-86) to Konnagar.

Sri Ramakrishna was then living on the other side of the Ganga at the Dakshineswar temple. Well known for his demonstration of the highest religious experiences, his name was familiar to the people of Calcutta. There was none in history who had excelled him either in extensity of religious experience or in depth of feeling and sympathy for humanity. But he was himself more of a mystery than any of the many characters he had shaped. To unravel the puzzle of the greatness of the man behind a mask of apparent illiteracy and simplicity, many tried to fathom him but failed. But any guileless man who approached Sri Ramakrishna straight would find the door of his heart open and discover the wonderful source of divine joy that he truly was. Many considered him a re-incarnation of Sri Chaitanya. Knowledgeable people were wonderstruck by his religious ecstasies which he had achieved through a life of purity and concentration and, much more so, due to hearing words of highest wisdom from his lips. People thronged around him. At the very first sight of the Saint, Navachaitanya felt an inexplicable but irresistible attraction towards him. After several visits, it dawned upon him that the Lord of his heart, Gopinath Jiu, was appearing before him in the guise of the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. He considered his meeting with the Saint itself was indicative of his Lord's grace upon him. The Saint too was pleased to notice the new arrival's devotional nature.

A number of Navachaitanya's relations soon came within the charming circle of Sri Ramakrishna's influence. His nephew, Manomohan Mitra, who was also a neighbour of his, came in contact with the Master in November 1879. Manomohan's third sister Visweswari was married to Rakhachandra Ghosh, later regarded as the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. His cousin Ramchandra Dutta, though a householder disciple, was very close to the Master. His youngest brother-in-law, Balaram Singha, joined the Ramakrishna Order of monks later. After Manomohan's introduction to the Master, Navachaitanya would sometimes go to Dakshineswar alone, and at other times in the company of Manomohan. Whenever he would find a favourable occasion he would offer devotional songs for the Master (called *Saṅkīrtan*) which Sri Ramakrishna liked much. The latter began addressing him as Nabaichaitanya or simply Nabai. The following few years, as long as Sri Ramakrishna was in his physical body, were the most joyous and fruitful in Navachaitanya's life.

Sri Ramakrishna could see into his soul. Pleased with Navachaitanya's sincerity and hankering for spiritual growth, Sri Ramakrishna began offering him necessary guidance. Navachaitanya accepted him as his Guru. Nava strongly desired that the Master would grace his house at Konnagar by paying a visit. In response to his repeated imploring Sri Ramakrishna visited the house several times, the first time being on 3rd December 1882.⁴ Sri Ramakrishna's presence there turned the day into a day of festivity. All the members of the Mitra family and their neighbours were present. In the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was taken out in a procession to the accompaniment of *Saṅkīrtan* led by Navachaitanya himself. Nava-

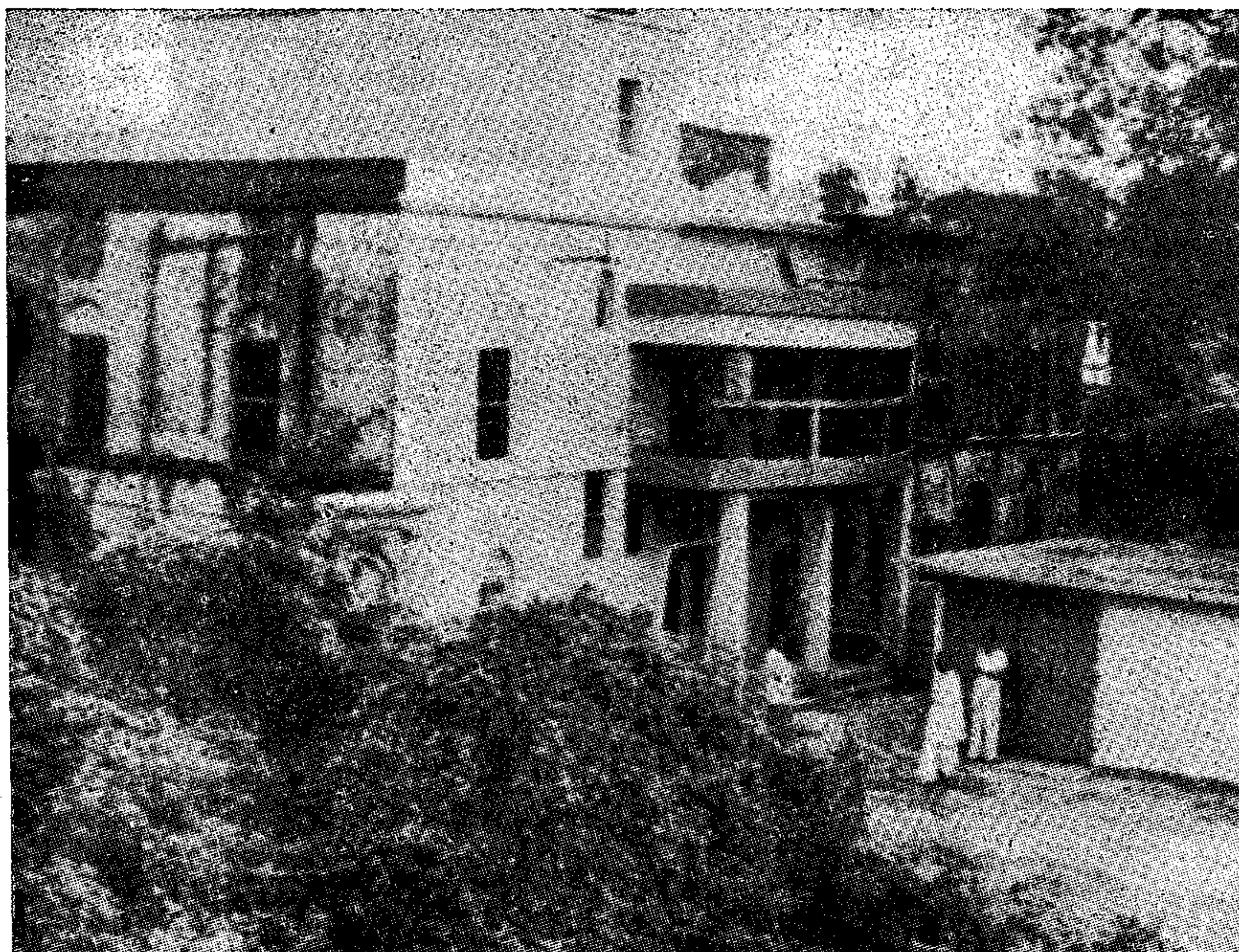
4. According to *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Punthi*, Sri Ramakrishna had begun visiting the village of Konnagar earlier than this.

chaitanya and his companions bade the Master farewell on the bank of the Ganga. The latter took a boat for Dakshineswar.

The reverential attitude of the people of Konnagar prompted Navachaitanya and his nephew to think of ways to propagate the message of the Master there. Urged on by Navachaitanya, Ramchandra and Manomohan began visiting Konnagar every Saturday and preaching in public meetings the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. In evenings they used to meet in the parlour of Manomohan to discuss the import of the Master's life and teachings. And on Sunday mornings they held a session of devotional songs in the parlour and took out processions, singing songs through the streets.

Several others, Kedar Chatterji, Nityagopal Basu and Harish Kundu used to participate in these programmes, which soon, however, were suspended by the Master's intervention.

Invited by the *Haribhakti Pradāyini Sabhā* of Konnagar, Sri Ramakrishna deputed Ramchandra and Manomohan there. Following Ramchandra's talk on "What is True Religion", *saṅkīrtan* was started and Ramchandra, Manomohan and Navachaitanya began dancing to the joyful music. Being flooded with emotion Manomohan lost himself in ecstasy. Some devotees once carried him on their shoulders, walking along the roads and shouting "Hari Bol" (Chant the name of Hari) all the time. Manomohan came back to his senses at about three



*House of Navachaitanya Mitra at Konnagar:
Sri Ramakrishna visited this House several times*

o'clock the following morning. While this drama was going on at Konnagar, Sri Ramakrishna was himself clapping his hands and uttering, "Let a spell be cast!"

Sunday, 11 March 1883 was a sprightly spring morning in Dakshineswar. The devotees came that day to celebrate the birthday of the Master. From early morning Sri Ramakrishna was in spiritual fervour, part of the time his mind soaring in the spiritual realm. At other times he chanted the name of God, every word showering nectar into the hearts of the devotees. Some devotees from Konnagar arrived singing *Kīrtan* to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. The elderly Navachaitanya was their leader. As the party reached the north-east verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room, the Master joined in the music, dancing with them intoxicated with divine joy. Now and then he plunged into *samādhi* and stood transfixed like a statue. While he was in *samādhi*, the devotees put thick garlands of fragrant jasmine flowers around his neck. Sri Ramakrishna passed alternately through three moods of divine consciousness: the inmost, the semiconscious and the conscious. It was indeed a sight for gods to see. Navachaitanya felt overwhelmed, all the while musing that Sri Chaitanya must have re-incarnated in the form of Sri Ramakrishna.

