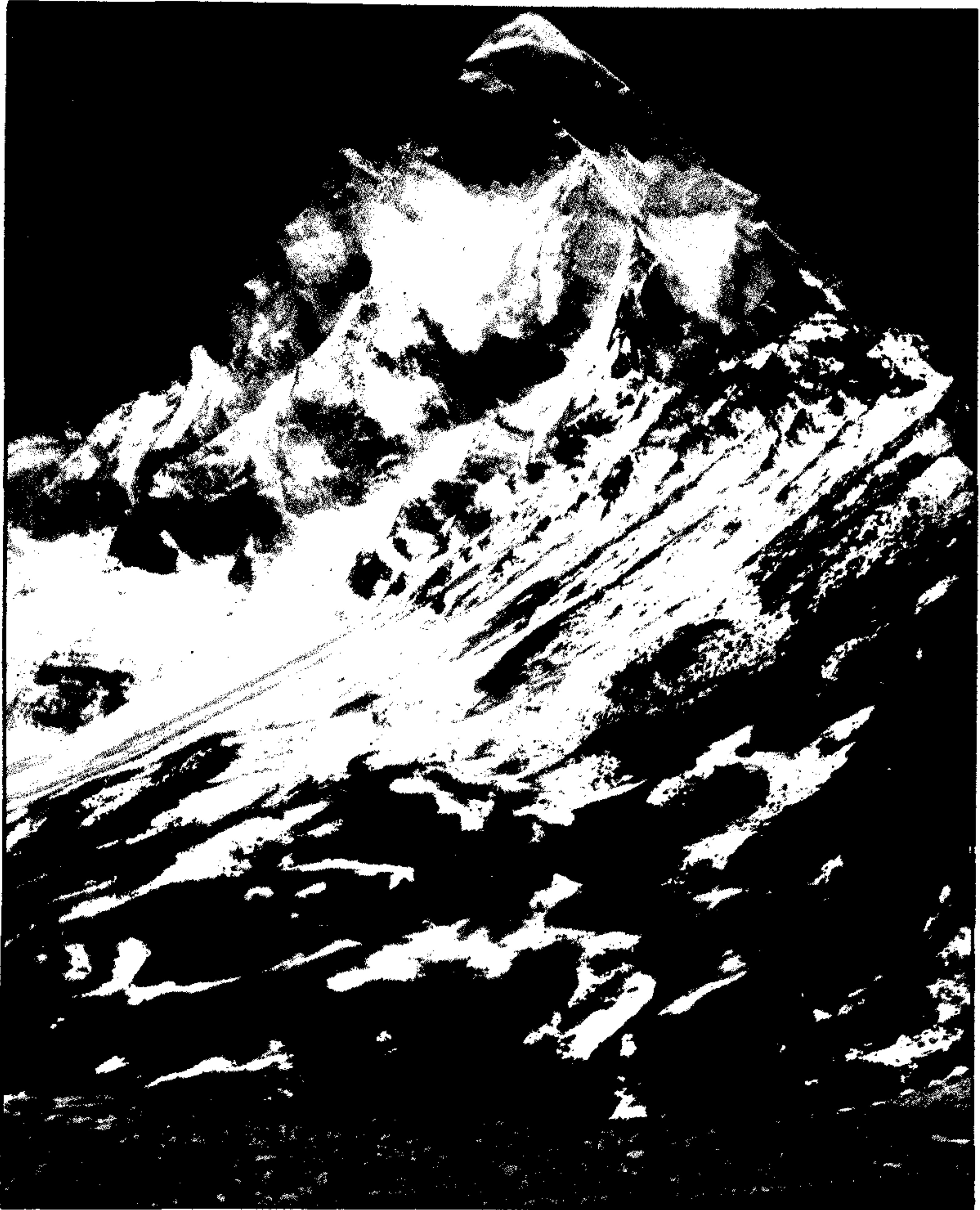


# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or Awakened India



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# Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the  
Ramakrishna Order

*Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

**JUNE 1991**

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

# Prabuddha Bharata

Or Awakened India

VOL. 96

JUNE 1991

No. 6

## The Divine Message

(A PLEA FOR MERCY)

Dear Ram! day after day I am in the heat of remorse.  
O Thou, supremely merciful to the lowly, dispel my temptations.  
I cannot hold in restraint this fickle heart of mine.  
Without Thy help I am growing weary. Run, run now to my help.

All my life, O Ram, has passed without due worship of Thee.  
In vain did I covet the wealth of my relatives and others ;  
O Ram, make my heart thine own.  
Casting aside all other, may I, with trust, cling to Thee.

Pleasure that is born of sensual desires can never be joy.  
Without Thee, O Ram, everything is revolting.  
O Chief of the Raghu line, do for me what is for my good.  
Drive my sins far away, and give me Thine own divine form.

Attempt as I may to destroy my heart's fickleness, I cannot destroy it.  
Attempt as I may to break away from all family affection, I cannot break away.  
And again and again this determination of my heart is lost.  
Therefore, it is that with humble voice I plead for Thy mercy.

—Saint Ramdas

## The Myth of Security

Two predominant drives that guide and shape human lives are the desire for security and the desire for happiness. Life moves apace with the momentum they provide. Of these two, the more fundamental one is the drive for security. It may be a truism to say that the urge to be happy operates within the boundaries imposed by the drive for security. None courts disaster by seeking pleasure overstepping the bounds of personal safety. Feelings of insecurity are not tolerable and always reveal themselves in aberrant behaviour, painful to the individual as well as to the society. All beings, therefore, first seek to be secure physically, and in the case of human beings, psychologically too. After having gained a firm footing, people try to enrich their lives with various pleasures and cultural refinements. The concern for the protection of body, its nourishment and well-being, occupies most of their time and attention. When the need for physical security is satisfied, the surplus energy is free to flow into other divergent channels of human interest. For a man who does not know from where his next meal will come, to him all happiness will seem to lie in food only. It is an indubitable fact that physical needs have overriding determinative effects on our lives. When people feel that they are sealed off from all dangers and comfortably settled among familiar objects and faces, in intimate surroundings, they tend to relax.

In the case of primitive man, who lived in caves, his sole concern was with his body, and his unevolved, unsophisticated mind had no other care than securing food and shelter. When the social instinct developed and there was such a thing as family life,

the cave got more comfortable. He wore animal skins for clothing; fire and tools were discovered and invented and life became less tenuous and rigorous. Though not wholly free from anxiety about security, he decorated the walls of his cave with rudimentary art and made that dwelling more habitable, in his own way. Early man began to manipulate his environment. Family bonds grew stronger, group life evolved and man discovered he could cultivate grain crops and store his food. Village life sprang up, clan leaders were recognized, and being governed by the persuasiveness imposed by brute strength, a few rules and regulations were accepted. Owing to environmental factors and some sense of ethnicity, group mind evolved, and there was more social cohesion. Early man enjoyed some degree of safety. Different social rules and observances probably grew owing to unique differences in geography and climate.

Enjoying security in this expansion of individual consciousness to include the wider society produced one drawback. Every man had to give up some of his individuality and independence. It was in a certain sense a false sense of security primitive man had thus gained. As people felt secure owing to life in familiar surroundings, with common language and common religious beliefs, they were putting their limbs, as it were, one by one, into a psychological strait-jacket. Cultural training, beliefs and dogmas were handed down from generation to generation, mostly unquestioned. Mostly unquestioned, because any enquiry entailed some risk to personal acceptance by the group. To maintain personal security the safest thing was always to go to the right—follow the conservative path. The common herd were satisfied with living quietly, without rocking

the boat. Happiness then consisted in just amassing wealth for the enjoyment of the physical peaceful life.

Only a few bold spirits, who were invariably present, could not rest in the moribund repetitive condition of eating, drinking, procreating, growing old and dying. They questioned and probed into the mass-hypnosis that the majority fell prey to. Heroic spirits, they raised their voices in every society, seemingly undaunted by the threat of clouds of insecurity, heard the sound of a distant drummer, and refused to follow and conform to all the injunctions of society. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* graphically describes that distant drummer, the ancient Ṛṣi—...*kas cid dhīrah pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad āvṛttacakṣur amṛtatvaṁ icchan. (the wise person, seeking Life Eternal, with his eyes turned inward, saw the Inner Self.)*—Therefore, leave the world to itself, allow nature's elements to form themselves in their own way. Be the witness, and discover that true security is hidden in you.

Why should truth have a very unsettling impact on most of our cherished worldly values? It is because our view of the world and our existence in it are entirely different from that of the enlightened souls. To us the world is all-important; to them it is nothing more than a playfield. In order to bridge the gap between their view and ours, we try all the clever methods—either picking and choosing those of their teachings that do not threaten to demolish our dream-world, or by trying to insulate ourselves from such disturbances. But truth is a storm which can blow off the ground under our feet and sow in us seeds of tremendous discontent. Human nature does not like to face truth boldly, even relative truth when it is discomforting. That is why most of us seek shelter in the mythical insularity of language, culture or ethnicism. The dreamer, lost in his dream, thinks it is the whole reality. For

a time his dream is bounded by granite hard walls. But these walls are actually paper walls and any passing wind reduces them to mere scraps. It is no doubt a painful lesson to be learned—some learn quickly and others take time.

Our minimal requirements are for food, shelter and clothing. When the organism is hungry, it needs food—not this or that dainty morsel. Shelter and clothing to protect from heat and cold is needed—not a building of specific architectural design, or clothes made up in a particular fashion, colour or material. The physical organism does not place exorbitant demands to maintain its existence. If a man is caught out of doors in a blizzard, the ice shelter of an Eskimo igloo is as good as heaven. To one who is dying of thirst, scented water cooled by refrigeration is not required. Modern people have grown accustomed to such “basic necessities”, actually quite far from actual requirements. It is due to the interference of our own minds.

The mind is the culprit that twists and turns simple matters into complications. Due to its false fear of ennui or monotony, it continually fabricates false desires and delivers them to our weak human nature. Once pampered, these desires become real ones and enter the list of our demands. We have, in yielding to the bad leadership of the mind's lower nature, unwittingly fallen into a trap from which it is very hard to come out. Mind is like a whimsical child. It is fickle and does not know what is for its own good. As Sri Śaṅkara has stated: if we want to enjoy tranquillity, then it is necessary to stop pleasing the mind—*Na tu cittasya lālanam*. Otherwise the mind, once convinced of its power to govern, becomes terrible, like a veritable tiger, capable of destroying the life itself. Says Śaṅkara in *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*: *Mano nāma mahāvyaṅghro viṣayāraṇya bhūmiṣu...* (“In the forest-tract of sense-pleasure there prowls a huge tiger called the

mind..."). He warns us to be careful about this tiger.

Our feeling of complacency is the side effect of uncaredful or aimless living. Our only aim is to protect our complacency. We try to see and foresee that events either remain undisturbing to us, or try to improve our comforts according to the plan of our imagination. How fragile is this imagination! Beneath the surface of this lull of placidity, hidden from our view, active volcanoes are rumbling. They may erupt at any time and unsettle the slippery ground on which we sit. Ironically, in what our five sense organs present to us as the only reality of the universe, we have implicit and explicit trust. Beyond this limited horizon our vision is blank.

The sense of security for all physical organisms springs from natural impulses. The organism instinctively wards off any danger that threatens its extinction. It is careful and watchful to escape any injury to itself. The immunological system is strong enough to heal most injuries. But the indiscriminating mind does not permit the body's intelligence to mature and function in a healthy way. A glutton or an alcoholic or a drug addict wrecks his body owing to his unrestrained mind, lack of will power and runaway desires. It all has its foundation in the deep-rooted human identification with and attachment to his body. He never thinks as a conscious being that *he has a body* but, on the contrary, that *he is the body*. This topsy-turvy condition has sown the seed of untold suffering and anguish for all human life.

Mind, or ego, does not desire its own extinction. It wants to continue indefinitely and to endow the quality of immortality to the body also. None of us remember that we have to leave this world suddenly any day. It is one of the greatest wonders of the world. This is what King Yudhishthira said

to the *Yakṣa* in *The Mahābhārata*. Buddha called it *tanha*, this tenacious *clinging to life*. But who can give us any guarantee that we will not be afflicted by some terminal sickness, meet with a fatal accident or be destroyed in a war? Where is the assurance that we shall live long to wither away quietly in old age? Believing that our body will be always with us and can give us eternal security is a delusion. But our natural predilection to the contrary is so strong that it seems none is capable of escaping from it. To think deeply on it is discomfoting. It would perhaps be bearable except that so much suffering arises from our excessive attachment to our bodies and life. Sri Sarada Devi therefore, once pointed out the attitude of the spiritually awakened ones. She said, "What is this body? It is nothing but three pounds of ashes when it is cremated. Why so much vanity about it? However strong or beautiful this body may be, its culmination is in those three pounds of ashes. And still people are so attached to it."<sup>1</sup>

If an energetic young man or woman, enjoying the world, robust, full of health and beautiful, is asked to think on the fact that youth and beauty should not be taken too seriously, he will shrug, laugh and go away. He may perhaps mutter, "Who are they to bring up such an awkward topic, except old fogies?" It is universal experience. A family man, young in years, rides the waves of success and wealth. He tries never to think that his euphoria is not the real life. A mere whiff of wealth or success in the world can be as intoxicating as strong wine.

Tyrants rise over portions of the earth with the momentary glory of meteors. They take a serious view of themselves as we do. But how long can they live and what can

1. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1984) p. 49.

they do to the patient earth? Their end comes sooner than we expect. Not tyrants alone, all people invest their energies and hopes in what are imagined to be solid, permanent investments for a secure future. Some seek security in fame, wealth or power; others in their kith and kin. A few seek it in knowledge. Sooner or later, the desperate mind, like the drowning man, grasps for straws to sustain itself. Buddha described a man being swept off by a turbulent current past the grassy banks of a river. Desperately he clutches at the grasses to slow his descent, but the attempt is a failure. Deaths of husbands and wives never deter people from remarrying; nor repeated deaths of children restrain begetting more. Security in the world is surely a myth and a chimera.

Why then seek security? It is obvious that we have to take care of our physical existence, and that breadwinners have to provide for rainy days, against disability and old age. Pursuit of wealth through right and honest means, and with the purpose of helping others, is not wrong. But there it should end. There should be a limit put on acquisitiveness. Security, if one probes deeper, is dependence. A dependent person is never happy or free from anxiety and fear. When one leans on something or someone for his happiness and security he is always vulnerable. Happiness is the absence of anxiety and dependence. If our lives are filled with uncertainty and anxieties, it is an indication that our struggles for happiness—to be rid of them—are misdirected. The urge to be secure, when it is pursued intensively, becomes tainted with greed. This selfish, isolated 'me', insulated from others, succumbs to greed, jealousy, hatred, fear and grief. This 'me', the imaginary entity threatened by everything holds on to something firm and secure for its protection. It is the root cause of all troubles. Buddha said, "I have no trouble, but 'I' is the trouble." Sri

Ramakrishna put it: "When this 'I' vanishes, all difficulties vanish."

The mystery of life has to be unravelled personally by every one. As separate individuals, 'islands', as it were, we can be neither secure nor happy. Real security lies elsewhere. Egoistic 'I-consciousness', the oppressive individuality, must be annihilated. When this is achieved there is absolute security. But it does not go so easily. Its concrete presence and intimidation are always felt. Any amount of knowledge engenders only a deepening of the root of its existence. Egoistic 'I-consciousness' is tyrannous because it is ever apprehensive and obsessed with itself. If flattered, it is elated, and it feels miserable when insulted. It interferes in all matters and vitiates the atmosphere. The 'I' is incessantly eager to become somebody in the world and, if thwarted, becomes jealous, angry and destructive. The fact is, as long as it is there it is not going to allow us to live in peace. In whatsoever way one may try to forget its presence, one cannot.

Is there no way to get rid of it? "There is a way," Sri Ramakrishna assures us. Outlining it, he says, "You may indulge in thousands of reasonings, but still the 'I' comes back. You may cut the peepul-tree to the very root today, but you will notice a sprout springs up tomorrow. Therefore, if the 'I' must remain, let the rascal remain as the servant 'I'. As long as you live, you should say, 'O God, Thou art the Master, and I am Thy servant.' The 'I' that feels, 'I am the servant of God, I am His devotee' does not injure one. Sweet things cause acidity of the stomach, no doubt, but sugar candy is an exception."<sup>2</sup> On another occasion the Master said to Keshab Sen, "You should give up only the 'unripe I'. The 'unripe I' makes one feel: 'I am the doer.

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) p. 170.

These are my wife and children. I am a teacher.' Renounce this 'unripe I' and keep the 'ripe I', which will make you feel that you are the servant of God, His devotee, and that God is the Doer and you are His instrument."<sup>3</sup>

This is surrendering the dwarf and mischievous 'I' at the altar of the Supreme Power of the Universe, which is the Ground of everything, by not allowing oneself to get attached excessively to objects—living and non-living. In a temporary life, morbid attachments are a curse. If one is afraid to resign oneself totally unto unseen God, he

3. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

can at least trace the whereabouts of the 'I-sense', from whence and in what form it has come, and root it out. No one doubts the existence of the 'I' and it does not need any external proof. The Lord, or the Indivisible Consciousness pervading the entire universe, is the real security. The rest is a mirage. "We can get everything in and from the world."—this deeply embedded indoctrination should be uprooted from our mind. For this the spiritual life is the only way. Spiritual freedom is never of the individual, but from the slavery of individuality. Watchfulness, effort, earnestness and holy company take one to that shoreless ocean of bliss and ultimate security.

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\* Unpublished original articles of general interest pertaining to Religion, Philosophy and Culture coming from competent writers of any country are considered for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*.

\* Article should preferably not exceed 4000 words. They should be typed with double space, on one side only. Handwritten MSS are not normally considered for publication for obvious reasons.

\* The Editor does not accept responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles.

\* For quotations, the references should include name of author, title of publication, publisher's name and city, year of publication, and page number.

\* MSS of articles not accepted for publication are not returned, unless so requested, and adequate stamps for the purpose are enclosed.

\* Books, preferably in the English language, are reviewed in our Journal by competent scholars. Publishers are requested to send *two* copies of only *new* publication to the Editor, in order to facilitate early attention.

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# The Mother of All

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

*Continuing his essay, Swami Atmasthananda unfolds more of the story of how the direct and lay-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were able to discover the universal significance of the Holy Mother.*

THE great famine of 1864-65 caught Bengal in its terrible grip. Sri Sarada Devi's father Ramachandra was poor but kind and charitable. He had saved some stock of grain from the previous year's harvest and at once opened a free kitchen, without thinking about the hardship it might cause to his own family. Hot *khichuḍi* (rice boiled with lentils) was served to the famished people. Eleven-year-old Sarada showed evidence of her universal motherhood even at that tender age: when hot food was served on leaf-plates she would stand there fanning, holding a big fan, which she had to grasp with both her hands in order to cool the food.

The Holy Mother kept herself informed of contemporary events of the world, and openly expressed her deep sorrow at the sufferings of people at the outbreak of the First World War, the repressive measures of the British Government against freedom fighters in India, and the sorrows of people brought on by floods, droughts and other natural calamities. Sometimes, unable to bear those sufferings of others, she would shed tears in silence. She once said to a young disciple, "How great is the sorrow of people you will understand when you grow up. You are not a mother." For all suffering people the Holy Mother was a real mother who cared.

Shiromanipur was a village not far from Jayarambati. The villagers mostly were Muslims who lived by cultivating mulberry

and rearing silk-worms. But owing to the large-scale import of foreign silk, many of them lost their trade and took to robbery as a means of livelihood. Some of them were employed in the construction of Mother's new house at Jayarambati. The Mother treated them as her own children. This brought about a transformation in many of them. Even the fastidious villagers began to say, "By the grace of the Mother the robbers too are becoming devotees."

A crazy woman used to come to the Mother at Dakshineswar. At first all took her to be merely insane and so treated her kindly. Afterwards, it turned out that she belonged to that class of spiritual aspirants who considered God as their sweetheart. This woman regarded Sri Ramakrishna as her Chosen Ideal, and one day ventured to speak out her attitude to him. This created a sudden commotion in the mind of Sri Ramakrishna as it was opposed to his own attitude of looking upon all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother. He started pacing up and down in his room condemning the crazy woman's attitude in strong colloquial Bengali. The Holy Mother heard all this from the *Nahabat*. Feeling humiliated by this insult to her daughter, she at once sent Golap Ma to call the crazy woman to her, and when the woman came, she said affectionately, "My daughter, you had better not go to him since your presence irritates him. You can come to me." The Mother

also remarked to Golap Ma that the Master ought not to have insulted the woman in this way. The poor woman found refuge in the Mother.

The Holy Mother was once staying at the Jagadamba Ashrama in Koalpara (near Jayarambati). The Ashrama was in a lonely place surrounded by a jungle frequented by wild animals, including bears. It was ten o'clock at night. The Holy Mother was sitting under a tree talking with her attendants. All on a sudden, she began to speak of the lunatic of Shihar (a neighbouring village). Hardly had she finished then the lunatic himself appeared, coming towards the Mother's house with a bundle of leafy vegetables under his arm. Everybody was frightened to see him, but the Mother remained calm. The mad man said he had brought some vegetables for her. She said to him softly, "Please go away; don't create any noise." But he said he could not go back as the river was in spate. Then the Mother told him in a persuasive and sweet voice, "My good child, don't you create any disturbance." Mother's love soothed the man's heart and he left the place in a peaceful mood. If Sri Sarada Devi could become the mother of dacoits, she could with equal facility become the mother of lunatics also.

The scene changes. The Mother is now at her Udbodhan house in Calcutta. It is the sacred hour of dusk. Mother is sitting on the first floor verandah telling the beads. Across the road is an open space where live some poor people of the labouring class. The evening stillness is suddenly broken by the sound of a man's beating his wife. After some blows, he gives her such a kick that she rolls down into the courtyard with her babe in her arms. The man still goes on kicking her. The Mother's *Japa* stops. Although she is well known for her shyness and gentleness, a change has now come over her. She stands up holding the railing

and shouts to the man, "I say, you wretch, are you going to kill your wife? Alas, what a pity!" The man, who had become mad with anger looks up, and the sight of the motherly figure acts like a charm on a hooded snake. With lowered head he leaves the scene. The Mother's sympathy makes the woman burst into tears, and the man comes back to console her. Seeing this happy ending, the Mother sits down and resumes her *Japa*. Thus has the Holy Mother shown herself the Mother of the downtrodden and insulted.

At Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna had earmarked a few of his young disciples as the founding members of his future monastic order. After the Master's passing away they came together one by one—Naren, Rakhai, Sarat, Sashi, Latu, Yogin, Baburam and others. The Holy Mother was to them an unfailing source of strength, and they rallied round her as their centre. Right from their early days at Dakshineswar, the Mother used to regard them as her own children. She always kept a watchful eye upon them, and her protective influence was felt by every one of them. It was only natural that they all looked upon her as their own true Mother. For, right from the beginning they had firm conviction that the Holy Mother was not an ordinary woman, but the helpmate of Sri Ramakrishna in his mission on earth. For them she was the Divine Mother Herself, who had assumed the human form.

More than anyone else it was Swami Vivekananda who understood the universal significance of the Mother's life and recognized her central role in the regeneration of Indian culture. Before starting his long travels in India as a mendicant monk, Swamiji first begged for the Mother's blessings. Again, when the call came to go to the West, he sought the Mother's advice before making his decision. Later on he wrote in a poem, "I am the servant of you

both ; I salute your feet united with *Śakti*.” In a letter to fellow disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji spoke of the Holy Mother as ‘the living Durgā’. Swamiji used to wash his mouth and sprinkle Ganga water on his body in order to purify himself before he went in her presence. He would salute her by making a full-length prostration, but he never touched her feet which he regarded as too holy. In his letters Swamiji revealed to the world Holy Mother’s true divine nature. He often expressed his desire to start an Order of nuns first, with the Holy Mother as its Ideal, an inauguration of a New Age of womanhood.

Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Ramakrishna, used to ‘be so much overwhelmed with devotion in the presence of the Holy Mother that his whole body would tremble. He regarded her as the embodiment of the Power of Brahman. He used to say, “*Mother is none other than the Divine Mother of the Universe, who has assumed a human form.*”

Among the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Lata Mahārāj (Swami Adbhutananda) was the Holy Mother’s first attendant, and he regarded her as his own mother. He used to say, “*Is it easy to understand the Mother? She could accept the worship offered by Sri Ramakrishna, just think of her power! What the Holy Mother’s real identity was, he alone knew—of course, Swami Vivekananda also understood a little. She was none other than the Goddess Lakṣmi.*”

The Holy Mother’s first ‘burden bearer’ after the Master’s passing away was Swami Yogananda. He would never salute her standing in front of her ; instead, when Mother left the place, he would collect a little of the dust of that spot and reverently touch it to his head. He had the vision of the Primal Power embodied in her.

After the death of Swami Yogananda, for a short time Swami Trigunatitananda took

over the burden of looking after the Mother. His devotion to her service was unbounded. Once he was prepared to take an extreme step. Holy Mother was travelling to Jayarambati in an ox-cart with Swami Trigunatitananda walking alongside as guard. It was a long journey and the Mother was resting. On the way the Swami saw that a part of the road had been washed out by recent rains and there was a possibility of the cart being upset at that place. Not wishing to disturb the Mother, he ran ahead and stretched himself across that depression in the road and ordered the cartman to drive the cart over his body. Fortunately the Mother awoke in time, got down and went round the place on foot. She scolded the Swami for his rash act. On another occasion the Swami went to buy some good quality hot chillies for the Mother. He walked three miles tasting chillies in different shops until his tongue became painfully swollen.

When Trigunatitananda was still in teens he had been sent by Sri Ramakrishna to the Holy Mother to receive initiation from her. On that occasion the Master had quoted a Bengali couplet to him: “*Infinite is the māyā of Rādhā which defies definition—a million Kṛṣṇas and a million Rāmas are born, and live, and die.*” The faith in the Mother that the Master induced in the boy on this occasion never left him.