Again on 1 March 1885, the birthday of Sri Chaitanya, the devotees assembled at the Dakshineswar temple. Sitting on a mat spread on the floor Navachaitanya intently watched Sri Ramakrishna, who was seated on the small couch, absorbed in deep *samādhi*. The devotees observed a divine glow on his countenance. Partially returning to consciousness of the world, Sri Ramakrishna asked Mahimacharan to say something about love of God. Mahima chanted from the *Nārada Pāncharātra*:

What need is there of penance if God is worshipped with love?

What is the use of penance if God is not worshipped with love?....⁵

After a while Narendranath came. The sight of him gladdened Sri Ramakrishna. The latter inspired Narendra with the spirit of renunciation. With great emotion welling up in his heart and casting a tender look on Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna sang:

We are afraid to speak, and yet we are afraid to keep still...

Navachaitanya and the others watched the scene silently. They felt that some secret passed between the Master and Narendra. In the afternoon the devotees listened to Navachaitanya singing in melodious voice. About this time the Master went to the temples of Radhakanta and Kali to offer *abhir* (the red powder used in the Dolyātrā festival). On his return to the room he threw some of the powder on the bodies of Narendra and the other devotees. They all took the dust of his feet reverentially. After a while Navachaitanya and the others began again to sing. The Master joined them, and soon was dancing vigorously drunk with divine love. After the singing was over Sri Ramakrishna said, "This is the one thing needful, the chanting of God's name. All else is unreal. Love and devotion alone are real, and other things are of no consequence."⁶ Were these words meant specially for him? Navachaitanya thought. He felt blessed.

Gradually it dawned on him that simply uttering God's name cannot take one far. The idea must sink into one's mind. The lips and the mind must go together in singing the glory of God. A picture does not take on bare glass. Mind trapped in enjoyment and attachment cannot truly appreciate the

5. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 388.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 707-715.

glory of God. The mind needs to be cleansed by the spirit of renunciation and painted with the silver iodide of bhakti. Then only the mind will take a good impression of the name and form of God, the Beloved. Being convinced of this idea Navachaitanya decided to renounce hearth and home. He got one cottage built on the bank of the Ganga adjacent to Panchu Datta's *ghat* and began practising *japa* and meditation in solitude.

In the 'Gospel' we find next mention of Navachaitanya in the account of events on 7th September 1884. An arrangement had been made by Ramchandra Dutta and his music teacher, Shyamadas, was entertaining Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees with his *sañkīrtan*. Shyamadas was singing with his party:

*Dry as a desert seemed the happy lake to
them:*

*The Chatak died of thirst, gazing towards
the clouds....*

Though Shyamadas was singing of the gopis' sorrow at separation from Sri Krishna, a favourite theme of Sri Ramakrishna, the latter did not like the singing. Sri Ramakrishna became somewhat abstracted. The musician failed to create a spiritual atmosphere. Later on it was found out that the singer was not a man of pure character. At Sri Ramakrishna's request Navachaitanya began to sing a *kīrtan* in full throated voice. Imbued with a spirit of detachment from the world, Navachaitanya was then living alone, devoting his time to prayer and meditation. His singing therefore created such an intense spiritual atmosphere that Sri Ramakrishna left his seat and began to dance—with indescribable charm. Immediately the singer and the other devotees began to dance around him. In no time a tangible spiritual fervour filled the surroundings. It stirred the hearts of all present. Even the dry philosopher that

Mahimacharan was, began chanting the name of Hari and dancing in the *kīrtan*.

After the music stopped Sri Ramakrishna resumed his seat, and in keeping with the mood of the assembled devotees he began to sing songs of the Divine Mother with great feeling. His eyes were turned upward. Song followed song. Intoxicated with divine love he began to dance as he sang the last one. He reeled and the devotees stood up. Sri Ramakrishna caught hold of M's hand and said, "Don't be foolish! Dance." 'M' responded and a charming spell of song and dance followed. Sri Ramakrishna finally regained his normal mood and remarked: "We have had such joy today! How much joy Hari's name creates! Is it not so?" The episode shows that Navachaitanya could satisfy with his singing a great spiritual giant like Sri Ramakrishna.⁷

Through all these recorded episodes—and some unrecorded—Navachaitanya came closer and closer to Sri Ramakrishna. He used to frequent Dakshineswar whenever he could come. One morning Navachaitanya appeared at Sri Ramakrishna's room and after a few words of greeting Sri Ramakrishna suddenly said: "Well, you have such a nice *bilwa* fruit on your tree, but you have not brought one for me." A surprised Navachaitanya made a mild protest saying that it was not the season for *bilwa* fruit. Smiling, Sri Ramakrishna refuted him. "It seems you are unaware of many things in your household. There is *bilwa* in your tree, yet you say there is none." On his return home, Navachaitanya hurried into the adjoining garden. To his utter surprise a ripe *bilwa* of big size fell on the ground and burst open in front of him. Taking up the fruit he immediately returned to Dakshineswar and placed it in front of Sri Ramakrishna who was all smile. The baffled Navachaitanya

7. *Ibid.*, p 517.

thought to himself, "Well, Sir, this is but a play of yours!"

For a long time Navachaitanya was pining for some deep spiritual experience. He thought of opening his heart before the all-powerful Master. But though he tried, hesitancy always overtook him. His mind churned with worries. Suppose, the Master refuses! Suppose, he points out my deficiencies! With a whirlpool of thought spinning in his head he went to the Master at Dakshineswar, but could not speak out. Every time, he tore back to his residence at Konnagar. When he heard that the Master had contracted some serious illness he became deeply distressed. But one day word reached him that the Master had gone to Panihati to attend the annual Vaiṣṇava festival held there. Immediately he rushed to Panihati, a few miles upriver from Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganga. It was 11th June 1885. Ignoring that day the pain caused by a sore in his throat (later diagnosed as cancer), Sri Ramakrishna attended the festival with about twenty-five devotees, including Narendranath, Sarat, 'M', Manomohan and others. Sarat left us a description of what happened. Without a moment's hesitation the Master had joined with a large party of *Saṅkīrtan* singers. It was afternoon. Sometimes Sri Ramakrishna was seen dancing with the stride of a lion; sometimes with the fluid movements of a fish swimming in a sea of bliss. Sometimes he was standing motionless in *samādhi*. The enthusiasm of onlookers and participants alike increased a thousandfold, seeing him; his dancing on that occasion was something extraordinary. Slowly the party of *kīrtan* and devotees moved towards Pandit Raghava's cottage.⁸ An eye witness, Sarat described the Master's dance: "When his body, overflowing with the intense joy of divine feelings, swayed to

and fro in quick steps, one seriously wondered whether it was made of any solid, physical substance at all. One felt as if waves, mountain high, rose in a sea of bliss and were going forward carrying everything before them and would merge that very moment, liquid in liquid, and vanish out of sight!"⁹ As if bewitched by the charm of music, the congregation of devotees followed the Master and joined the *kīrtan* with great enthusiasm. Many were utterly amazed to have the glimpse of the rapturous upsurge of Sri Ramakrishna's ecstasy; waves of joy struck all the sensitive minds. The Master finally entered Pandit Raghava's shrine, paid his obeisance to the Deities and took rest for about half an hour. After the dispersal of the crowd he came back with the devotees to the boat for the return to Dakshineswar.

In the meantime, Navachaitanya arrived there searching for the Master, and finally coming to know that he was about to leave for Dakshineswar, came running in wild haste and threw himself on the ground at Sri Ramakrishna's feet, weeping bitterly. Dodging all his fears and forebodings he earnestly prayed, "Please bestow your grace on me!" Already in half-ecstasy, Sri Ramakrishna now touched him. And the touch brought a sudden change in Navachaitanya. His bitter weeping turned into unbounded delight; almost in a dazed condition he danced and sang the Master's glory and bowed down to him over and over again. This continued until he was calmed down by Sri Ramakrishna's touch on his back. Evidently he was blessed by some divine experience. The Master gave him some instruction. This experience and the Master's advice brought about a revolutionary change in Navachaitanya; he became more indrawn,

8. A companion of Sri Chaitanya (1486-1533 A.D.)

9. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, Trans. Swami Jagadananda, 4th edition (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1952) p. 824.

soaked in the love of God. Thereafter he devoted himself entirely to the practise of spiritual disciplines, doing *japa* and meditation day and night in the cottage he erected on the bank of the Ganga.

Repeated invitations of Navachaitanya and Manomohan induced Sri Ramakrishna, already stricken with terminal cancer, to visit Konnagar once again on 5th July 1885. Accompanied by Navagopal Ghosh, Mahimacharan Chakraborty, Ramchandra Dutta, Rakhal Ghosh and Tarapada. Sri Ramakrishna travelled by boat to reach 'Puratan Ghat' at Konnagar. Alighting, he rode by hackney carriage to *Haribhakti Pradāyini Sabha*, or simply called *Harisabha*, of Konnagar. Established about 120 years ago the *Harisabha* had its *Natmandira* constructed in 1869.¹⁰ It stands on the road now called Sambhu Chatterjee Street. In the shrine is regularly worshipped Shyamsundar Jeu. Reading from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was going on when the Master arrived. Curiously enough, Sri Ramakrishna sat with his face turned towards the Deity and his back towards the reader of the scripture.