Another ‘burden bearer’ was Swami Saradananda who, however, regarded himself only as the Mother’s doorkeeper. His attitude towards the Mother was expressed in his *Rāmakṛṣṇa Stotram* couplet: “*I salute Sarada Devi, the Embodiment of all knowledge, Who exists in Sri Ramakrishna ; as within fire, the burning power dwells.*”

For Swami Shivananda, the Mother was the highest appellate court. Any decision made by her regarding the Order and its young members was accepted by him with his whole heart. This *Mahā-Puruṣ Mahārāj*

(great-souled one) who became the second President of the Order, once said in a reminiscing mood, *"She is not an ordinary woman. She is not one who attained perfection through struggle and practice. She is the Ever-Perfect. She is a part of the Primordial Power, just as are Kālī, Tārā, Sōḍaśī, Bhuvanēsvarī and other Goddesses."*

In the eyes of Swami Akhandananda, the great exemplar of Swamiji's ideal of 'Service to God in Man', the Holy Mother was Annapūrṇā (the Bestower of Nourishment on the world), Viśveśvarī (the Divine Mother), Jagaddhātṛī (Creator of the Universe), and Lakṣmī (Giver of Fortune) of Vaikunṭha.

Swami Vijnanananda, whom Swami Brahmananda described as 'a hidden knower of Brahman', used to say, *"Sri Ramakrishna is the Embodiment of the Spirit, the Holy Mother is the Embodiment of thought-force: She is the nature of Cosmic Power."*

Swami Premananda, who was himself an ocean of love, has given expression to his experience through this significant utterance: *"I find the Holy Mother to be a vaster source of Power even than Sri Ramakrishna himself. And how great is her capacity for self-concealment! The inherent divine nature of Sri Ramakrishna used to show itself in spite of his efforts to hide it. The Holy Mother also gets bhāva-samādhi, but does she let everyone know about it? How much power she has, to keep her spiritual moods under control!"*

Swami Abhedananda, the 'Lion of Vedanta', whose hymn to the Holy Mother, *Sārādādevī Stotram*, is well known, looked upon the Mother as *Sarasvatī (the Giver of Wisdom), and Mahāmāyā (the Giver of Liberation)*.

Swami Ramakrishnananda, the exemplar of *dāsyā-bhakti* (attitude of servant to God),

had a wonderful vision of the Holy Mother on his death bed. Based on his description of it, Girish Chandra Ghosh later composed a hymn beginning with the line *"Behold my Mother whose smiling face is lit with the crimson glow of wisdom! She, the Giver of Boons, now grants me refuge."* In a letter to a devotee of Bangalore, Ramakrishnananda wrote: *"You should never lose this very rare and unexpected opportunity to worship the Motherhood of God in her. She is your real Mother...It is so fortunate you are to have the Mother of the Universe at your very door!"*

Swami Advaitananda, who used to do marketing for the Mother, served her with great devotion. He was older in age and yet he looked upon her as his own mother. He was one of the very few men with whom she used to talk freely.

Swami Turiyananda, who was the very personification of the Advaita Vedanta, paid his homage to the Holy Mother this way: *"What a great Power has assumed this form for the welfare of the world! The mind which we struggle hard to raise from the lower levels to the heart-centre, the same mind she has brought down from higher levels to the heart-centre forcefully, by thinking about Radhu. Now try to understand what it all means. Glory to the great Divine Mother!"*

Swami Niranjanananda, who was regarded as belonging to that class of Souls called by Sri Ramakrishna *Īsvarakoti-s* (the eternally-free), was the first to reveal the greatness of the Holy Mother in the circle of the Master's devotees. With uninhibited faith and reverence he used to proclaim that she was not just the wife of their Guru, but the *Divine Mother of the Universe, the Supreme Creatrix*.

Swami Subodhananda, called '*Khoka*' (babe in-arms) by the Mother and the dis-

principles of Sri Ramakrishna, glorified the Mother with the following words: "*The priests of this place celebrate the festival of Annakūṭa (in which a huge mound of rice is distributed as prasād), but it is only a show. How vast is the real Annakūṭa of the Divine Mother who feeds all the living beings of this universe! If we think of it, our minds will soar to higher realms.*"

As Sri Sarada Devi was the mother of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, she was in no way less so the mother of the lay disciples. Sri 'M', (Mahendra Nath Gupta), Nag Mahashay, Balaram Bose, Akshay Sen, Manomohan, Navagopal, Haramohan, Devendra and others were highly favoured children of the Mother. Gradually, in due course, they came to realize in her the Divine Nature—that she was not merely the wife of the Guru, but the eternal consort of Sri Ramakrishna in the unfoldment of his divine *Līlā* from age to age. She manifested herself to them in their mystic experiences. 'M', the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, regarded the Holy Mother as his own mother. He began his diaries with the invocation: ..."*Taking refuge at the feet of my Guru and Mother*". Each volume of the original Bengali original of the *Gospel* has been dedicated to the Mother with the lines: "*Mother, you are the Mother of the Universe. Kindly bless that all your children in all places and for all time may attain peace and joy in their hearts by thinking of Sri Ramakrishna and that they may have devotion to His Lotus Feet.*"

Nag Mahashay was another householder disciple of the Master who was greatly devoted to the Holy Mother. In fact his devotion was unparalleled. Nag Mahashay was a veritable personification of humility, hardly conceivable, even by those who never saw him. In the presence of the Mother he would completely lose external consciousness

and could utter only the word 'Mother, Mother'. This was his condition when he came to pay his respects to Holy Mother. The Mother herself had to feed him with her own hands. When he left her presence, he was heard muttering, "*Mother is more compassionate than Father, Mother is more compassionate than Father.*"

Sri Ramakrishna regarded Balaram Bose as one of his chief *rasaddārs* or providers. Balaram served the Holy Mother also devotedly. His whole family became blessed by worshipping the Mother as the Supreme Goddess. Balaram used to refer to the Mother as "*the Embodiment of the ascetic virtue of patience*".

Akshay Kumar Sen, nicknamed 'the Gremlin' (*Śāṅkcunnī*) by Swamiji, has in his celebrated epic, *Srī Rāmākṛṣṇa Puṅthi*, glorified the Holy Mother as follows:

*Glory, glory to Holy Mother, Mother of  
Universe,  
Eternal Brahman with and without  
attributes.  
Incomparable you are ; formless, impartite,  
You are Puruṣa, Prakṛti, the Supreme  
The Primordium of creation, the  
Root of All,  
You are the twenty-four categories, gross  
and subtle.  
By Your will is the universe created and  
sustained,  
And destroyed when you draw it on to  
your lap.  
All things created are toys in your  
play box,  
Playful You are, frolicsome, ever playing,  
playing.*

Another devotee, Manomohan Mitra, had visions of the Holy Mother as the Goddess Lakṣmi. The well known writer in Bengali Devendra Mazumdar, had a prayer-hall known as 'Sri Ramakrishna Archanālaya' at Entally in Calcutta. Invited by Devendra,

the Mother visited this place a few times. Devendra's worship took the form of this song to the Mother

*Here I am your naughty child ;  
comfort me, O Mother, taking me on  
your lap.*

*To whom else can I go, Mother ?  
abandoned as I am by Father without  
mercy.*

*I roam playing here and there,  
knowing that's why you don't talk  
with me.*

*Never have I heard this—  
that mother mourns not a wicked son's  
death.*

Swami Vivekananda's classmate, Haramohan Mitra, used to spend money unstintingly in the service of the Holy Mother. When the 'hogala-flower' bangles on her hands became unfit for wear owing to long use, Haramohan got new ones made for her. Another devotee, Manindra Krishna Gupta, the son of the poet Ishwar Chandra, received Mother's special love

Among the householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the famous playwright, Girish Chandra Ghosh, had a special relationship with the Holy Mother. He said, "Did we ourselves recognize her in the earlier days? It was Niranjan who opened our eyes." From that time onwards Girish looked upon the Holy Mother as the Divine Mother of the Universe, of whom once in his early youth, he had a wonderful vision while lying alone seriously ill. In answer to Girish's rather blunt question—"What kind of a mother

are you?"—Sri Sarada Devi replied without a moment's hesitation: "*I am your own real mother—a mother not because of being your Guru's wife, not because of any assumed relationship, not by way of mere empty talk, but truly your mother*"

This reply was meant not for Girish alone, it was addressed to all her children. When his only son died in early childhood, Girish was utterly disconsolate and, to bring peace to his grief-stricken soul, Swami Niranjanananda took him to Jayarambati. There Mother took great care of him, and her pure and unselfish love turned the great poet into a child at her feet. In Jayarambati, Girish got some clearer understanding of the true greatness and divinity of the Holy Mother. When the Mother's own brother, Kali Prasad expressed his inability to understand the divine nature of the Mother, Girish thundered: "You are a mere village Brahmin's son. Is it then impossible for the Great Source of all delusion to keep you labouring under the notion that she is merely your sister, for the whole of your life? *Go, and if you want freedom here and hereafter, take refuge at Her feet at once. I say so!*"

On another occasion, in Calcutta, Girish openly declared to a group of devotees in the presence of the Mother: "*She is the Mother of the Universe—Mahāmāyā, Mahāśakti, appearing on the earth for the salvation of creatures, and at the same time exemplifying the Ideal of true motherhood.*"

(to be continued)

# First Chapel to Sri Ramakrishna

SWAMI AMARESHANANDA

*The first place of worship for Sri Ramakrishna—where and when did it come into existence? Interestingly, it was at a devotee's house. Swami Amareshananda, a monk of the Order, Belur Math unfolds some of its history.*

A TINY seed of the Banyan, going unnoticed at first, sprouts and grows in course of time into a gigantic tree providing shade and shelter to a large number of people. Similarly, just a century ago, the name of Sri Ramakrishna, current only among a limited circle of citizens of Calcutta, has today become a household name. Now lakhs of people look upon him as God-incarnate and worship him as their Ideal of Life (*Iṣṭa Devata*), while quite a good number of chapels and temples stand dedicated to him in India and abroad.

The genesis of the worship dates back to the very lifetime of the Master himself. Five categories of people came to Dakshineswar to keep his holy company: Some were curious visitors; some were people seeking solutions for mundane problems; some belonging to various faiths were searching for guidance in the spiritual life; a few were families, all of whose members had been devoted to him for years; and a handful were pure, earnest youths who came to belong to his 'inner circle', later transformed into spiritual dynamos and torch-bearers. Sri Navagopal Ghosh was the head of a family, of the fourth category. He and all the members of his family looked upon the Master as God-incarnate, the pole-star of their lives, and passed on this heritage to their descendants.

Sri Navagopal Ghosh, born in Begampur village of Hooghly District in 1832, resided in the Badurbagan neighbourhood of Calcutta. He was by nature gentle, cheerful and

kind, and held a top executive post in the English firm, M/s Henderson Company. He distributed medicines free of cost to the poor, and supported many from time to time. Being endowed with a religious temperament Navagopal used to take delight in religious festivals, took part in group singing and lived a contented spiritual life. Early in life he was married twice and each time his wife died prematurely. Finally he married a third time to the devout Nistarini Devi. In her dwelt the Goddess of Fortune as well as a current of devotion. She had even in youth developed remarkable devotion to God and had instilled the same fervour into the sons and daughters of her family.

Once Navagopal chanced to hear about Paramahansa Deva of Dakshineswar and became at once eager to meet him. Accordingly, one Sunday with his wife he proceeded to Dakshineswar. After preliminaries it was the practice with Sri Ramakrishna to guide each seeker along a path best suited to his nature. Not much is known about this first meeting of Navagopal with the Master, but so instructed, Navagopal began to chant and sing the Divine name daily without any interruption. Of course this was to his liking, so every morning he along with his wife and children used to sing together the divine names to the accompaniment of cymbals and *khol*, a type of musical percussion instrument.

Nearly three years went by but Navagopal had not visited the Master at Dakshineswar for the second time. The Master however

did not forget his devotees. He made enquiries through Kishori Roy, who happened to be a friend of Navagopal saying, "Hallo, some three years ago, with you came here a gentleman who lived in Badurbagan holding a high post in an office, and who distributed medicines free to the poor, where is he nowadays? If you meet him, ask him to come over here, once at least."<sup>1</sup>

On hearing of the kind enquiries of Sri Ramakrishna through his friend, Navagopal's eyes filled with tears of gratitude and joy. Taking his family with him, he at once hastened to Dakshineswar. To Sri Ramakrishna's enquiry about his long absence, the devotee replied that he had been meticulously following the instructions imparted to him. Sri Ramakrishna then advised Navagopal not to simply confine himself to the routine practices, but to come to Dakshineswar frequently so that he could make progress and easily reach the state of divine bliss. Thereafter whenever he was free, Navagopal used to come to the Master with his family. We may recall the assurance Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna in the *Gītā* (IX. 22):

"...*Yoga-kṣemam vahāmyaham*"

"*Those devotees who are ever  
devoted to Me ;  
to them I carry what they lack...*"

Sri Ramakrishna really took over responsibility for the devotee.

Gradually Sri Ramakrishna completely possessed the hearts of the family and became their Preceptor and Chosen Deity (*Guru-o-Iṣṭa*) in one. Navagopal's son, Suresh, was then five or six years old and even at this very tender age was a talented player of the *khol* in accompaniment to

singing. Sri Ramakrishna loved this boy very much.

In those days devotees having the means, in order to benefit by the blessed company and presence of Sri Ramakrishna, by turn invited him to their homes and organized religious meetings on Sundays. Navagopal too, taking the cue from others, earnestly requested Sri Ramakrishna to sanctify his home. And after getting the Master's consent arranged a religious festival. On that auspicious day when *Bhāgavata* reading was in progress, Sri Ramakrishna arrived. When the attention of all the assembled devotees was drawn to him, the reading did not proceed further. He took a seat and shortly thereafter, Banavari, the noted Vaiṣṇava musician with his group of *saṅkīrtan* singers commenced singing. Sri Ramakrishna, who was already in divine inebriation, was stirred up by the music and in a virile mood he leapt amidst the orchestra and stood motionless in the posture of Sri Krishna playing the flute (*Tribhāngi Muralidhar*). Slowly he entered the state of *Mahābhāva*. Navagopal Ghosh had kept two beautiful garlands made of fragrant flowers to adorn the Master. Seeing him in that God-intoxicated mood the devotee placed those flowers on his neck and began to dance round the Master. Some shed tears of joy, and a few who were unable to check their emotions lay flat on the floor.

Women devotees used to remain in the inner apartments and offer separately their respects to Sri Ramakrishna on such occasions. On this occasion Nistarini Devi and other women devotees, busy in the inner apartments on the first floor, were arranging to serve food to all the assembled people. They were also eagerly waiting to pay their respects to Sri Ramakrishna. Regaining partially his normal mood and being helped by others he went upstairs. The women devotees who were waiting then offered their

1. Swami Gambhirananda, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya), Part II, pp. 363-4.



obeisance and Nistarini was blessed by him.

Sri Ramakrishna, who could see the innermost of a person, sometimes used to awaken the spiritual consciousness lying dormant in qualified aspirants. He would do this either by a mere look, or a touch or by writing a sacred *mantra* (a name of God) on the tongue with his finger. (Swami Vivekananda describes this particular power of the Master in his famous 'Hymn to the Divinity of Sri Ramakrishna'—*Vimalanayana-vikṣane-mohajāya...*) On this occasion Nistarini Devi, overflowing with motherly devotion, beseeched Sri Ramakrishna to allow her to feed him with her own hand. In an exalted mood the Master asked her, "Who are you to feed me?"<sup>2</sup> After a little pause, knowing her deep devotion and pious nature, the Master allowed her to put food into his mouth. To her utter surprise, while so doing she felt that some great spiritual presence residing in him had accepted the food. Being fed three or four morsels in this way, the Master became normal and resumed taking his food himself. On some earlier occasion Sri Ramakrishna had indicated that Nistarini was endowed with an element of *Chinnamastā*, a form of the Divine Mother embodying divine knowledge. Once she had remained in an exalted spiritual mood for six months.<sup>3</sup>

*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* contains stray references about Navagopal Ghosh. Other books like *Paramahamsadever Jivana-vṛttānta (The Life of Paramahansa Deva)* by Ramchandra Dutta; *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Punthi*, by Akshaya Kumar Sen, and others give some more details. Finding Navagopal shedding tears of joy at the sight of Sri Ramakrishna in *samādhi* gives us an indication of his mental make-up. Navagopal was

one of the older devotees assigned to attend Sri Ramakrishna at Shyampukur and Cossipore during his last illness.

When Sri Ramakrishna was seriously ill at the Cossipore garden house, Navagopal's family used to visit him as often as they could. During one of these visits Nistarini Devi, who was frank and free with him, was asked by Sri Ramakrishna if she would agree to take charge of a cat with kittens which had taken shelter with him. Before handing them over to her, he got confirmed by her that it would not entail any undue hardship or be disapproved of by her husband. Nistarini Devi replied, "It will be my great good fortune, and I like to keep cats and kittens anyway. You are giving; it is your grace."<sup>4</sup> Though Sri Ramakrishna's mind soared high, yet he took note of minute details in all matters and paid proper attention to them. On her part, Nistarini Devi accepted his gift with all humility and felt blessed. She never allowed anyone to ill treat the kittens.

Then came a memorable day, January 1, 1886. Though lying seriously ill, Sri Ramakrishna became the 'Wish-fulfilling Tree' of epic fame (*Kalpataru*). He blessed and bestowed his unbounded grace on some thirty devotees who happened to be present at Cossipore on that day. Ramchandra Dutta, having just got the Master's blessing, seeing Navagopal Ghosh, eagerly called him, "Sir! What are you doing here? Hurry up, be quick! If you want any favour from Sri Ramakrishna, ask for it, today he has become the 'Kalpataru'! Hearing these words of Ram, Navagopal hastened to Sri Ramakrishna, offered obeisance and implored: "O Lord, what will be my lot?" Sri Ramakrishna, after a pause, asked him, "Can you do *japa* and meditation?" Replied Nava-

2. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

3. Kalijiban Sharma, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Lila Abhidhān* (Calcutta: Karuna Prakashani) p. 132.

4. *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā*, Part II, p. 367.

gopal, "I am a householder having responsibility for wife, children and other dependents. Where is the time left for carrying on *japa* and meditation? I am afraid I shall not be able to do it." Again, Sri Ramakrishna asked, "Can you not do even a small number [of *japam*]?" Reply came, "Even for that, where is the time, Sir?" Sri Ramakrishna simply asked him, "Well can you remember me and chant my name?" Navagopal, overwhelmed with joy, replied, "Certainly! certainly! That I can do!" Sri Ramakrishna then assured him, "That will do. You need not do anything else."<sup>5</sup>

Thereafter Navagopal Ghosh used to chant with deep feeling the Master's name most of the time. Returning from his office every evening he used to distribute sweets to the children of the locality and repeat the Master's name. The children used to call out "Jai Ramakrishna"—Hail to Sri Ramakrishna! and dance round him playfully. In the neighbourhood he became thus known as 'Jai Ramakrishna'. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, while Swamis Brahmananda and Turiyananda were undergoing severe austerities at Vrindavan, Navagopal too went there with his son Nirod and spent some time in their holy company. He went also to Vindhya-chal and returned to Calcutta with Swami Brahmananda.

Navagopal Ghosh had such a fascination for the name Ramakrishna that, finding a locality in the Howrah area bearing the name 'Ramakrishnapur Lane', he purchased a house in this lane and shifted his residence from Badurbagan. He added a spacious room to it on the first floor, provided it with an altar and marble floor and began using it as his chapel. On the auspicious *Māgh Pūrṇimā* (full moon day of *Māgh*, 6 Feb. 1898), in the morning, Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by Swamis Adbhuta-

nanda, Brahmananda, Premananda, Subodhananda, and Turiyananda, came to Navagopal's house by country boat, all the way singing devotional songs with cymbal and *khol*. With the blowing of conchs and due solemnity in the presence of all the great monks, Navagopal installed and dedicated the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the new shrine. Swamiji himself sat on the worshipper's seat and worshipped the Master's photo. As the worship came to an end, he composed extempore the now famous lines:

*Om, sthāpakāya ca dharmasya,  
Sarvadharmā swarūpine,  
Avatāra Variṣṭhāya,  
Rāmākṛṣṇāya te namaḥ.*

"Establisher of righteousness, Embodiment of all religions; Best of Avatāras, to Thee I bow."

Then with great feeling the household requested Swami Vivekananda to pray to Sri Ramakrishna that he always reside in the chapel. Swamiji humorously remarked, "For fourteen generations Sri Ramakrishna (his line) never dwelt in such a fine building with marble flooring! If he does not reside here, where will he?"

Some call this chapel of Navagopal the first and oldest chapel of the Master, since the monastery (*Math*) had always been located in rented buildings and was shifted from place to place a few times, only at the end being finally established at the Belur Math. There was a mart of joy on that day in Ramakrishnapur Lane. From then onwards, even till today, descendants of Navagopal Ghosh offer daily worship and observe *Māgh Pūrṇimā* with a festive special worship of Sri Ramakrishna. The day is celebrated with great joy. Subsequently, as the original chapel was located adjacent to a living room, a separate hall was constructed on the second floor and the chapel shifted there. A new picture of Sri Ramakrishna

5. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

on porcelain, made in Germany, was later consecrated by Swami Brahmananda. Besides himself being an ardent devotee, Navagopal also brought Nagendra Ghosh, Dr. Ramlal Ghosh, Haran Babu, and others into the fold of the Master's circle of devotees.

The eleventh book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, particularly the twenty-three chapters from seven to twenty-nine, are called *The Uddhava Gītā*—"The Last Message of Sri Krishna to Uddhava". They deal with the doctrine of Bhakti and Jñāna. While discoursing on the ways of devotion and worship, the Lord lays stress on service rendered to holy men, listening to the scriptures and meditating, building and maintaining temples and organizing and celebrating special festivals, and feeding the devotees with sacramental food.<sup>6</sup> These injunctions were carried out true to the letter and spirit for many years by Sri Navagopal Ghosh and his family.

Sri Ramakrishna used to caution his householder devotees, engaged in the spiritual life, of the dangers of losing one's balance due to excessive attachment to worldly relations. He used to advise them to hold on to the Lord at all times, in fortune and adversity alike. When one of Navagopal's married daughters died suddenly, everyone in the family was broken down in sorrow and dejection. But Navagopal maintained his calm, and smoking his chillum in his usual way said, "All is His will; there is nothing to grieve over." Thus he corroborated the *Bhāgavatam* statement: "*The association with sons, wives, dear friends, and other relatives is no better than*

*the chance gathering of a group of travellers in a caravanserai.*"<sup>7</sup>

Like her husband, Nistarini Devi too, was a great devotee. She acquired perfection in *japa*, the repetition of the Lord's name. She had a vision of Sri Ramachandra, her *Iṣṭa*, through *japa*. Once when she was offering obeisance to Him, in the process of touching His feet, she actually saw the form of her Guru, Sri Ramakrishna. When the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi was in Vrindavan, for about a year after the passing away of the Master, during a vesper service in the Rādhāraṇ temple, she saw in a vision Nistarini Devi fanning the presiding Deity and after returning to her residence she narrated to Yogin Mā, "Yogen, Navagopal Babu's wife is very pure. I saw her like this."<sup>8</sup> Holy Mother, too, sanctified the house of Navagopal by her visit, invited by Nistarini Devi, in August 1909.

Nistarini Devi cherished great respect and love for the monks of Belur Math. If she heard that any one of them was ill, she took the ailing monk into her house and arranged for his treatment, diet and nursing till his recovery. Those were the days when there was not much provision for taking care of sick monks at the Belur Math due to paucity of funds. The monks found their loving mother in her.

Swami Brahmananda visited the pious household of Navagopal many a time. Shyam-sundar and Nirod, two of the sons of Navagopal were his disciples. Both of them were greatly devoted to him, like their parents had been to Sri Ramakrishna. On the passing away of Swami Brahmananda, Shayam-

6. मज्जन्मकर्मकथनं मम पर्वानुमोदनम् ।  
गीताताण्डववादित्रगोष्ठीभिर्मद्गृहोत्सवः ॥  
ममार्चिस्थापने श्रद्धा स्वतः संहृत्य चोद्यमः ।  
उद्यानोपवनाक्रीडपुरमन्दिरकर्मणि ॥

—*Srimad Bhagavatam* (XI. 11.36 & 38)

7. पुत्रदाराप्तबन्धूनां सङ्गमः पान्थसङ्गमः ।

—*Ibid.* (XI. 17.53)

8. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1955) p. 143.

sundar, by this time grown up, donated Rupees forty thousand towards the construction of the Brahmananda temple at the Math.<sup>9</sup> Swami Abhayananda, used to reminisce that "Shyam Babu, son of Navagopal, bore almost the entire expense of the construction of the temple, even for the statue of Swami Brahmananda inside." He recounted that every day Shyam Babu used to come to the Math on a white horse and watch the progress of the construction till it was completed and dedicated by Swami Shivananda in 1924.

In April 1909, at the age of seventy-seven, Navagopal had a premonition of his coming end. He drew all his family members close to him and blessed them, saying in a firm voice, "Do not grieve. The physical body is bound to perish. Sri Ramakrishna is our real Master. We are his children. He will take care of you. Instead of grieving, call on him."<sup>10</sup>

Navagopal carried out the instructions of Sri Ramakrishna that he had received on the Kalpataru Day, to remember him and chant his name, till his last breath. Chanting his sweet name and feeling a sense of complete fulfilment, Navagopal breathed his last, his face beaming with joy. He demonstrated how an ideal householder should live: "One

who is devoted to Me, can continue to live in the home itself till his end, performing all duties as offerings to me."<sup>11</sup>

Nistarini Devi, in her old age, when she was lying ill, felt joy when the monks, the authorities at Belur Math, arranged for her nursing just as she used to look after them. She was then in her 'Divine Mood of *Chinnamastā*' and could not bear the touch of impure persons. In that exalted spiritual mood she passed away.

The other son of the family, Nirod, joined the Belur Math at the tender age of eighteen in 1902. His parents were all praise for his taking up the monastic life. He was ordained with sannyāsa by his guru, Swami Brahmananda in 1914 and was given the name Ambikananda. He was well known for his musical ability and was also good in painting. It is said that only after deep meditation on different deities, he used to paint his pictures of the gods and goddesses. Once he was asked by Swami Brahmananda to set a melody for the *Rāma Nāma Sai-kīrtana* which was included in the Bengali drama, *Rāmānuja*. The same is sung now on *Ekādaśī* days in most of the Ramakrishna Mission Centres. Swami Ambikananda passed away while leading an austere life in the Punjab in 1954.

9. *Śrī Rāmakṣṇa Līlā Abhidhān*, p. 132.

10. *Śrī Rāmakṣṇa Bhakta Mālikā*, Part II, p. 371.