As Sri Ramakrishna stepped out of the *Harisabha* he came across 'M' who was on his way to Navachaitanya's. Advising him to come on foot, Sri Ramakrishna, along with a few others went straight to Navachaitanya's house. There the devotee cordially received him and showed him the garden and the mango and bilwa trees. Paying his respects to Gopinath Jeu, the Master climbed to the second floor of the three-storied house and took a seat in the small six-by-eight foot room. Family members came one after another to show their respect by touching his feet. After a while Sri Ramakrishna went down to the parlour of Manomohan Mitra. It was a fairly big room, twenty by twelve feet, and was airy

and cool. Devotees from Calcutta and some local people assembled. One of them, an elderly witty man, pointed to Sri Ramakrishna and observed, "What a wonderful man! Full of joy all the time!" He came forward and said, "Well, man is really free from virtue and vice. Whatever evil a man does, he does so under the compulsion of God." Sri Ramakrishna corrected him saying, "Well, he who has really got the conviction that God is the Doer, is liberated." By way of illustration, Sri Ramakrishna then narrated the story of a monk who was beaten unconscious by a wicked landlord. On regaining consciousness he was asked by the inmates of the monastery, "Who is feeding you milk?" The monk replied, "He who beat me is now feeding me." Sri Ramakrishna exhorted that one must assimilate the meaning of the story. He wanted to drive home the point that thought of worldly objects were the real impediments on the way to God-realization.

Sri Ramakrishna further said, "Do you know what a worldly man's idea of God is like? It is like children's swearing by God when they quarrel. They have heard the word while listening to their elderly aunts quarrelling."

Continuing, he said, "*I* and *mine* are but manifestations of ignorance or *māyā*." Then drawing the pointed attention of the elderly gentleman, he said, "You better give up the 'sour-broth of hog-plum'. Happiness in worldly life is like the enjoyment of hog-plum which consists of stone and skin only. And if one eats it, one suffers from acidity." The Master further said in the course of his discussion, "He who says a hundred times 'I am a sinner'; 'I am a sinner', a sinner he becomes." Navagopal Gosh remarked, "One who fears a ghoul, truly he becomes possessed."

Sri Ramakrishna's eyes fell on Mahimacharan. He said, "Formerly you were quite

10. *The Souvenir*, Published by *Harisabha* on the occasion of its 125th anniversary.

egoistic. Hriday used to say that a realized soul does not find distinction between his *guru* and a sweeper....There are three words that prick my flesh: 'guru', 'master' and 'father'."

After taking some rest Sri Ramakrishna walked to the bank of the Ganga and took a boat at Panchu Datta's Ghat. Addressing 'M' he said, "The river is not choppy. Why not accompany us?" 'M' agreed and boarded the country boat. Mahimacharan, Navagopal, Navachaitanya, Tarapada and others also accompanied the Saint to Dakshineswar.

The boat moved along the eastern bank of the Ganga. At Ariadaha Ghat Sri Ramakrishna could see Baburam¹¹ wearing newly purchased clothing. He remarked, "Ah, he looks like a dandy!" Baburam also got into the boat.

After a while Sri Ramakrishna pointedly said, "Everyone wants to be a Master, but even to be a true disciple is quite difficult. Water cannot accumulate unless in the ground there is a low place....The three words 'guru', 'Master', 'father', prick me, as it were."

It seems Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the top of the low covering of the boat's cabin. Evening was approaching and the sky was cloudy. At one stage, Sri Ramakrishna found his head just under the boom attached to the ship's rudder. He raised his hand over his head to protect himself from the swinging beam. He was like a joyous boy. Pointing to a bird he said, "Look, the bird is chirping, there is rumbling in the clouds too!" Sitting on the cabin top he was dangling his legs.

He told the devotees about the episode of the Mussalmān girl. He said, "The Divine Mother reveals Herself to Her devotees in different forms. She came to me one day

11. Later known as Swami Premananda.

as a Mussalmān girl six or seven years old. She had a tilak on her forehead and was naked. She walked with me, joking and frisking like a child. As soon as Hriday came she ran away." After a while he remarked, "I wonder, how the girl put so much trust on me!"

On his return to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna went to the Kali temple and offered flowers at the feet of the Divine Mother. 'M' accompanied him. Coming back to his room he asked Tarapada to partake a little of the offering to the Mother. In fact he helped Tarapada to procure some.

While the Master was sitting on the small couch, Navachaitanya and a few others sat on the mat spread on the floor. He said, referring to the day of the festival recently held at Panihati, "That day I could touch the chest of Navaj Chaitanya!"

The Master could not touch a man who was not of pure heart. His statement indicates the lofty character of Navachaitanya.

As his eyes fell on the devotee, the Master said, "Strong liking as you have for the name of God, you will surely succeed. Hello! when will you hold the big festival?"

The Master asked about the week-long festival the Mitra family used to hold at the temple of Gopinath Jeu. The next festival was due to begin on 20th March 1886, the day of *Dolpūrṇimā*.

After a while the Master asked, "Where is that stuff—a little sour, a little sweet—that begins to fizz when you push down the cork?" It can be safely presumed that Navachaitanya got one bottle of lemonade from the nearby Alambazar market and the Master like a boy of five enjoyed the soft drink. Navachaitanya too returned home with his heart brimful of joy from the Master's company.¹²

12. The day's proceedings are from the unpublished diary of 'M'.

During the summer of 1885 the Master first complained of throat pain; after that the pain went on increasing. Sometimes there were signs of its becoming aggravated. One day he had a haemorrhage in the throat. The doctors became worried; the devotees felt depressed. Despite his suffering Sri Ramakrishna continued the work of his spiritual ministration. His concern for the welfare of the devotees went on unabated. One day, probably before the haemorrhage, Navachaitanya implored the Master to pay a visit to Teorapara of Konnagar where the Mitras lived. The Master condescended and advised him saying, "You keep consecrated food offered to Gopinath and gruel of rice ready." On the appointed day Sri Ramakrishna went to Konnagar, very probably in the company of Manomohan. Since Manomohan's parlour was spacious and quite airy the Master sat there. As the Master was cautioned against ecstasies by the doctors, there could be no singing of *kīrtan*. However, people in large numbers thronged to see him and touch his feet. The Master gave them spiritual instructions. He partook of the consecrated food offered to Gopinath Jiu, rice gruel and some of the dishes specially prepared for him. On this occasion Manomohan, Navachaitanya and others were amazed to see the large quantity of food the Master took. They later realized that he must have been in an ecstatic mood.¹³ It seems on this occasion the Master visited the house of Navachaitanya too. This was the last time the Master accepted the invitation of a devotee.

During Sri Ramakrishna's eight months' stay at the Cossipore garden house, Navachaitanya used to visit him and receive his spiritual instructions. At the physician's behest he could no longer entertain him with his *kirtans*, however. But the Master's

advice "that love of God, or devotion to God is real, all else is trash" had made a deep impression on his inner thoughts. Such inner thoughts shape one's life more than any other single force. Whether one likes it or not, one travels through life with one's inner thoughts as navigator. Such noble thoughts instilled by the Master were piloting Navachaitanya's life boat. In January 1886 he went on a pilgrimage to Gangasagar Mela and on returning he presented himself before the Master.

A spirit of renunciation gradually suffused Navachaitanya's life. Remembering the Master's advice that to meditate on God one should withdraw within oneself or retire to a secluded corner or to a forest, Navachaitanya had already handed over his family responsibilities to his two sons and plunged himself into spiritual practices. As mentioned before, he was living in a cottage erected at Panchu Dutta's ghat on the Ganga. He was wearing ochre cloth. In the beginning he used to accept food cooked and sent by his family, but afterward began to cook for himself. He spent his days singing the glories of the Lord, telling his beads, remembering the Divine *Lilā*, and so on. Once he was taken seriously ill and a physician diagnosed pneumonia. The two daughters-in-law persuaded Navachaitanya to return home. He received the doctor's treatment and as soon as he came round again went back to the cottage. Strong willed as he was he arduously pursued his religious disciplines without paying attention to bodily requirements or to the infirmities of old age.

After the Master's passing away, his monastic disciples had taken shelter in a dilapidated house at Baranagore. Filled with an ascetic spirit they devoted day and night to the practice of spiritual disciplines. Navachaitanya considered them as his very own, and would often visit them. Likewise some monks, particularly Narendranath (later

13. "Bhakta Manomohan" (Bengali), *Udbodhan*, 1351, p. 155.

Swami Vivekananda) used to cross the Ganga to meet him in his cottage at Konnagar.¹⁴ The Alambazar Math diary records that between June and November 1897 Navachaitanya came to see his monastic brothers at least four times and the monks in their turn visited Konnagar twice. On 25 November 1897 Navachaitanya in the company of Swami Advaitananda of Alambazar Math, left on a pilgrimage in the south. They passed through Raipur en route for Rameswaram. When the Ramakrishna Math was shifted to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house at Belur and finally to its present site Navachaitanya continued to visit the monastic disciples of the Master. Perhaps his last visit to Belur Math was on 8 February 1901 when he spent some time with Swami Vivekananda.¹⁵

About the householder devotees of the Master, like Navachaitanya, 'M' once told: "None of the Master's devotees who are living with their families are worldly people—this is what the Master himself said.¹⁶ They were, in fact, householder-ascetics, *grihastha-sannyāsis*, as described in the *Devī-Bhāgavata*. Such ascetics primarily renounce mentally and keep their mind fixed on God.

14. Mahendranath Dutta, *Śrīmat Vivekānanda Swāmijīr Jivaner Ghatanāvāli* (Bengali) Vol. I. 2nd. Edn. p. 202.

15. Diary of Swami Brahmananda.

16. Swami Nityatmananda, *Śrī Ma Darsan* (Bengali), Vol 9, pp. 170-71.

In Sri Ramakrishna's eyes, "This world is like the 'whirlpool of Viśalakṣī'. Once a boat gets into it, there is no hope of its rescue. Again the world is like a thorny bush; you have hardly freed yourself from one set of thorns before you find yourself entangled in another. Once you enter the labyrinth you find it very difficult to get out. Living in the world, a man becomes seared, as it were."¹⁷ To help such worldly men get out of the mess, Sri Ramakrishna placed before them a few working models. Navachaitanya was no doubt one of them.

As he made progress in his total surrender to the Lord, people could see him beaming with a sense of fulfilment. Swami Saradananda in his *magnum opus*, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, remarked about Navachaitanya: "Many loved and respected him on seeing his devotion and blissful figure. He was thus able by the grace of the Master to awaken the love of God in the hearts of many people during the last part of his life."¹⁸ After a long and meannigful life Navachaitanya Mitra breathed his last in 1904 at his family residence where he was finally brought. Till the last moment, his life shone like a lamp illuminating the glory of Sri Ramakrishna and thus inspiring the worldly people in search of peace and harmony.

17. *The Gospel*, page 96.

18. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, p. 827.

As a jewel covered with ashes becomes dirty, so also, scholars, heroes, humble and grateful persons lose their respective nature and become corrupted when they amass wealth.

—Sri Ramachandra

Process of Christianization of the Tribals of Chotanagpur

AMIYA BHAUMIK

Sri Amiya Bhaumik is a research scholar in Anthropology at Lucknow University. He discusses the religious conversions of tribals in Bihar during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Before the advent of Christian missionaries, tribals of Bihar were under the influence of dominant elite culture. The elite ideology reflected mostly the moneyed interests of the upper classes during the 18th century colonial period. They were the capitalists, the landlords, money-lenders and political functionaries. In Bihar the feudal lords were the most powerful. They were a culturally heterogenous group and their operations were limited to their own hegemonic cultural areas. Three elite cultures, namely *Bhojpuri*, *Mithila* and *Maghai* were most prominent. The Rajput-Bhumihar combine in Bhojpur and Maghai, and the Brahmins in Mithila represented the hegemonic cultural groups. The parts of Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas had their distinct tribal-culture roots and were dominated by the upper castes, Rajputs and Bhumihars in particular.

The tribals had a distinct language, religion, culture and social organization. Their exploitation by the upper castes led to land-alienation, pauperization and proletarian bondage to the land. The dismal situation provided fertile ground for the missionaries and ultimately paved the way for mass conversion in Chotanagpur.¹

1. Chotanagpur was a large division in the East composing parts of Bengal and the modern Bihar. It included Medinipur, parts of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Santhal Parganas, Gaya, Meerjapur, etc.

The advent of Christianity in Chotanagpur brought a vast change in socio-economic, socio-political and socio-religious institutions of the tribals. The establishment of churches, both of catholic and protestant denominations, progressed at a great rate, and in a matter of a few decades the whole of Chotanagpur came under their influence. The aim of this paper is to focus on the history of Christian missionary activity and their methods of conversion in the Chotanagpur area.

Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission

An evangelist, Father Gossner of Berlin sent four missionaries: E. Schatz, A. Brandt, F. Balsch and Th. Janke to India. But he could not advise them on any special area or field of work to enter upon in India. Therefore upon reaching Calcutta they were in a state of perplexity about it. After a few days they came across some tribal labourers who told them about Chotanagpur and its people. The missionaries felt that Chotanagpur might be an appropriate place for their evangelical work. At the same time, Captain Hannington, the then Commissioner of the Chotanagpur Division, requested the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society of Calcutta to send the four missionaries to Chotanagpur to preach the Gospel to its people.

On 2nd November 1844 the four missionaries arrived Ranchi. It was rather a difficult

task for them to make any immediate conversions to the new religion because of the rigid social structure of the tribals. They were a close-knit subculture. (Well has Swami Vivekananda said that if you ask any common man of the West about his religion, you may expect the reply that one has to go to church on Sundays for service, but an Indian villager, even though uneducated will often be able to tell you in some detail about his religion and some profound ideas that lie behind it.) These four ambitious missionaries initially had to work very slowly. After four years of work they wrote to Father Gossner about the difficulties they faced. In reply the Father asked them to be patient and persevering. He also mentioned that if the people did not receive the Word for their salvation, "then to preach to them their condemnation".²

In 1850 for the first time, four tribal *Oraons* came to the missionaries and wanted to see Lord Jesus, of whom they had heard so many times from them. The missionaries replied that to perceive Him one needed a strong desire and longing. The *Oraons* found it, therefore very difficult to realize Jesus. Ultimately, however, these four along with their families got themselves converted into Christianity after receiving some religious training. In 1851 two *Munda* families were also converted. In the same year the foundation for the big church in Ranchi was laid and in 1855 it was dedicated and thrown open for public use.

Achievements in the missionary evangelical work was far from satisfactory. In seven years they could convert only six families. Therefore the missionaries introduced welfare programmes to improve the socio-

economic condition of the Christian converts, along with evangelical work. It is said that in the event of court cases the Christians were helped and sometimes financially backed by the missionaries. Christianity also brought freedom to the tribals from the dread of witchcraft and sorcery, and also exemption from the customary need of sacrificing fowls and animals to the spirits. Such customs were prevailing at that time.

Chotanagpur tribals were glad of these changes and were attracted by the newcomers' utilitarian outlook, so by 1855 the number of Christian converts rose to nearly twelve hundred. Tribal Christians gradually became powerful in organized groups and grew into a quite different class of people from the non-christian tribals. In course of time they acquired the idea that to become a Christian was the best means of shaking off the oppression of the *zemindars* (landlords). This encouraged tribals to come increasingly into the fold of Christianity.

Soon the rapid spread of the new religion alarmed the *zemindars*, who naturally feared that it would check the free exercise of despotic power which they had so long enjoyed. They therefore tried their best to drive away the missionaries from the Chotanagpur area: Christianity not only brought about tension between the *zemindars* and the converts, but also divided the tribals among themselves. Neo-christians came to be regarded as social outcasts by their non-christian brethren. On the whole these tensions had a favourable effect on the Christian community as they developed a greater sense of unity and solidarity among themselves. However, at the end, the *zemindars* and non-christians prevailed over the missionaries, and in 1857 the missionaries were advised by the Government officials to leave Ranchi. Later, in their absence, church property was destroyed and looted and the Christian converts were badly persecuted.

2. Lakra, J., "The Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1845", *The Lutheran Enterprise in India*, C. H. Swavely, Editor; Publ. The Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1951, p. 51.

During that period also a bomb was thrown over the Lutheran church in Ranchi. However, the missionaries returned to Ranchi after the situation improved. The Commissioner, Mr. Dalton of Chotanagpur, became their special friend and the missionaries and missions began to flourish.³

In 1855 Father Gossner, before his death, committed the Mission to the German people who began to work under directions from the 'Home Board' at Berlin. A constitution was drawn up in 1868 but somehow it dissatisfied a section of the missionaries. Some of them, including Father Paster, Father Balsch, one of the four pioneers, and also the leader of the group, joined the *Society for the Promotion of Gossner Mission at Ranchi* (S.P.G.). New Mission branches were opened along with the opening of schools, dispensaries and other social welfare centres. The Theological College of the Lutheran Mission was established in 1874.

Gossner Mission was directly affected during the first world war in 1914 when all Germans were repatriated. The Government of the British then came to treat the missionary property as that of the enemy, but somehow the matter was reconciled. A proposal to join the S.P.G. Mission was offered by the National Missionary Council of India, but the Lutheran Christians rejected the proposal. They recommended that the Gossner Lutheran Church of Chotanagpur and Assam should be treated as an independent indigenous Church and there should be an advisory board to look after the institutional work of the Church. In July 1919 the Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chotanagpur and Assam was declared autonomous and a new constitution was formed.

After its autonomy, the Church had to face great economic distress. It underwent

great trials and tribulations due to inner frictions and disputes, but these proved to be the 'birth-pang' of the new era. In 1950, again the constitution was revised according to which a synodical system in the Church was introduced. This revision provided for several congregations and some power was delegated to the synods. The church council became a representative body made up of members from each synod. But the conflict between the tribals and Christian group persisted, and consequently an ecumenical committee was set up in 1960 to enquire into difficulties, settle internal disputes, and devise some other lasting remedies. The constitution was completely overhauled according to which the whole Church was divided into four Zones and the head of each Zone was to become alternatively the *Pramukh*, equivalent to the President of the Church, for the term of three years. It was considered to be an event of great significance in the history of the Church, designed to eliminate all the internal differences and conflicts. The present figure of the Lutheran converts in Chotanagpur is nearly 80,500.