11. *The Bhāgavatam*, XI. 17.50

12. Nalini Ranjan Chattopadhyaya, *Śrī Rāmakṣṇa O Banga Rangamancha* (Calcutta: Mandal Book House) p. 102.

Devotee: The soil of India is different. Only what is true survives here.

Master (Sri Ramakrishna): Yes, that is so. The Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Religion declared by the Rishis, will alone endure. But there will also remain some sects. Everything appears and disappears by the will of God.

# Universal Religion and the Spiritual Humanism of Radhakrishnan

DR. SONAL K. AMIN

*Torn by many conflicts, wars and religious bickering, human society staggers and reels. But saints and great souls like Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan appear, and with rare leadership and wisdom reestablish human fellowship on a universal basis of compassion and love. Dr. Sonal K. Amin teaches Philosophy at the Mankuvarbai Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.*

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN is amongst the foremost contemporary writers and thinkers. The sweep of his comprehension is almost encyclopaedic. One is astounded at the range of his interests—philosophy, literature, poetry, science, history, culture, civilization and religion. Nehru, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Tagore and Radhakrishnan are writers and thinkers of great distinction. Nehru and Radhakrishnan, who took up a cultural offensive against the Occident, wrote exclusively in English, and had an impressive hearing in the West. The names of C. Rajagopalachari and Tagore come to mind as bilingualists. Contemporary Indian writers have their roots in the Indian soil. It is on the Indian culture, tradition and thought that they build. Radhakrishnan along with K. C. Bhattacharya built their philosophy after a thorough assimilation of the Indian and European thought systems. Radhakrishnan's works, storehouse of illustrative material, are interpretative as well as constructive. His lucid and illustrative style coupled with his wonderful power of expression and mastery over the English language has captivated the modern mind.

Radhakrishnan has given a new garb to the Upaniṣadic message of the Ātman being supreme and the purpose of human life being its realization through intuition. The old Upaniṣadic theme is interpreted in the light of the modern predicament.

In both Radhakrishnan and Vivekananda spiritual humanism and universal religion play a key role. The difference lies in Vivekananda being an Advaita Vedantin in the tradition of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja—Absolutism with Theism. The cardinal concepts in the philosophy of Radhakrishnan are Spirit, Religion and Intuition.

Gandhiji is relevant to mankind for his belief in Truth and Non-violence. Nehru, for his doctrine of *Panchsheel* to solve international conflicts. Radhakrishnan will always be remembered for his concept of Universal Religion and Spiritual Humanism whereby all human conflicts will end—internal as well as external; and the entire cosmos will manifest as *Sat, Cit* and *Ānanda*. A true brotherhood of divine beings in a divine universe.

Commenting upon the plight of modern society, Radhakrishnan says:

We have a world of rationalistic prophets, of selfish individualists, of a monstrous economic system compounded out of industrialism and capitalism, of vast technical achievements and external conquests, of continual craving for creative comforts and love of luxury, of unbridled and endless covetousness in public life, of dictatorship of blood and brutality, anxious to make the world a shamble, dripping with human blood, of atheism and disdain

for the soul, a world in which nothing is certain and men have lost assurance.”<sup>1</sup>

Only ‘spiritual religion’ can give back this lost assurance.

In his *An Idealist View of Life*, Radhakrishnan examines the various substitutes for religion and finds them all wanting—Naturalistic Atheism, Agnosticism, Scepticism, Humanism, Pragmatism, Modernism, and Authoritarianism. An exclusive religion is not an answer either. It will further divide humanity and lead to conflict. The Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam are exclusive religions.

The Jews first invented the myth that only one religion could be true. As they, however, conceived themselves to be the ‘Chosen People’ they did not feel a mission to convert the whole world.<sup>2</sup> Judaism is therefore exclusive but not missionary. Christianity, on the other hand, is both exclusive and missionary. “Christian religion inherited the semitic creed of the Jealous God ‘in the view of Christ as the only begotten son of God’ and so could not brook any rival near the throne.”<sup>3</sup> Regarding Islam, Radhakrishnan says, that it is “the creation of a single mind and is expressed in a single sentence, There is one God and Mohammed is his prophet.”<sup>4</sup> It aimed at world domination. Its motto was ‘conversion or subjugation’. As opposed to this “Hinduism takes its stand on a life of spirit and affirms that the theological expressions of religious experience are bound to be varied.”<sup>5</sup> Hinduism provides a model for

universal religion. It meets the requirement of men of different temperament and aptitude. Vivekananda also looks upon the Vedic religion as the most universal religion. The central theme of Hinduism is ‘*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*’—the one truth is manifested as many, or as Radhakrishnan puts it, “All the paths of ascent lead to the same mountain top.”<sup>6</sup> Or as Vivekananda says, to quote *Gita*, “Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever from, I reach him, all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.”<sup>7</sup>

Modern man wants a religion which is dynamic, open, free and spiritual. “We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will construct the basis of conviction and devise a scheme of life which men can follow with self-respect and creative joy.”<sup>8</sup> Like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan believes in the plurality of religions. “The core of all religions is the same. Plurality is only external. It is misleading to speak of different religions. We have different religious traditions which can be used for correction and enrichment. The traditions do not create the truth but clothe it in language and symbol for the help of those who do not see it themselves.”<sup>9</sup> A true understanding of the spirit of religion leads to a deeper absorption of the truth of one’s own religion. It is not *fusion* of all religions but a *fellowship*.

1. Radhakrishnan and Muirhead, Editors, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952) p. 264.

2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) p. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin) pp. 88-89.

6. P.A. Schilpp, Editor, “The Religion of the Spirit and the World’s Need, Fragments of a Confession” in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1952) p. 77.

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

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: Oxford Univ. Press) p. 83.

9. S. Radhakrishnan, “Fragments of a Confession”, p. 77.

This fellowship is possible because human being irrespective of country, caste, creed or sex are basically Spirits. Defining this spirit in man, Radhakrishnan says, "It is not the physical body or the vital organism, the mind or the will, but something which underlines them all and sustains them. It is the basis and the background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula."<sup>10</sup> This spiritual element is unitive and universal. Its intuitive realization or *Jnāna* or *Parāvidyā* alone can bring about love and universal brotherhood in everyone. This is the 'spiritual humanism'. Its doors are open to the entire human race, paving the way for a universal human culture which combines and assimilates the best of the Orient and the Occident, a broad all-inclusive creed which is truly relevant in this nuclear age.

Radhakrishnan is all praise for humanism, but he, like Vivekananda, is against humanism being a substitute for religion. People like the agnostics, rationalists, socialists and the sceptics, who find no solace in religion turn to humanism. Humanism aims at the social and economic well-being of man and a development of his personality and conscience. It aims at human values like fraternity, selflessness, courage, and discipline. It advocates inner discipline and a middle path which avoids self-indulgence on the one hand and excessive asceticism on the other. Radhakrishnan praises the revolt of humanism against ecclesiastical religion, with its dogmas, creeds, ritualism and superstition. He also commends its revolt against mechanization and industrialization of society where man is treated like a cog bereft of his spirituality and individual dignity. But man is not merely a social being. He cannot 'live by bread alone'. Plato and Aristotle, the founders of humanism in the West, were

aware of the fact that material gains and prosperity cannot satisfy the human soul. He is a spirit who wants transfiguration into the Divine. Religion alone can satisfy this spiritual need of man. It is by religion that he can ascend to a divine life and be at peace with himself. Humanism limits man to his finite existence and looks upon this world as an end-all. Man basically is a denizen of another world. His roots are elsewhere.

In ethics, humanism recommends the 'golden mean', but that is a very vague principle and cannot serve as a moral guide. Radhakrishnan queries, "What is the middle path between violence and non-violence? The difference between right and wrong is not quantitative but qualitative. Virtue is not mere balancing, but it is the spirit in man that discerns the virtuous and the spiritual personality which has this insight. Religious men are ever ready to sacrifice their lives at the altar of truth. A mere humanist can never do so. "The saints invariably overstep the boundaries...Socrates and Christ overstepped the boundaries.... All this is possible only if we do not sacrifice the mystical to the moral."<sup>11</sup> True morality requires a firm deep faith in the immortality of the soul and a deep conviction in the goodness of God. "Humanism lacks that indefinable touch, that *elān* of religion which alone can produce that majestic faith whose creativity is inexhaustible, whose hope is deathless, and whose adventures are magnificent."<sup>12</sup> A humanist cannot face death, unjust suffering and pain of despair. For that, a deep religious conviction is needed. Social reform, love of mankind, is a necessary part of religion but they cannot be equated. Religion is much more.

We can divide the interpreters of Hinduism into the *R̥ṣis* i.e., *Seers* and *Bhaktas* ;

10. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 226.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

12. *Ibid.*

and in a third category we would like to place people like Radhakrishnan who show great wisdom and erudition. Radhakrishnan is the most distinguished academic interpreter of Hinduism. It was he who gave a deep and concise interpretation of Hinduism to the West and showed the Western mind a glimpse of the integrative framework of Indian philosophy and Hinduism in a rational and scientific manner.

His schooling forced him to thoroughly examine his Hindu beliefs. It was something akin to Hume waking Kant from his dogmatic slumber. He writes in his *Essay* that going to a Christian Missionary school was both an enlightening and deeply charring experience. He continues, "By their (the teachers') criticism of Indian thought they disturbed my faith and shook the traditional props on which I leaned."<sup>13</sup> This criticism had a salubrious effect on his philosophy and religion.

For him, religion in essence is a living contact with the ultimate Reality. It is an apprehension of something which is over and above the individual. Religious experiences, though, similar to scientific and artistic insights, are unique and autonomous. Vivekananda also looks upon religion as a matter of experience and not as a mere system of dogmas.

Radhakrishnan's spiritual idealism is based on the mystic experiences of the *Seers*, and his own. For him, philosophy is not based on speculation or theology, but it must have the seal of experience. He says, "...for my thinking had another source and proceeded from my own experience which is not quite the same as what is acquired by mere study and reading. It is born of spiritual experience rather than deduced from logically ascertained premises."<sup>14</sup> These spiri-

tual experiences are rationally assimilated and explained by him. It is intuition which can lead to mystic experience, as it is direct and immediate perception. Radhakrishnan writes, "Strictly speaking, logical knowledge is non-knowledge, *avidya*, valid only till intuition arises. Intuition is experienced when we break down the shell of our private, egoistic existence, and get back to the primeval Spirit in us from which our intellect and our senses are derived."<sup>15</sup> Again, he says, "Intuitive knowledge is not non-rational, it is not non-conceptual. It is rational intuition in which both immediacy and mediacy are comprehended."<sup>16</sup> Intellect is one and continuous with intuition which is supra-rational.

In his philosophy *Jnāna* and *Bhakti* both are important, in it Brahman and God both are real. The former being transcendent and the latter immanent. The Absolute has infinite possibilities and this world and God are one of them. When the entire creation becomes divine, this world comes to an end. God is then absorbed in the Absolute.

Salvation for Radhakrishnan is a dynamic cosmic life and a total union with the Absolute. Liberation means enjoying the constant vision of God and engaging in divinization of the cosmos. He believes in the hierarchy of mystic souls, but in the final salvation the souls lose their individuality and merge in the Absolute. *Saccidānanda*, absolute Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, becomes explicit in the Cosmos. In the Advaitic ultimate analysis, the world along with God is within the realm of *Māyā* or Ignorance. The *darśana* (vision) of the various gods we have in *Bhāvamukha Samādhi*. But only in the *Advaita Samādhi* only pure unity remains. All gods and individuality vanish in the total absorption with the Absolute.

13. "Fragments of a Confession", pp. 3-82.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

15. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 146.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 153.



Radhakrishnan believes in the *Kośa* (sheath) Theory of the *Upaniṣads* in which the aim of creation is the manifestation of *Ānanda* or God. The five *Kośas* (sheaths) are matter (*Anna*), life (*Prāṇa*), perceptual consciousness (*Manas*), Self consciousness (*Vijnāna*), and bliss (*Ānanda*).

The full realization of the spirit or salvation is not possible in man until *saccidānanda* is manifested in the cosmos. A divine individual can emerge only in a divine cosmos. If the world remains evil and imperfect there can be no emergence of a divine personality. "In a true sense the ideal individual and the perfect community arise together."<sup>17</sup> For Vivekananda *Mokṣa* is not dependent upon cosmic salvation, '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' (I am Brahman) is the *mahā-mantra*. But the soul in man is the same in all. There is no diversity or plurality, only pure unity.

A liberated man is always altruistic. He is forever engaged in transforming his fellow beings, in divinizing the cosmos. Compassion and love are the hallmarks of such a one. He suffers martyrdom for the love of all beings and for the fulfilment of the divine task. To him the division between himself

17. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

and others vanishes. He sees himself in all. In his *The Hindu View of Life* Radhakrishnan gives the example of Buddha who turned away from his own liberation and took the vow of never crossing over while a single being remained subject to sorrow and suffering. "Religion may start with the individual but it must end in fellowship."<sup>18</sup> *Mokṣa*, far from being antagonistic to social well-being is not only conducive to it, but it forms its very basis. Bondage is a result of ignorance of the true nature of the Self. Once the real nature of the Self is realized, '*Tattvamasi*' (That thou art) dawns, liberation takes place. But the humanistic element is also very strong in Vivekananda. Love for God is expressed through service to mankind. We must see *Nārāyaṇa* (God) in *Nara* (man).