Roman Catholic Mission

The history of the Roman Catholic Mission in Chotanagpur is closely associated with the name of Father Constant Lievens who was regarded as its greatest missionary in India. It was only with the coming of Father Lievens that conversion on a large scale began. But the missionary movement had started much earlier, when a priest from Calcutta had come to Doranda to minister to the Christians of Madras Regiment stationed there. In 1869 the Archbishop of Calcutta asked Father Stockman to open a branch at Chaibasa (near Jamshedpur) in Chotanagpur. He was warmly welcomed there by a residential Magistrate. The Magistrate in his hearty letter of welcome to the Father said that he felt sure that the race

3. *Ibid.*, p, 55.

he loved so well would be converted without any difficulty. Contrary to his hope, however, the Father could not make much headway in the work of conversions. During the first five years he was able to convert only six families.

In 1885 Father Lievens came to Jamgain near Torpa in Ranchi. He soon learnt the local language and sincerely started observing the social and cultural customs of the people. He compiled a catechism in Hindi and composed hymns for his parishioners which were set to foreign tunes. Such was the rapid progress of the Father that within just six months he was given independent charge of a vast mission.

Police officials were very much helpful in his endeavour. They used to provide information regarding tribal customs, their problems, and the injustices the tribals suffered at the hands of vigilantes and *zemindars*. Accordingly, the Father took up their cases and plunged himself into the defence of tribal interests, especially in agrarian and tenant law cases. Bowen wrote: "The Father became one of the greatest Justices in India, and even English judges would refer intricate questions to him and defer to his decisions."⁴ Soon the Father declared to the tribals that he had come not only for the eternal welfare of people's souls, but also to help them in their temporal benefits. Tribals used to come to him with their problems, in which the Father took interest, brought a few cases to the court of Ranchi, and won them. The downtrodden peasants began to realize that they had at last found a defender who was more than an equal of the unscrupulous landlords. The number of Christians then increased day-by-day. The missionaries asked the tribals to render only

customary service to the *zemindars* and to resist exorbitant demands, if made. All these gave rise to big disputes and conflicts between the missionaries, the *zemindars* and non-converted tribals, called 'pagans'. However, the Father never annoyed the British Government. All along he was on very good terms with the officials.

Among converts, Lutheran Christians were the largest in number. Owing to this, Father Lievens had to face opposition and embarrassment from the Lutheran pastors. He was called 'the missionary of the devil'. Then he was reluctant to provide any help to the 'pagans'. Rather he would tell them clearly that he would help only the Christians. Considering the material benefits which Christian converts were enjoying many a non-christian felt attracted to Christianity. To the Father they promised that they would stop any worship or sacrifice to spirits, abstain from work on Sunday, and act according to his advice.

Methods employed in conversions have evoked some controversy, providing a point of attack on the Christian missionaries in general. Missionaries have been generally accused of converting the illiterate aborigines through fraud or temptation of monetary and other gains.

Legal Support and Material Inducements

Giving relief and legal advice to the aborigines being exploited by the landlords, winning their cases in court, exercising all possible influence for the protection of the Christians, and introducing numerous welfare programmes in education and in economic and medical fields were the most common methods of conversion. In fact the large number of tribals accepted Christianity because of socio-economic benefits, and not for the spiritual life. In conversion, Father Lievens was more successful than the earlier

4. Bowen, F. J., *Father Constant Lievens, S. J.* (St. Louis: M.O.B. Herder Book Co., 1936) p. 65.

four Lutheran missionaries and the Roman Catholic missionary Father Stockman. He was the first who introduced social welfare programmes. It appears all their efforts emerged from a policy motivated to expand Christianity.

One notorious method of bringing in converts was coercion. It was mainly adopted by the Roman Catholic sect. Grimley and Renny's official documents (1889-1890, pp. 136-46) provide this information. Several landlords and police complained to the higher executive authorities against the aboriginal Christians who would convert others by forcibly cutting the top knots of their hair and threatening them with damage to crops. Sometimes authorities used to take action against them. Once a *chaprasi* (local servant) of Father Lievens was also involved in this kind of act and was duly punished by the authorities. Sometimes the Christians would also take weapons with them and the records show that they had clashes even with the police. These disturbances had the tacit approval of missionaries. Renny had condemned the action of the Jesuit priests in very strong language charging them with encouraging the discontent and laying at their doors the responsibility for disturbances.

Bluff and Deception

In some cases, bluff and deception was employed to win converts. Renny, in his official documents, pointed out that Father Lievens used to move from village to village as an official of the *Mahārānī* (Queen Empress). During his visits he used to announce that he was ordered by the *Mahārānī* to inform the people that if they became Christians they would not be subjected to excessive exaction. A number of innocent people were convinced by such promises and adopted Christianity. But soon people rea-

lized that they had been deceived by Father Lievens.

Social and Charitable Work

The opening of schools, dispensaries and hospitals, orphanages, maternity centres, vocational institutions, cooperative societies and other social agencies were the method usually adopted in Christian conversion. Among these, missionaries laid the greatest importance on education. They knew well that primarily through education they could draw more and more people into their fold, and they actually did so.

Hallet, in his documents (1917, p. 230-40), noted that apart from a high school in Ranchi named St. John's High School, the Catholic Mission had not less than five hundred boys' schools in different parts of Chotanagpur in the early decades of the present century. To obtain better teachers for their numerous schools the Catholic Mission opened a Training School exclusively reserved for aboriginals. In 1890 the Catholic Girls' School, later named Ursuline Convent, was opened in Ranchi. Now a Lace School is attached with this Convent in which two hundred women are working. Later, another high school for boys, named Alousis High School, was opened, and St. Xavier's College and St. Xavier's Institute of Social Work in Ranchi were started in 1945 and 1955 respectively.

To impart training in carpentry and masonry, an industrial school was opened in 1894. A similar school was started to give training in weaving and dying, carpentry, iron-work and silk-worm rearing. In 1909 Father Hoffman established the Chotanagpur Catholic Cooperative Credit Society.

Lutherans were the first to open a primary school, which was named the Gossner High

(Continued on page 234)

Ethical and Moral Values in Education

PROF. K. RAMA RAO

Still adequate attention is not being given to instill our younger generation with the sound moral and spiritual values. Professor Rama Rao indicates that this is cause for concern. He offers encouragement and hope to educators and presents discussion of not only current theory but content and methodology too, in what is termed "Value Education". Prof. Rama Rao is the author of much appreciated "Moral Education—a Practical Approach", and is Principal of the B. Ed. College at Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education in Mysore.

What is a value and what is its relationship to education? If education is intended for the realization of values, how should it be shaped? These form the material for this essay.

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

Things worthy of possession are of value. Materials such as property, money, food, shelter, air and water are of value to all. Human qualities such as honesty, truth-speaking, love, peace and kindness are also of value to all. When something acts as a means to an end it is said to be of 'instrumental value', e.g. food, money, and such other things. When a value is its own end it is called of 'intrinsic value', e.g. good-will, *dharma*, unselfish acts. And some values can function both as intrinsic and instrumental. In general, material values are mostly instrumental, and human and ethical values, intrinsic. Education should emphasize the development of the intrinsic values.

Ethical and Moral Values in India

Ethics is the science of morality. It lays down the theory or principles for moral behaviour. Ethics and morality are analogous to science and applied science. Ethics owes its origin to (secular) philosophy and/or religion. Ethics grew in India following the

tenets and teachings of the *Vedas* and *Smṛtis*. The latter are themselves simplified forms of the *Vedas* and meant for everyday life. We have many *Smṛtis*, such as those of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Prasastapāda, and many others. Each one of these lays down certain obligatory duties for all people. (*Manusmṛti* lays down ten obligatory duties, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* lays down nine, and *Prasastapādasmṛti* mentions twelve.) Changes in social life demand changes in certain aspects of human conduct and values. So new *Smṛtis* are created. Nowadays we can conceive of a *Gāndhi-smṛti* also, which lays down eleven duties for all people. They are: *Satya* (truthfulness), *Ahimsā* (non-injury to others), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (continence), *Śarīśrama* (physical labour), *Aswāda* (discrimination about quantity and quality of food), *Sarvatra-bhaya varjanam*, respect for all religion, *Swadeśi* (love of indigenous goods), and removal of untouchability.

In ancient India, ethical values were formulated not merely for leading a worthy life here, but also for entering a future or transcendental life. Four important personal values, namely: *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* are prescribed in the *Vedas*. Through experience and enjoyment of these legitimate pleasures of life one is expected to go beyond them to experience *Mokṣa* or spiritual

illumination. The material values *Artha* and *Kāma* are to be governed by a righteous life based on *Dharma*. These should serve as instrumental values for achieving *Mokṣa*—liberation from the cycle of rebirths. However, the Prabhākara school of *Mīmāṃsā* Philosophy (which declares no necessity for a faith in the existence of God) says *Dharma* is its own end, and is therefore an intrinsic value also. It may be noted that Philosophy speculates on the goals of life, nature of the universe, nature of man, etc., and conflicts among ethical systems may arise when values are based on different philosophies.

In India religion prescribes the way of life. Both religion and philosophy are based on the same source, viz, the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*, and so there can be no conflict in *Dharma* or ethical values. But what is *Dharma*? *Dharma* lays down duties for individuals, sectors of society, and even for rulers. As such, all duties are meant for the good of individuals and also of the universe. *Dharma* has to support the universe. That is one of its definitions. What is *Dharma* in a given context is therefore to be decided by reason, if it is not already laid down in the *Śrūti* (*Vedas*) or *Smṛti*, or accepted and widely approved by society. *Dharma* is therefore dynamic ethical value.

Any consideration of value education must not lose sight of the fact that the national character of India is '*Dharma*', the etymological meaning of which is 'to hold together'—*Dhāraṇāt dharmah ityāhuḥ*. Religion in practice (*Yoga*) also means 'to unite' and both religion and *Dharma* meant the same thing to our ancestors. We will return to this point when we think of the goals in '*Education in Values*' following.

Ethical Values in the West

In the West the origin of philosophy was purely secular, and the ancient Greeks

prescribed three universal and eternal values for human life. These are: the *good*, the *right*, and the *ought*. They are concerned with human actions. That action which aims at the good of all is a right action. A *good* person is one who is benevolent and *good* in an action lies not in itself, nor even in its results, but in volition. (As Kant says, "There is nothing really good in this world or outside of it except the 'good-will'.") A *right* action, to be right, should be objectively right. Its objectivity can be increased by the doer, the agent, by putting himself in the place of all those concerned with the action, and judging its *pros* and *cons* from their point of view. Such deliberation may not result in a hundred percent objectivity, but it can reduce the subjectivity of the judgement. Human actions are sometimes governed by 'a must' if done in obedience to an external authority. But if actions are carried out in obedience to the agent's own free will they are governed by '*ought*'. '*Ought*' actions have a superior moral value since they are inspired from within.

That the single word *Dharma* covers the meaning of all the three foregoing ethical principles of the West is easily understood because *Dharma*:

- (a) Questions the right or wrong of an action—(*The right*)
- (b) Prescribes to do deeds of *Dharma*—(*the good*)
- (c) Demands deliberation before acting—(*the ought*)

Having established the identity between *Dharma* and the three Western principles of ethics, it may be added that all these are to a great extent eternal and universal in their application. Commenting on the nature of ethical laws MacKenzie says, "The particular rules may vary with different conditions of life ; but the broad principles always remain the same and are applicable not only to all kinds of men but to all rational

beings." It should be the endeavour of all concerned to formulate such ethical and moral values in education.

Three Impersonal (Spiritual) Values

Besides the four personal values, viz. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*, already mentioned, India has offered in addition three impersonal values also to all human beings. These are Truth (*Satyam*) Love (*Sivam*), and Beauty (*Sundaram*). These are also believed to be the attributes of the 'Supreme Power', the Lord of the Universe, or of the individual 'Pure-Self'. One is expected to seek these values through one's every thought, word and deed. *Dharma* as an instrumental value must strive for these values. What is *Dharma* for a worldly life may change from time to time. But *Dharma* for a spiritual or transcendental life remains always the same—it is universal and eternal. Acquiring the impersonal spiritual values is also *Dharma* in its intrinsic sense.

Reflective Morality vs. Tribal Morality

Why should *Dharma* modify itself to suit life? This is because society is not static; it changes its way of functioning, its material goals and attitudes to life. Society changes as a result of education, political vicissitudes, advances in science and technology and other factors. In India we have witnessed changed attitudes of people of late towards child marriage, satī, widow remarriage, untouchability, exploitation of child labour, and other issues. If old moral laws are not modified or replaced by new adaptations in any society, either they become backward, degenerate, or even die out. Hence the ethical values should always remain dynamic. How is this dynamism achieved?

Moral laws are transmitted in any society from generation to generation through customs. Observation of moral values help to keep the unity of the group or the tribe.

Violations of these are opposed by the group because of the fear that the harmony of the whole will be disturbed. So custom-based moral laws are zealously guarded. However, thinking and rational individuals in every society from time to time realize the shortcomings of certain outmoded moral laws and boldly suggest by their words or their actions either to reject those outmoded values or modify them. Society in the beginning refuses to listen to well-meaning reformists, but ultimately sees the light and finds justification for modifying or rejecting certain of them and changes its life pattern. Says Norman J. Bull: "Moral progress means the morality followed by individuals who went against the accepted morality of their day and suffered for doing so." This is how reflective morality is born. Individuals capable of reflective morality are very few. But examples are there in every country. To mention a few: Bhagavan Buddha, Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Maharshi Karve and Sri Narayanaguru.

Emergence of some NEW VALUES all over the world

As a result of scientific and technological advancements and due to the emergence of new philosophies, many new values have emerged in the present century. Some of these concern world peace, international brotherhood, human rights and rights of women and children, maintenance of pure food, water, air and medicine, protection of the environment—air, rivers, lakes and seas, and ecological balance. Besides there are in different parts of the world new emphasis on the democratic spirit, on liberty, on humanism, non-violent solutions to world problems, and the power of *Satyāgraha*.

Any education in ethical values cannot ignore any of the above strongly felt values of people all over the world.

Religion vs. Ethical Values

Religion is derived from the Latin *religare*—‘to bind together’. It is only *Dharma* or ethical values that can bring unity, peace and happiness to all people. It is unfortunate that sometimes religion divides people and makes them fight. Religion has two aspects: (1) ethnic—which forms due to the particular customs, traditions and social laws that prevail where the particular religion arose, and (2) the spiritual—which is universal and eternal, and concerns the indwelling Spirit in all beings. Religion understood in the latter sense, as it should be, is only spirituality and cannot be the cause for any struggle between people professing their different religious faiths. Swami Vivekananda said: “Take away religion from society; what remains is a forest of brutes.” He also said, “Religion is like a milch cow; it sometimes gives kicks.” So neither ethnic nor spiritual religion can be ignored when we consider values and value education.

Education in ethical values can be considered of two types: (a) education in secular values—free from religious ideas of ethnic origin, and (b) education in secular ethical values supplemented by ideas from religion which have helped unite humankind into one family of man.

Dr. K. V. Puttappa, the well known poet and educator of Karnataka, advocates that the goal of all education should be towards preparing the *Viśva-mānava*, the ‘universal man’, and the attainment of global consciousness. He has suggested five *mantras* as the goals: (1) *Manujamata*—a universal human religion, (2) *Viśva-patha*—a universal path, (3) *Sarvodayā*—the good of all, (4) *Samanvaya*—harmony, and (5) *Pūrṇa-dṛsti*—integral vision. By these he envisages the annihilation of all ethnic and religious barriers between man and man, such as those of caste, pride of community, colour creed and so on. He also advises that every

one should try to become spiritual by studying the scriptures of as many religions as possible—instead of institutionalizing the spiritual ideas and teachings of the great religious Masters. Religions should be individualized, so that there will be as many paths as there are individuals, if need be. This was the great idea of religious freedom propounded by Swami Vivekananda.

Education in Spiritual Values Identical to All Religions

There is much evidence to establish that all religions speak the same truth. Among several such examples just one we offer here:

On the Nature of Self/God

(a) The Self (Ātman) is not *this*; nor is it the *other*.—*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*

(b) God Almighty revealed to me that I was neither *that* nor *this*.—*Abusaidibu Abikhayar*

(c) We cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not.—*St. Thomas Aquinas*

(d) The one sound ‘OM’ is Brahman.—*The Bhagavad Gītā*

(e) Hallowed be Thy (God’s) name.—*St. Matthew*

(f) The noblest speech is the invocation of Allah.—*Quran*

Hence teaching about spirituality, or the essence of all religions, supplements ethical values.

The Nature of the Child’s Moral Development

No moral education of the youth can be achieved effectively without some basic knowledge of the nature of the child’s moral development by those concerned—parents, teachers and others. That moral development is not innate and that it demands education and training is very clear from experience. The following couplet emphasises the idea:

*No moral man was made so in a day ;
Nor was any born moral.*

Unlike physical and intellectual development which slows down or ceases after attaining a certain age, moral development can continue through one's lifetime. During the course of moral development a child is found to pass through four important stages, schematized below by psychologists and educationists :

- (a) Anomy (0-4 yrs.)—an amoral stage
- (b) Heteronomy (4 to 9 yrs.)—a stage of external control by parents, teachers, and others through rewards/punishments.

External Controls

'I must' ... is replaced by ...
The sense of fear/shame ... is replaced by ...
To honour convention ... is replaced by ...
The voice of public opinion ... is replaced by

(c) Socionomy (9 to 13 yrs.)—a stage of external-internal control by society through praise or blame.

(d) Autonomy (13 to 17 yrs.)—a stage of internal control by the self—capable of making morally right decisions on one's own ability.

The above stages are not like water-tight compartments. Any stage may overlap with its subsequent stage. So they may perhaps better be called phases. In the end the child has a fully developed moral consciousness or conscience. The important change that took place in the child was replacement of external controls by corresponding internal ones. This is nicely illustrated by Norman J. Bull :

Internal Controls

'I ought'
sense of guilt or self-respect
to honour conviction
the inner voice or conscience

(To be Concluded)

PROCESS OF CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE TRIBALS

(Continued from page 229)

School in 1895 when it was upgraded to include class ten. Similarly, a girls' school, opened in 1915, was expanded to include class ten in 1941 and renamed the Beth Sada Girls' High School. In 1917 the Girls' Primary Teachers' Training School was attached to the old primary school and in 1987 the Beth Sada School was upgraded to B. Ed. The Gossner College in Ranchi was established in 1971.