Radhakrishnan is an optimist. He foresees redemption and a life divine for the entire human race. "All individuals are destined to gain life eternal, for, as a Hindu text says, *We are children of immortality (Amṛtasya putrāḥ)*."<sup>19</sup>

18. J. H. Muirhead, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952) p. 476.

19. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 115.

God is not only inside us ; He is both inside and outside. The Divine Mother showed me in the Kali Temple that everything is Chinmaya, the Embodiment of Spirit ; that it is She who who has become all this—the image, myself, the utensils of worship, the door-sill, the marble floor. Everything is indeed Chinmaya. The aim of prayer, or spiritual disciplines, of chanting the name and glories of God, is to realize just that.

—Sri Ramakrishna

# The Buddha's Dhammapada

DR. YOG DHYAN AHUJA

*The importance of the Dhammapada—one of the sublime spiritual scriptures of the world, is highlighted by Dr. Yog Dhyān Ahuja. The author is a professor of Philosophy at the Metropolitan College of Denver ; Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.*

THE conspicuous importance of the Buddha's *Dhammapada* as a fundamental text of Buddhism has been graphically emphasized in Hermann Oldenberg's words:

For the elucidation of Buddhism nothing better could happen than that, at the very outset of Buddhist studies, there should be presented to the student by an auspicious hand the *Dhammapada*, that most beautiful and richest of collections of proverbs, to which anyone who is determined to know Buddhism must over and over again return.<sup>1</sup>

Believed to be the original utterances of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, the *Dhammapada* has a prominence of its own. There is an aura of sublimity around the *Dhammapada* which makes it second to none among the Buddhist scriptures. The canon of the Theravada Buddhism (i.e., the School of Elders in Buddhism) is preserved in the Pali language in three compilations, termed collectively the *Tipitaka* (Sanskrit: *Tripitaka*), the Three *Pitakas* or Baskets. These are: *The Vinaya Pitaka*, on Discipline, consisting of five books ; *The Sutta Pitaka*, containing the Discourses of the Buddha in five *Nikāyas* or collections, and *The Abhidhamma Pitaka*, a total of seven works on the Doctrine.

The *Dhammapada* is a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* which is, in turn, one of

the five *Nikāyas* or collections grouped under the *Sutta Pitaka*. The title *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Pali, *Khuddaka*; Sanskrit, *Kṣhudraka*, meaning small) suggests its being a collection of minor works. It appears, however, that regardless of their size, those texts which were not or could not be placed in other groups have been included in this compilation. The *Khuddaka Nikāya*, therefore, may be understood to be the supplementary collection.

The Pali *Dhammapada* consists of four hundred and twenty-three verses which do not happen to be uniform in metre or in the quantity of their lines. These verses are arranged under twenty-six different headings, the selections being named as various *Vaggos*,<sup>2</sup> i.e., classifications or chapters. The arrangement again is arbitrary as numerous verses do not strictly belong to the subject matter of the title under which they have been placed. There are numerous repetitions, partial and near complete, in the text of the *Dhammapada*.

The Chinese and the Tibetan versions of the *Dhammapada* have their agreements and disagreements with the Pali text. An English translation of the Chinese rendering was

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1. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, Trans. into English by William Hoey (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1882) pp. 194-95.

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2. *Vagga*: (i) a class, troop, multitude, company, bribe, party. R. C. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language* (London: 1875) p. 545.

(ii) Collection (*Vagga*): Max Muller, *The Dhammapada: The Sacred Books of the East* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1924) Introduction: p. xl.

published by Samuel Beal in 1878.<sup>3</sup> The total number of chapters in the Chinese work come to thirty-nine as compared to the twenty-six in Pali. This Chinese work, as described by Samuel Beal, is one of the four major renderings which could be called the *Dhammapada* in the Chinese language.

A Tibetan rendering of the *Dhammapada* discovered by Schiefner consists of thirty-three chapters and contains more than one thousand verses. Of these only one fourth have substantial similarity with the Pali text.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, a collection of Buddhist proverbs in Kharoshti script and written in the first or the second century A.D. was recovered by John Brough and published in London in 1962 under the title of *Gandhari Dhammapada*.

Referring to the contents of the *Dhammapada*, almost half of these are estimated to have been culled from different ancient religious works, including Buddhist scriptures such as the *Therā Gāthā* and the *Theri Gāthā*, as well as the *Upaniṣads*, the classical epic *Mahābhārata* and the law book, *Manu Smṛti*.

The dating of the *Dhammapada* is linked with the time of the compilation of the Pali canon. The famous Buddhist scholar Buddhaghosha, maintains that the Buddhist scriptures were given their final shape at the First Council, held immediately after the death of the Buddha around 477 B.C., and this is the view commonly held by the Buddhists. The *Milindā Panhā*, which belongs to the beginning of the Christian era, contains explicit mention of the *Dhammapada*. There are numerous quota-

tions from the *Dhammapada* in the *Katha Vatthu* attributed to Tissa Moggaliputta (Sanskrit, Tishya Maudgaliputra, fl. 242 B.C.). It is said that *Appamadavaggo*, a chapter of the *Dhammapada*, was recited to King Ashoka (259-222 B.C.). Modern scholars, however, hold the view that in its prevalent form the Buddhist canon was formulated sometime after the Second Council held in 377 B.C. and before or during the Third Council in 242 B.C.

F. Max Muller concludes his discussion about the date of the *Dhammapada* with the following remarks:

I cannot, therefore, see any reason why we should not treat the verses of the *Dhammapada*, if not as the utterances of Buddha, at least as what were believed by the members of the Council under Ashoka, in 242 B.C., to have been the utterances of the founder of their religion.<sup>5</sup>

There are some dates significantly worthy of note in this connection. While accepting 557 B.C. as the year of Siddhartha Gautama's birth, his *Nirvāṇa* took place in the year 477 B.C. as also the First Council at Rajagriha, under Kaśyapa, Ānanda and Revata in 377 B.C. Ashoka's reign lasted from 259 till his death in 222 B.C. He is known to have converted to Buddhism in 256 B.C. The Pali canon is believed to have been consolidated, at the latest, under Tishya Maudgaliputra in 242 B.C. In 420 A.D. Buddhaghosha compiled his commentaries on the Pali texts.

Among the books attributed to Buddhaghosha is also the work *Dhammapada Atthakathā*,<sup>6</sup> the commentary on the *Dhammapada*.<sup>7</sup> Buddhaghosha is well known as the author of the encyclopedic work in

5. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii-iv.

6. *Atthakathā*: Sanskrit *Arthakathā*, i.e. commentary.

7. For some of the other commentaries, etc., see Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, *loc. cit.*, p. x, Introduction footnote.

3. *Dhammapada with Accompanying Narratives*, Trans. from the Chinese by Samuel Beal: First Published 1878; third edition (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971).

4. Vide Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, p. lx.

Pali entitled the *Visuddhimagga* and numerous other books. However, in language and style the *Atthakathā* differs from his other authentic writings. Consequently, the scholars in general are not inclined to accept the validity of his authorship of this work. The difference of language and style, though, has been also attributed to the variation of the subject matter.<sup>8</sup>

### *Dhammapada and the Pali Studies*

The first important work in Pali studies by the western scholars was Clough's *Pali Grammar* which appeared from Colombo in 1824. He was followed by George Turnour whose edition of the complete text of the historical work *Mahavansha*, or the *Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, was published as early as 1837. In 1855 Professor Vincent Fausboll brought out his Latin edition of the *Dhammapada*. While discussing the 'discovery of Pali', Dr. T.W. Rhys Davids<sup>9</sup> considers Professor Fausboll's edition of the *Dhammapada* with its Latin translation to be of 'utmost service' and as the 'second landmark in the story of our knowledge of Pali', the first place being assigned to George Turnour. The earliest lexicographical work in this language, R.C. Childers' *Pali Dictionary* was published in 1875. The *Dhammapada* became the first religious text to be translated from Pali into a western language.

The interest of western scholars in Pali literature has been growing ever since. Max Muller shares the view with other scholars that the most favourite Pali text seems to have been the *Dhammapada*.<sup>10</sup> Some of the

renderings of the *Dhammapada* in various western languages may be enumerated as follows: In English by Max Muller (1881), James Gray (1881) and F. L. Woodward (1935); in French by Fernand Hu (1878) and R. M. de Maratray (1931); in German by A. Weber (1860), Leopold Von Schroeder (1892), K. E. Neumann (1893), Walter Mark Graf (1912), Dahlke (1919) and L. Otto Frankle (1923); in Italian by P. E. Pavolini (1908); in Latin by Professor Vincent Fausboll (1855) and in Polish by St. Fr. Michalski-Iwjiński (1925), among others.

Suriyagoda Sumangala Thera's edition of the Pali text in Roman script was published in 1914.

### *The Title*

The title *Dhammapada*, a combination of two words—*Dhamma* and *Pada*—like certain other Buddhist terms, is not free from ambiguity. *Dhamma* is the Pali word for *Dharma* in Sanskrit which, in its older form, appears as *Dharman* in the *Rg Veda*. *Dharma* has several significations such as doctrine, duty, virtue and religion. In Buddhism the term '*Dhamma*' has a diversity of meanings. Although in general, it may signify the Buddhist Doctrine or Law, or the duty of a Buddhist, it may also be interpreted as 'the religious text', 'quality', and also 'form'. Oldenberg observes that:

The word *Dhamma*, 'order', 'law', usually signifies in Buddhist terminology, 'essence', 'idea', insofar as the essence of anything constitutes its own immanent law. Thus the word is also used as the most general designation of the doctrine or truth preached by the Buddha.<sup>11</sup>

It appears pertinent to study some of the contexts in which the word *Dhamma* occurs

8. *2500 Years of Buddhism*, General editor, Prof. P.V. Bapat (Delhi: Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1964) p. 190.

9. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896) pp. 47-48.

10. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, Introd. p. x.

11. Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, English Trans. by William Hoey (Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1882) p. 250, footnote.

in the *Dhammapada*. The word *Dhamma* implies elements of being, or forms, for instance in the statement that "All the *Dhammas* are non-Self." (Verse no. 279). In the two expressions that follow, the word '*Dhammas*' apparently signifies qualities or virtues: "The *Dhammas* of the good, never grow old." (Verse 151) and "Of the *Dhammas*, freedom from attachment is the best" (273). One of the verses of the *Dhammapada* exhorts: "Do not pursue the *Hina* (ignoble) *Dhammam*"<sup>12</sup> (167). Evidently the word *Dhamma*, in these instances, stands for principle, way of life, or doctrine.

The words '*Dhammam Sucharitam*' occur in two verses that succeed the above and may be translated as: *Sucharitam*, that is, virtuous and *Dhammam*, that is the Doctrine.<sup>13</sup> In the examples that follow the term *Dhamma* expressly conveys the sense of doctrine: "One who violates the *Dhamma*" (176); "Superhuman delight comes from the discernment of *Dhamma*" (373); "He who imbibes the *Dhamma* lives in happiness with a serene mind" (79); "On drinking the nectar of the love of *Dhamma*" (205) and "On hearing the *Dhammas*" (82).

There are several other verses in which the word *Dhamma* seemingly has been used in the sense of the Doctrine. To quote one of such instances: "Those who follow the *Dhamma* after the *Dhamma* has been well-preached to them, go over to the other shore beyond the dominion of death, which is difficult to cross" (86).

A clear illustration of the word *Dhamma* in the traditional Buddhist sense of Doctrine occurs in the verse: "He who takes refuge with the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* (the Order), perceives the four *Aryan* (noble) truths with clear wisdom" (190).

The same interpretation of *Dhamma* finds support also in the various combinations of this word: *Dhammattham* (217) or *Dhammattho* (256) that is one established in the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine; *Dhammadharo* (occurring twice in 259), that is the guardian of the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine; *Dhammagata* (297), one with thoughts set on the *Dhamma* or the Doctrine.

Similar to *Dhamma*, the word *Pada* also has diverse interpretations. *Pada* may mean course, path, foot, base, position, body, portion, word, or verse. Of great significance in this connection, is the verse number 21, which asserts that *Appamādo* (*non-'Pamāda'*, Pali or *non-'Pramāda'*, Sanskrit), that is alertness, means the *Padam* or *Pada* of *Amṛta* (immortality) and *Pamādo* (Skt., *Pramāda*) or carelessness, is the *Padam* or *Pada* of death. Referring to the former part, Max Muller translates the sentence as "Earnestness is the path of immortality".<sup>14</sup> Dr. P. L. Vaidya interprets these words as "Earnestness or zeal is the way to *Nibbāna* (immortality)".<sup>15</sup> Dr. Radhakrishnan gives two different interpretations: "Vigilance is the path that leads to eternal life"<sup>16</sup> and "Vigilance is the abode of eternal life."<sup>17</sup>

Again, in certain cases, the entire term *Dhammapada* has been interpreted differently by different scholars. These renderings include among others: 'Footsteps of Religion', according to Gogerly! 'The Paths of Religion' as translated by Spence Hardy;<sup>18</sup>

14. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, Introd. p. ix.

15. Dr. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1934) p. 55.

16. Dr. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966) Introd. footnote, p. 1.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

18. (i) Vide Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, Introd. p. liii.

(ii) "Footsteps of Religion" by Sir Hari Singh Gour, *The Spirit of Buddhism* Calcutta: 1929) Introd. p. xii.