Instilling a Sense of Inferiority Complex

This was another method through which tribals were Christianised. The missionaries used to impress upon them that their religion was inferior, and that it could not save them from going to hell. This 'sense of inferiority', and 'fear of condemnation' gradually led

the tribals to believe that their own religion and social conditions were really inferior. Naturally they felt an urge to abandon their old values and embrace Christian values.

To sum up, it appears that the Christian missionaries often went beyond the bounds of practising pure religion, or religion for its own sake. Though they started different welfare programmes for the tribals, it was often lacking sufficient altruistic motivation and attitude, except for converting poor people into Christianity.

The missionary motive in conversion of tribal people, not being based solely on spiritual motive, in the present days most of the tribals are seeking to withdraw themselves from the Christian fold to go back to their distinctive cultural heritage.

Lingasārira (The Subtle Body)

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The problem of soul is as old as humanity itself. In ancient philosophy, most of the outstanding philosophers and saints regarded the inadequate knowledge of the soul as the cause of the sufferings of mankind. In the religio-philosophical culture of the Hindus, in addition to soul, the discussion about body occupies a place of special importance. The Hindus do not ignore the synthetic and integral outlook on life, or man's place in the universe as a whole. In Philosophy the soul is known as the pivot around which everything moves; the body is described as the abode of enjoyment. Body is the locus of the senses which are the means (*Vyañjakas*) of the soul's getting various types of knowledge and experiences, pleasure, pain, etc. Hindu Philosophy mentions three types of bodies. These are the gross body (*Sthūla-śarīra*), the causal body (*Kāraṇa-śarīra*), and the subtle body (*Sūkṣma-śarīra*). Leaving aside subtle polemics of the differences and considering the combined function of these bodies with reference to the idea of rebirth, we may discuss the latter two conflated into one. We shall designate it 'the subtle body'. It is also called *Liṅgaśarīra*—"*Layam gacchati iti liṅgam*," since it will disappear in the long run, i.e. at liberation. The idea of *Liṅgaśarīra* represents a remarkably coherent picture of the evolution of the soul and it is the *Liṅgaśarīra* through which the Hindus analyse the passage of the soul from one world to another. The main purpose of our discussion will be to give an account of the general idea of this subtle body or *Liṅgaśarīra* which survives the death and

decomposition of the human physical body, as it is dealt with in Hinduism's scientific and religious-philosophical literature.

The Carakasamhitā View

The *Carakasamhitā* states that the gross body (*Sthūla-śarīra*), visible to our senses, is composed of gross physical components. It is said to be derived from the six components of parent bodies. It is born, grows and dies. The six elements are skin (*tvak*), muscles (*māmsa*), blood (*rakta*), nerves (*snāyu*), bone (*asthi*) and marrow (*majjā*). The first three of these we get from the mother and the rest comes from the father. Semen is constituted from the gross components of the five subtle elements—in equal proportion, subtle earth, subtle water, subtle fire, and ether i.e. *ākāśa*. The last, the *ākāśa*, is all-pervading subtle matter from which is derived during the course of evolution the gross *ākāśa* (or ether) and the other gross elements composing all the gross matter of the universe. The gross body exists for a time and finally perishes at death, but the *Liṅgaśarīra* with the *Antahkaraṇa*—the mind, intellect and ego (*manas, citta, buddhi* and *ahaṁkāra*) survives death and connects the present life with the future one. The Hindu sages held that the individual soul (*Jīvātmā*) inhering in this *Liṅgaśarīra* transmigrates from the gross body at death to another new gross body at the time of rebirth. This transmigration of the individual soul is sometimes not immediate, since there is an intermediate phase before rebirth when the soul enjoys or suffers the fruits of the

actions of the previous earthly life. So Hindus believe in the existence of previous lives, in an after life and in future rebirths. It is with the *Liṅgaśarīra* or subtle body that the individual soul retains association till it is liberated. In the meantime it sustains the individual soul in the invisible worlds. Swami Abhedananda in his *Life Beyond Death* (p. 61) thus describes the *Liṅgaśarīra* as the 'nucleus' of life. It contains all the *karmic* dispositions of past lives, along with sense and motor organs in their subtle forms. The impressions it contains of the present and past lives (*Samskāras*) are said to be the 'seed' containing all the potentialities of the future.

The Gītā's View

The *Gītā*, which forms a vital and philosophically important part of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, states that on the eve of death the individual soul contracts all its energies and centres these into the subtle body. Our ordinary sight is incapable of perceiving it. How the individual soul inhering in the *Liṅgaśarīra* enjoys the consequences of its deeds from one birth to another can only be perceived by the Yogis with their extraordinary cognitive insight.¹ The subtle body accompanies the soul in its wanderings through cosmic existence.² It is a prevalent custom among the Hindus that at the time of death the name of Lord Krishna and the teachings of the *Gītā* should be recited. They believe that listening to these the dying person experiences mental and spiritual uplift (*devabhāva*) which helps determining to a great extent his destiny in the next birth. It cannot be denied that will-power plays a significant role in our daily efforts. The teachings of the *Gītā* go a step further and declare that the desire that is very strong in

this life persists beyond death, and in accordance with this the *Liṅgaśarīra* of the individual is greatly affected, made as it is of the very material of mind and intellect. Thus, the importance of the dying person's thoughts. The saying is, "What we think we become."³ In the course of cosmic evolution, according to the *Gītā*, our past thoughts have determined our present birth and our present ones will determine the future.

The Vedantic View

In spite of some differences in terminology there is general agreement among the Hindu philosophers on the composition and function of the *Liṅgaśarīra*. We may summarize these under the head of the Vedānta as it is generally accepted as the most developed and analytical cosmology. According to Vedānta philosophy, the *Liṅgaśarīra* is composed of seventeen subtle components. These are the mind (*Manas*), the cognitional intellect (*Buddhi*), the five sense organs and the five motor organs. These are all its subtle invisible components and are activated by the five vital forces: *Prāṇa*, *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Udāna* and *Vyāna*. Sri Sankaracharya in *Ātmabodha* (verse 12) states that the subtle body, consisting of the five vital forces, the intellect, and the ten organs, is produced from the simple elements and is the means of [the soul's] experiencing the results of [its] actions.⁴ As neither the cognitional intellect nor the mind nor even the organs—either sensory or motor, nor the five vital forces are perceptible by the ordinary eyes, the body composed of these is described as supersensible.

The Sāṃkhya View

Īśvarakṛṣṇa, in his *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* also states that the subtle body is the combina-

1. *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 15.10.

2. *Ibid.*, 15.8.

3. *Ibid.*, 8.6.

4. As quoted in *Vedānta Paribhasa*, Tr. Swami Madhavananda, 1972. p. 164.

tion of *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṅkāra* (ego), the eleven sense and motor organs, the five *tanmātrās* (subtle elements). It is an admitted fact that neither the intellect nor the ego nor even the different senses can function without the support of the subtle body.⁵ The *Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*⁶ also states that all the dispositions of the present life reside in the intellect. But where does the intellect itself reside? Along with the senses, it cannot exist without a supporting body in the interval between death and next birth. According to the *Sāṅkhya* philosophers, the *Lingaśarīra* occupies the position of this support.⁷

Concluding Remarks

The *Sāṅkhya* view is not fundamentally different from that of the Caraka or the Vedānta. "All the cosmic elements of the *Sāṅkhya* can be found in the *Gītā* also and the evolution series is the same."⁸ It may

5. *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, 40.

6. See *Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*, Verses 29, 41, 44, in the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* ed. by Purnachandra Vedantachanchu-Sankhyabhusana, Sahityacharya (Publishers: West Bengal State Book Board, 1983) pp. 190-200.

7. *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā*, 41.

8. Dr. Nirmala Devi, "Concept of Nature in the Bhagavad Gita", *Prabuddha Bharata*: February, 1987.

also be said that all the above views, constituting a major part of Hindu cosmology, recognize the role of the *Lingaśarīra* in more or less similar ways, despite obvious slight differences. All the *karmic* dispositions (*Samskāras* or subtle impressions on the mind-stuff) inhering in the *Lingaśarīra* at death transcend the gross body of the present life and again connect themselves with the gross body in the future birth. Due to Ignorance (*Avidyā*) the *Jīva* (the *Ātman*) occupies different gross bodies in birth after birth and leaves these one by one till it attains liberation. Since it is a material body, *Lingaśarīra* is finite and changeable. It transcends our spatio-temporal order. It also reminds us that "the aim of philosophical wisdom in India is not merely the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity, but mainly an enlightened life led with far-sight, foresight and insight."⁹ As a matter of fact, the line of demarcation between philosophy and religion in India is so thin that very often one influences the other. The role of the subtle body gives a consistent picture of rebirth and the *Doctrine of Karma*.

9. S. C. Chatterjee & D.M. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1968) p. 12.

The caste system can be removed by one means only, and that is the love of God. Lovers of God do not belong to any caste. The mind, body, and soul of a man become purified through divine love. Through bhakti (love) an untouchable becomes pure and elevated.

—Sri Ramakrishna

REVIEWS & NOTICES

THE METHOD OF THE VEDANTA, by Sri Swami Satchidanandendra Sarasvati. Translated from the Sanskrit by A. J. Alston. Kegan Paul International, P.O. Box 256, WCIB 3SW London. 975 pages.

Swami Satchidanandendra Sarasvati, founder of *Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya*, Holenarsipur (Karnataka), was a seeker and scholar in the true Indian tradition, working quietly without seeking any recognition. His contemporaries remember how he wrote in three languages; Sanskrit, Kannada and English, and authored more than a hundred and eighty works of classical quality. The present work is a scholarly translation of his *Vedānta Prakriyā Pratyabhijñā*, published in the author's eighty-fourth year. Swamiji was concerned at the deviations from what he considered to be the authentic Advaita tradition. To establish the true tradition dating from pre-Shankara days, and to point out the major departures at the hands of various scholars—both before and after Shankara—the writer has researched innumerable works—published and unpublished—and produced what is rightly described as a critical history of the Advaita *paramaparā*.

The central argument is that the various attributes to the Self found in the *Upaniṣads* "are only imagined for purposes of instruction" and are later retracted, leaving the Self pure and absolute. We are told that things are ascribed to the Self in order to suit varying intelligences, for purposes of understanding. Examining the different texts of the *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, the author seeks to affirm that "the method of false attribution followed by retraction underlies" the Vedanta teaching.

After a detailed survey of the Vedantic content—the *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras*, the scrutiny starts with the *Kārikās* of Gaudapāda, takes up the system of Bhartṛprapancha, the contribution of Mandana (whose identity is pointed out to be separate from Sureshvara's), whose influence is strong to this day on Advaita exegeses; Sureshvara's exposition, the thought of *Pancapādikā*, the emphasis on 'Difference in Identity' by the Bhāskara school; the reply of the Bhāmati school to

Bhāskara; *Iṣṭasiddhi* of Vimuktātman, which focusses on the Power of Ignorance as the material cause of the world; Vivaraṇa commentary on *Pancapādikā*; the eclectic nature of the work of Ānandabodha; Harsha's refutation of the logician; the effort of Chitsukha to reconcile the differences among the several approaches to the truth of Advaita; Sarvajñātman, who "maintained that the whole phenomenal universe of variety is created by the Ignorance of one soul, because he believed that the profoundest state of Vedanta was that in which it taught that there was only one Ignorance and only one soul." (p. 941).

The discussion is thorough, meticulous in its analysis and sincere in accepting the *bona fides* of each expositor, even while contradicting the suppositions. This is a model work, authentic, chaste in expression and noble in aim. The translator has done ample justice to this intricate text in high-flowing Sanskrit. An outstanding service to the continuation of the pristine tradition of Indian learning.

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COMMENTARIES ON THE DHAMMAPADA: By The Mother. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1989, pp. 118, Rs 12/-.

The Buddha's path to salvation is epitomised in the pithy verses of the *Dhammapada*. The main idea that emerges is that self-control and mental discipline are essential for spiritual development. The four stages of mental development, according to the Mother, are to *observe*, to *watch over*, to *control*, and to *master*. She, therefore, considers meditation as an indispensable factor of spiritual progress. Spiritual serenity lies in 'withdrawal', 'concentration', and 'a liberation from all cares'.

Every commentary sparkles with the Mother's profound understanding of the complex philosophical truths of the *Dhammapada*. The interpretations are coherent and immensely appealing. Sometimes, the Mother's interpretation is laced with her own personal observations. On page 25 she says, 'When I read these ancient

texts, I really have the impression that from the inner point of view, from the point of view of true life, we have fallen back....'

The commentaries are marked by incisive practical judgements. Take for example, the text that it is by the extinction of all desire that one attains true bliss. The Mother remarks that it may take a lifetime to get rid of all desires. The Mother admits that is a negative way of instilling moral discipline since desires at all levels (the mental, emotional and physical) have to be removed. Even then, there are far more subtle, dangerous and overpowering desires that cloak themselves in the guise of such a saintly appearance that one dare not call them desires at all. Even then, when all these desires have been vanquished, only the negative aspect of the spiritual task has been done. The Buddha states that when one is free from all desires, one enters into a state of infinite bliss. But the Mother observes that 'This bliss may be a little dry, and anyway it does not seem to me the quickest way.' (page 88) The quickest way is to confront the problem boldly and courageously and surrender to the Supreme Reality. The ego disappears and one merges joyfully into the splendour of the Supreme.

The Mother's commentaries are marked by a deep sincerity and a firm conviction in the potential goodness that resides in the heart of every individual. The cogent and lucid expositions ably aid in the realisation of this spiritual goal. For the best way to escape 'from the ignorance and falsehood and pain' in which one lives is through the process of mental discipline.

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THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION AND OTHER WRITINGS—SRI AUROBINDO, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 652-002. pp: 530, Rs 75/-.

This sizable volume contains Sri Aurobindo's deeply meditated thoughts, mainly on (1) Supramental Manifestation upon Earth, and (2) The Problem of Rebirth. There are other shorter articles on a variety of subjects dealing with *Yoga*, *The Superman*, and *Evolution*. A smaller section of *Views*

and *Reviews* is also there. All these subjects are dear to those who hanker for the knowledge of Indian culture. Some of these articles were published earlier, in book form, some fifty years ago, and the others appeared in *Arya*, the Organ of the Ashram. But still they are new and fresh to a majority of elders of the present generation and thus the coming of this volume is a welcome event.

The publishers in their note mention that "the contents of the volume have been ordered to follow strictly the arrangement of the material as it was issued by Sri Aurobindo during his lifetime." The book thus unfolds itself most naturally before the readers.

The first section, *The Supernatural Manifestation upon Earth*, consists of seven essays on the human body as it is and as it should be perceived. The common man views the body as some gross material, of which he is the possessor. Sri Aurobindo here, analyses the body in all its subtle forms and conjures before us a perfected body with a perfected mind within. *The Evolution of Supermind* is also elaborately explained in this section.

The second section running over 400 pages consists of miscellaneous writings from *Arya* during the years 1914 to 1927. Here, the writing about "The Problem of Rebirth" comes first. The theories of Karma and Rebirth stand expounded in a most rational way. All possible questions stand answered. Apart from these main themes Sri Aurobindo's short articles are culled under the headings: "Ideal and Progress", "The Superman", and "Evolution". The "Views Reviews" and a few casual notes from *Arya*—one regarding Yoga—all add to an interesting and thought provoking reading. These are spontaneous writings of Sri Aurobindo recording his responses to books and articles which came across the table of the editor of *Arya*.

Sages and Seers are the salt of the Earth. Their thoughts blow over the land like a vernal breeze. The trees blossom and so do men who have seeds of good thoughts within them. Many articles of this volume are of lasting value. Readers may read them again and again and gain strength of the spirit.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

OF THE GOOD PEACEABLE MAN

First keep yourself in peace and then you will be able to bring others to peace. The peaceable man does more good than one who is very learned. The passionate man turns even good to evil, and readily believes evil. The good peaceable man turns all things to good.

He who is in perfect peace suspects no man. But he who is discontented and disturbed is agitated by various suspicions; he neither has rest himself, nor does he permit others to rest. Many times he says that which he should not say, and leaves undone that which it were best for him to do. He considers what others ought to do, and neglects that which he is bound to do himself. Have, therefore, a zeal in the first place over yourself, and then may you justly exercise zeal toward your neighbour.

You know well how to excuse and gloss over your own deeds, but you will not accept the excuses of others. It were more just for you to accuse yourself, and to excuse your brother. If you wish to be borne with, bear also with others. See how far you still are from true charity and humility, which knows not how to feel anger or indignation against anyone but oneself.

It is easy to converse with the good and the meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And everyone prefers to live in peace with those who agree with him and love him the best. But to know how to live peacefully with those who are stubborn and perverse, or undisciplined and opposed to us, is a great grace, worthy of much praise, and a sign of virile strength.

There are some who know how to live in peace and also enjoy peace with others. And there are others who do not have peace

themselves, nor suffer others to enjoy peace; they are troublesome to others, but still more troublesome to themselves. And there are still others who keep themselves in peace and procure to restore peace to others. Nevertheless all our peace, in this miserable life, must be placed more in humble suffering, than in not feeling adversities.

He who knows how to suffer will enjoy much peace, and he is a conqueror of himself, the lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and an heir of Heaven.

REFLECTIONS

A soul that is truly humble complains only of itself. It endeavours to excuse others, while it blames itself and is angry with no one but itself. I am resolved, therefore, to live in peace with God by obeying Him in all things, in peace with my neighbour, but not censuring his conduct or interfering with his affairs, and in peace with myself by combating and subduing on all occasions the emotions and repugnances of my heart.... We cannot trust ourselves much, because we often lack grace and good sense. There is but little light in us and we can quickly lose this through negligence. Often we do not perceive that we are so blind interiorly.

We often do wrong, and, what is worse, we excuse ourselves. Sometimes we are moved by passion, and we think it is zeal. We reprove little things in others, and pass over serious things in ourselves. We are quick to resent and ponder that which we suffer from others, but we do not think of how much others suffer from us. He who reflects well and duly weighs his own deeds, would never judge others harshly.

Imitation of Christ