12. Max Muller translates it as (evil) Law.

13. Max Muller translates these as laws of Virtue.

'A Path to Virtue' by Epiphanius Wilson;<sup>19</sup> 'A Line of the *Dhamma*' (i.e., Doctrine), or portion thereof as rendered by Trevor Ling;<sup>20</sup> 'Steps in Teaching' by Smith;<sup>21</sup> 'A Step to Piety' by Vaidya<sup>22</sup> and 'Religious Word or Utterances' by Bapat.<sup>23</sup> Juan Mascaro's translation bears the title, '*The Dhammapada, The Path of Perfection*'.<sup>24</sup> As Samuel Beal points out, the Chinese seemingly interpret the term *Dhammapada* as 'Scriptural Texts or Verses'.<sup>25</sup> The idea of religious utterances as the interpretation of the title *Dhammapada* is apparently favoured by R. C. Childers<sup>26</sup> and by Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids.<sup>27</sup>

Discussing the wording of verses number 44 and 45, and D' Alwis' translation of a passage from Buddhaghosha's commentary, Max Muller observes that "The Path of Virtue, or Footsteps of the Law, was the idea most prominent in the mind of those

who originally framed the title of this collection of verses.<sup>28</sup>

The two verses referred to above are given in their translation: "*Who will not pick up the well-taught Dhammapada even as a skilled person picks up the (right) flower?*" These words are repeated, with slight variation, in (45): "*The disciple will pick up the well-taught Dhammapada even as a skilled person picks up the (right) flower.*"

The words '*Dhammapada*' in the above verses could as well be interpreted as 'religious verses'.

Rahula Sankrityayana<sup>29</sup> and Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita<sup>30</sup> both take the term in the sense of 'religious verses'.

Quite importantly, an interesting comparison has been made in a verse in the *Dhammapada* as under:

*Better it is to recite Ekam Dhammapadam (a single word or line of the Doctrine) on hearing which one finds peace, than to repeat a hundred Gāthās (evidently implying a common Śloka or verse) made up of meaningless words (102).*<sup>31</sup>

The reading '*Dhammapada*' and its translation: 'a word or verse', have been given by P. L. Vaidya,<sup>32</sup> Rahula Sankrityayana,<sup>33</sup> Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita,<sup>34</sup> and also by

(Continued on page 275)

19. Epiphanius Wilson, *Sacred Books of the East* (New York: Colonial Press, 1900) Introduction to the *Dhammapada*, p. 113.

20. Trevor Ling, *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1981) p. 82.

21. F. Harold Smith, *The Buddhist Way of Life* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951) p. 21.

22. Dr. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada*, p. 97.

23. Dr. P. V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 18.

24. Juan Mascaro, *The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973).

25. Samuel Beal, *The Dhammapada*, Introductory Remarks: p. 1.

26. Childers, *A Dictionary of the Pali Language—Dhammapadam*: "A religious sentence, name of one of the books of the Tipitaka, body or portion of *Dhamma* (Dharma + Pada).

27. Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids & Dr. William Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary* (Surrey: 1925) pp. 171-74. Pada—a line or stanza of the *Dhamma*, a sentence containing an ethical aphorism, a portion or piece of the *Dhammapada*. In the latter meaning given as four main subjects...As name of person...title of a canonical book contained in the *Khuddaka Nikaya*.

28. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, pp. liv-lv.

29. *Dhammapadam*, Pali & Sanskrit with translation and commentary (Lucknow: 1965) p. 21.

30. *Dhammapada*, Pali with Hindi translation and commentary (Varanasi: 1968), pp. 27-28.

31. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Dhammapada*, pp. 92-93 gives the reading as *Ekam Gathapadam* for *Ekam Dhammapadam*.

32. P. L. Vaidya, *The Dhammapada*, p. 63.

33. Rahula Sankrityayana, *The Dhammapadam*, Pali and Sanskrit with commentary in Hindi (Lucknow: 1965) p. 48.

34. Bhikshu Dharma Rakshita, *The Dhammapada*, Pali with commentary in Hindi (Varanasi: 1968) pp. 71-72.

# Ethical and Moral Values in Education

PROF. K. RAMA RAO

(Concluding Part)

*The author's discussion on the methodology for imparting moral and spiritual values to the younger generation is concluded in this article.*

## *Conscience—Not a Dependable Judge of Moral Issues*

CONTRARY to commonly held belief, conscience or 'the inner voice' is not innate. It is acquired, but it can develop in one only in the midst of human society. The level of development of conscience is limited by the level it exists in any given society of which the child is a member.

Conscience can also be wrongly trained to become rigid, or it may die. The conscience of a religious or political fanatic tells him that his religion or political theory alone is the best. The conscience of a corrupt official or politician does not prevent him from misusing his position for selfish ends. Conscience cannot always help in solving all moral issues or resolving all moral conflicts. Only education in values and ideals can help where conscience may fail. How are values imbibed?

Values are acquired and interiorized through the process of *imitation, suggestion* and *identification*. Hence parents, teachers and others concerned with value development should expose children to worthy examples so that they may acquire the desirable values. They should also offer sympathetic guidance and valid reasons when correcting the child's behaviour. Any negligence here may result in stagnation of moral development. Such a child continues to depend on external advice and cannot acquire moral autonomy. Further, any cruel or harsh

treatment of children exhibiting immoral tendencies may also result in the child's hatred and aversion for the very values which are desired to be interiorized. Two well-known sayings in Sanskrit literature very nicely indicate the right process and attitude towards value development:

(1) *Śanaiśanairvinīyante  
tarjanaiḥ toṣanairapi  
navāiva aśwāḥ kuśalairbālāḥ  
capala cetasaḥ*

(2) *Bālāḥ putro nītivākyopacāraihi  
kārye kārye yatnataḥ śikṣanīyaḥ  
lekhāagnā yāmapātre vicitrā  
nā sau nāsam pākakālepiyāti*

(1) Children's minds are fickle; parents ought to train them for character slowly but consistently, sometimes with threats and at other times with satisfactions—as in taming a young horse.

(2) Children should be taught in every way; in every type of action. Do we not see the figures etched in the wet clay of an unbaked pot even after the pot is burnt?

The harmonious combination of moral and spiritual education which the Rama-krishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE) of Mysore, has been implementing for its B. Ed. trainees over the past fifteen years, with some tangible results, will encourage other educational institutions to introduce *Secular Moral Education* as

part of their educational programmes. What should be the goals of such education? Let us consider some viewpoints currently held on the issue before we present our own:

I. John Wilson,<sup>1</sup> researcher at Oxford, has recommended for moral development five 'moral components' or abilities. They are self-explanatory:

(a) Consideration for others.

(b) An awareness of feelings in one's self and in others.

(c) An ability to collect data (to solve moral issues)

(d) An ability to take the right moral decisions.

(e) A will to act on the decisions.

II. Nottingham Professor Kay Williams<sup>2</sup> lists 'Primary Moral Traits and Attitudes (P.M.T. & P.M.A.) as:

(a) P.M.T.—Making right moral judgements, postponing gratification of desire, treating other humans with dignity, and being flexible, creative and dynamic in moral decisions.

(b) P.M.A.—Rationality, altruism, autonomy and owning responsibility for one's (both right and wrong) decisions.

III. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, constituted a working group to review the teacher training programmes with a view to promote education in values. The Committee was of the view that education in values should be accomplished only through the existing school curricula and activities. It also suggested a list of moral and spiritual values to be developed, along

with values in physical education, emotional education, mental development and aesthetic development. (In our opinion these latter also form a part of moral education since they also dwell on grace, beauty, harmony, perseverance, impartiality, vision of beauty, and so on.) The Committee also recommended other values, including sincerity, faithfulness, obedience to what one considers the Highest, equanimity of mind and pursuit of the Ideals—the Deepest, Highest and Ultimate.

IV. The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) published a list of eighty-four values, most of which are mentioned already. A few others are: Secularism, and Respect for all religions, Universal Truth, Universal Love, Self-discipline, Purity, Common cause, and Valuing national and civic property.

V. The *Satya Sai Institute* has categorized virtues under five values, namely: *Satya*, *Shanti*, *Ahimsā*, *Dharma* and *Prema* (Truth, Peace, Non-violence, Dharma, and Love). Taking these as the basis, the DSERT, Karnataka, Bangalore, has attempted to re-list the eighty-some values of the NCERT under one or the other of the above heads. They have also suggested methods of teaching and evaluating techniques for a sample of the values in a book published by them designed for teacher-trainees at Elementary Education level.

The foregoing brief survey on current thinking tells us that education in values can be attempted through—

(a) broad moral principles, traits and attitudes

(b) basic values as goals supported by virtues, and secular, universal, moral and spiritual concepts.

The difference in thinking is limited to whether moral education should be attempted only through the existing school subjects

1. John Wilson: Director of Research, Formington Trust Research Unit, Oxford (Author of *Introduction to Moral Education*).

2. Kay Williams. Author of *Moral Education*, and Professor, Nottingham College of Education, London.



and activities, or through these as well as providing for separate periods allotted for values as a special subject.

The Association of Catholic schools in India and the DSERT, Karnataka, are for providing separate periods for the subject and they suggest also techniques of teaching and evaluation.

While there is full agreement on the necessity for education in values, the only hitch is how it should be accomplished. There are three approaches, besides the most important personal example of the teacher: They are—*Integrated*, *Incidental* and *Direct*. The first two have been there all these years. The *Integrated* approach consists in teaching values for concomitant learning through different school subjects and activities. The *Incidental* approach consists in advising and guiding children whenever they are found to be immoral. The most important shortcomings of these two approaches are—

(a) They do not set definite goals and employ only hit-and-miss tactics ;

(b) They are neither consistent nor comprehensive either with respect to the subject matter covered by the programme or with respect to the children.

(c) Tangible results have not been forthcoming through them because neither teachers nor students take them seriously, as shown by experience.

Hence it is necessary to make use of the *Direct* approach in addition to the first two. It not only aims at definite and clear objectives, but helps to keep the other two approaches active and useful. Two important objections against the *Direct* approach are (1) that there is *not enough subject matter* for value education, and (2) that values can only be *'caught and not taught'*.

There is no substance in the first objection. Literature in its several forms in every

language, and the fine arts, culture, music, and so many other areas can provide enough material for value education for classes one to twelve. Philosophy, comparative religions and professional ethics may be useful sources for the higher levels.

The second objection also cannot stand, for two reasons:

(1) Many values have to be taught and cannot be left to be 'caught'.

(2) There is hardly any worthwhile value to be 'caught' nowadays in several sectors of our prevailing social environment.

The *Direct* approach is, therefore, inevitable and also feasible. Its goals can be fully secular. In our opinion it can be based on three important universal and eternal values and achieved through virtuous conduct. Besides these, there have to be some values for a successful national life and for world citizenship.

The chart (*Overleaf*), indicating broadly the goals in value education, serves also as a guide for content in the subject. Any one of the items can be chosen and used in the *Direct* approach, bringing illustrations and examples from life situations, stories, biographies and such other sources. Besides, certain units among the existing school subjects and activities can be used to achieve these ends. Literature of all kinds—poetry, prose, drama, stories, biographies, parables, *stokas*, proverbs and real-life situations can be used in the *Direct* approach.

Besides co-curricular activities, certain other special activities such as moral-cum-spiritual retreats, discussion of issues involving moral questions, social services like tree-planting, slum-clearance, road construction or repairing, visits to places of worship, visits to patients in hospitals, debris removal, wiping off useless writings on the walls, School campus cleaning and many other

DHARMA (as an intrinsic value) (for the pursuit of Eternal Values of)			DHARMA (as an instrumental value)
BEAUTY	LOVE	TRUTH	WORLDLY VALUES
1. Exercises for securing health and beauty of the body.	1. Sympathy, Kindness, Charity & related virtues.	1. Sincerity, honesty, Truthfulness, Faithfulness, and related virtues.	1. Capacity for moral decisions at national and international levels.
2. Healthy habits in eating, drinking, reading, and speaking.	2. Nobility, Magnanimity, and related virtues.	2. Duty, responsibility, Dignity of labour, & related virtues.	2. Concern for equality, freedom, national integration, international brotherhood and safety of public property.
3. Cleanliness Orderliness, Discipline of mind and body.	3. Altruism, Service, Self-sacrifice.	3. Loyalty, Gratitude, Patriotism, Courage.	3. Concern for purity of the environment and prevention of its pollution.
4. Obedience to rules, respect for elders & humility.	4. Brotherhood: (family, society, National, International).	4. Democratic spirit, self-reliance, self-respect, Love of peace, & related virtues.	4. Concern for ecological balance everywhere & Protecting civic & National property.
5. Ability in cultural aspects & appreciation thereof.	5. Impartiality in Justice, & equanimity of mind.	5. Scientific temper & moral thinking.	5. Concern for world peace & Secularism.

activities can be employed to evoke and develop civic consciousness, moral consciousness and devotion to duty.

The list of goals in the table can be used in a hierarchical fashion; those in the first column mostly for the elementary school level and those in the succeeding columns for the higher classes. The table can be used as a basis for framing a syllabus in value education for any standard or any

stage of school education. The same virtue can be taught in different standards using new illustrations. The table is not sacrosanct. The other sources mentioned earlier may also be utilized in the Direct approach to value education.

#### *Teaching Techniques in the Direct Approach*

It is necessary to indicate at least briefly how a virtue, a story, or biography can be

dealt with in the Direct approach. Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education has been using these materials in the following way. As a preliminary condition to value education through any approach it is necessary to keep the school environment—physical, intellectual and the emotional—conducive to moral development. This means healthy and clean physical surroundings, healthy and happy relationships between students and teachers, and between teachers and the head of the Institute. These things are absolutely essential for any education in values.

### *Techniques Used by B. Ed. Trainees at RIMSE*

The Direct approach at RIMSE consists of three teaching-learning techniques:

- (1) Learning through reasoning—Inducto-deductive
- (2) Learning through discovery
- (3) Learning to be and become—an activity-approach

(1) *In learning through reasoning*: The following sources are made use of: Moral principles,<sup>3</sup> stories, biographies and commonly known virtues. Just a brief description of the steps in a lesson on virtue is given:

After a brief introduction appropriate to the particular virtue to be examined: (a) Its meaning is recalled and discussed through examples; (b) Its necessity, and the consequences to the individual and society if there were an absence of the virtue, or if the opposite of the virtue were to be practised; (c) Problems and difficulties faced in

3. A few moral Principles: (a) *Paropakārah punyāya pāpāya parapiḍanām* (b) *Dharmo rakṣati rakṣitah* (c) Never does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love. (d) Happiness comes to him through whom happiness goes to others.

the cultivation of the virtue are elicited from the class, followed with discussion about how those can be overcome; (d) Assignments are given appropriate to the virtue—to give illustrations, anecdotes, applications in life and so on.

In dealing with biographies, the difficulties faced by the hero in his/her life, in practising and implementing the values he/she cherished, the contributions he/she made to mankind or to the nation are narrated, bringing in, at the same time, questions drawn forth on how in any difficult situation ordinary people would behave compared with how the hero reacted to it in an exemplary manner and proved his worth.

(2) *In the Discovery approach*: The following sources are made use of: Life situations (observed personally and reported in the newspapers), proverbs, parables, *slokas*/poems, prose pieces.

After a brief introduction based on the value or virtue implicit in the subject matter the following steps are followed for poems, prose pieces and parables: (a) Reading aloud by the teacher, (b) Giving the meaning of difficult words appropriate to the context, (c) Putting one or two central questions to discover the value implicit, (d) Silent reading by pupils and answering the central questions, (e) Supplementary questions for elaboration of the content and (f) Oral reading by a few pupils and an appropriate assignment.

(3) *In the Activity approach*: Students are given an activity mentioned before, and the teacher guides them and supervises. The students are informed of the activity well in advance and a workable plan is prepared by the teacher in consultation with the head of the institution and others concerned and then executed. The results are evaluated and a report prepared mentioning the level of its success and the problems faced, etc.

*Spiritual-cum-Moral Retreat as an Activity*

In the Activity approach a spiritual-cum-moral retreat may be organized for a period of one to three days, during which time the participants live a community life observing complete silence except during free time, games and in *śramadān* (working sessions). The programme consists of:

(1) Talks on great personalities in science, government, religion and social service. At the end of each talk there is a brief question and answer session.

(2) Prayer and meditation.

(3) Study and reflection.

*An Evaluation Poll*

It will not be out of place to mention here in tabular form the reactions of high school pupils to the moral education lessons they were exposed to. A study was undertaken by the author through a questionnaire distributed to about 150 students consisting of both boys and girls (approx. 50% each). Their responses to some of the specific questions were as given below:

1. *Reasons for their liking at least some moral lessons:*

- (a) created interest in morality ... 93  
 (b) contained some moral for daily life ... 100  
 (c) helped to think of my future ... 79  
 (d) helped to think of an ideal for life ... 83

2. *Reasons for their liking the activity lessons:*

- (a) taught me dignity of labour ... 45  
 (b) it was a nation-building activity on a small scale ... 40  
 (c) taught me how to cooperate with others ... 70  
 (d) made me realize the strain in manual work ... 44

- (e) helped me to understand human feelings ... 60

(The number of responses to question two was low because activity lessons could not be organized in some schools for some unavoidable reasons.)

3. *Reasons for moral education to be a separate subject, in their opinion:*

- (a) not all morals can be taught at home or can be caught ... 79  
 (b) can make me a better person ... 96  
 (c) can help eradicate social evils ... 85  
 (d) doubtful whether effective moral education can be done through other subjects alone ... 57

To the question to mark their order of preference in the subject matter for moral education, the following were the responses:

Biographies	95	Parables	39
Stories	87	Poems	36
Virtues	68	Ślokas	31
Life-situations	44	Śramadan	17

To the question as to some of the benefits they derived from moral lessons the responses were as noted below:

Love of the nation	106
Better thinking ability	91
Better study habits	86
Better conduct	80
Will-power to avoid evil habits & unbecoming acts	70

A few other helps and benefits not mentioned in the questionnaire, but stated by pupils were:

- to face mishaps boldly  
 —love for the poor  
 —to become like Gandhiji or Bhagat Singh  
 —to develop dignity of labour  
 —to avoid over ambition  
 —not to waste materials

One more question that arises in the teaching of value development is whether it can be or should be evaluated. There can be two types of evaluation in this subject. They are (examinations of) (a) Knowledge of values, and (b) Moral behaviour.

The former is like any other subject and can be evaluated through objective questions or/and short answer questions on the meaning of moral terms, concepts, principles, stories, biographies and other material.

The second, moral behaviour, is not only difficult to evaluate but data can only be collected through direct observation (not being noticed by the individual) and through the maintenance of anecdotal records. Even after noticing an immoral or wrong beha-

viour it should not be used for penalizing the individual. Such records have to be used only for tendering advice and guidance.

The best instrument for testing morality is one's own process of moral development flowering into full autonomy.

Whatever is being done in moral education by the B. Ed. trainees of RIMSE, Mysore, is appreciated by the teachers and heads of the different schools. Syllabi are prepared in *Moral Education* for the eighth, ninth and tenth standards so as to provide adequate material to the trainees. There is still a lot of scope for improvement in this field. It is our sincere opinion that the Direct approach can be used for effective education in ethical values. This is supported by the students also as reflected in their reactions to the questionnaire.

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## THE BUDDHA'S DHAMMAPADA

(Continued from page 268)

Max Muller,<sup>35</sup> who discusses the difficulty of accepting the translation as 'sentences', but does not reject the soundness of its meaning in the singular, that is, 'a word' or 'a line'.<sup>36</sup>

As it is, the *Dhammapada* is the *Dhammapada*, a scripture enjoying a distinction of its own. In the literature of the world, its universal appeal entitles it to a place of exalted prestige. For the Therāvāda Buddhists it is the embodiment of their Master's teachings. Reading the *Dhammapada* is next to hearing the sacred word from the Lord himself. As Oldenberg observes, "The proverbial wisdom of the *Dhammapada*

gives the truest picture of all the Buddhist thought and feeling."<sup>37</sup> From the earliest times all the Buddhists in general, and the Theravadins in particular, have considered the *Dhammapada* as a most revered manual of their faith. The regular chanting of the verses from the *Dhammapada* forms a most sacred tradition in Buddhism. In several countries, particularly in South and Far East Asia, countless monks wearing yellow or yellowish brown robes as well as numberless lay persons still memorize and recite with all reverence, a part or all the four hundred and twenty-three verses of the *Dhammapada*, thus keeping alive a practice which started back in history, some two thousand five hundred years ago.

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35. Max Muller, *The Dhammapada*, p. 31.

36. *Ibid.*, p. lv.

37. Oldenberg, p. 219.

# REVIEWS & NOTICES

RAMAYANA—From the Original Valmiki, by Makhanlal Sen, Published by Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1989. 711 pages plus vii, Price Rs 95/-.

Despite the fact that Indian society has undergone many changes since the times that the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* were first composed, the two epics continue to fascinate human minds. As the author of the book under review says in his excellent introductory chapter for those who wish to understand the complex socio-cultural life pattern of even modern India, our epics are of immense help.

The book under review is the English translation of the Sanskrit *Vālmīki Rāmāyana* and, as claimed by the publishers, it is supposed to be the only authentic English translation. Translated in 1927, the present book is the first paper-back edition. It is a slightly abridged version of the original.

Although one cannot find fault with the translator's knowledge of the English language, the syntax has suffered in many places, particularly where dialogues are presented, due perhaps to an attempt at literal translation. Any attempt at literal translation, and specifically that of a poetical work, diminishes the beauty of the original and fails to express the idiom and subtle nuances well. A literal translation of a succinct language like Sanskrit is an extremely hard task.

The footnotes provided by the author are interesting. He is at considerable pains to prove that the *Vānaras* were not monkeys and apes, but local tribesmen, and that Jatāyu was not a bird but a tribal decorating himself with feathers! He tries to prove that there were no two distinct races like the Aryans and Dravidians. He thoroughly disapproves of Vibhishana's character and considers him a disgrace to his race!

The translator is a Bengali. The Bengali language does not have the equivalent of the letter 'v'. Therefore, proper nouns with 'v' have been transliterated as 'b'. For example, Vali is mentioned as Bali. While this is understandable, inexplicably the Sanskrit 'b' has been changed into 'v', and as a result Kubera becomes Kuvera.

The book contains innumerable printing errors. More glaringly, in places, large parts of a sentence are missing. Unpardonably, there is a printing error even on the front cover, and the title reads *Valimiki Ramayana*. A voluminous and valuable book such as this should have been bound with greater care. The pages come apart even after a single perusal.

To those who do not know Sanskrit the book will be a useful source to help know the contents of the original *Vālmīki Rāmāyana*. We hope the errors pointed out will be corrected in the next reprint.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao

WORDS OF THE MOTHER, PART 1 AND PART 2. Published by Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Pondicherry, 605002 1989. Pages 134 and 143. Price each: Rs 18.

In a spiritual journey one has to walk all alone towards the goal. A Guru will indicate the direction and will occasionally remove obstacles in one's spiritual progress. But individual efforts are of prime importance. A spiritual aspirant has to cleanse his mind of all the dross, and burnish it, so that it can catch the reflection of the Brahman. The company of holy men is of great help for a spiritual seeker. But many may not be fortunate to have such company. They have to satisfy themselves with books containing their wisdom. The words of sages can boost the courage of a seeker of the Truth. That is why such words are treated as *Āpta-vākya*s. An *Āpta* is one whose words are worthy of belief and who is an authority.

The present collection, *Words of the Mother*, is of the category *āpta-vākya*. It is a fine collection of stray sayings of the Mother of Aurobindo Ashram. It is classified and arranged for the benefit of spiritual aspirants. *Part One* is subdivided into three sections: (I) 'Man's Relationship with the Divine'; (II) 'The Path of Yoga'; and (III) 'Elements of Yoga'. The second book, *viz. Part Two*, consists of (I) 'Difficulties'; (II) 'Human Relationships'; (III) 'Work'; (IV) 'Parts of Beings'; and (V) 'Miscellaneous Subjects'.

It will thus be seen that the range of *Words of the Mother* is quite wide. Mother herself had led the life of deep meditation and experienced fulfilment. Her words indicate this. Her words, very pithy and full of wisdom as they are, echo the eternal truth at various levels. A few examples will make this clear:

“Refuse to do anything whatsoever which leads you away from the Divine.” (Part two, page 25); “God gives Himself to His whole creation; no one religion holds the monopoly of His grace.” (Part two, page 87); “Talk as little as possible, work as much as you can.” (Part two, page 66); “Do not pretend—be: Do not promise—act; Do not dream—realize.” (Part one, page 44); “You can be entirely free from fear, when you have driven out all violence.” (Part two, page 193); “Do not mind the stupidity of others, mind your own.” (Part two, page 36).

As one reads on through these pages, one is reminded of the sayings of the Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. This is not strange, for has not Sri Ramakrishna said that ‘all jackals howl in the same tune.’?

Both the books contain glossaries of Sanskrit and other terms used, and there is a biographical sketch of the Mother. The get-up and printing are good and simple. Readers will enjoy and benefit spiritually, browsing through them.

*Dr. Narendranath B. Patil*

**BHIKSHUGITA, THE MENDICANT'S SONG**, by JUSTIN E. ABBOTT. Published by Samata Books, 10 Kamraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Road, Madras-500 006, 1989. Price Rs 45.00.

Among the eighteen *Purāṇas*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* occupies the most important and honoured place in the devotional literature of India. Eknath, an eminent Marathi Saint of the sixteenth century, made valuable contributions to Marathi devotional literature, largely in the form of commentaries, short philosophic works and *abhangas* (poetical compositions). Eknath is remembered even today for his piety and deep devotion to God. His first large work was his commentary on the eleventh *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, known as *Ekanāthi*

*Bhāgavata*, and *Bhikṣugītā*, a commentary on the twenty third chapter of the same *skandha*. Originally there were sixty-two verses in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In it Sri Krishna instructs Uddhava on the spiritual life, citing the example of a rich miser, who being pressed by circumstances, turns to mendicancy and suffers immensely for his attempts to live an honest and pious life, and who, in the midst of all insults and persecutions, maintains perfect peace of mind. Saint Eknath expanded the sixty-two verses of the Sanskrit text into a thousand and four Marathi verses in which he fully develops his thoughts on the evil results of lust for wealth, and turning to the right way of approach to God.

The book under review, as commented upon by Saint Eknath, has been translated from Marathi into English by the Rev. Justin E. Abbott. It begins with the Sanskrit Text, followed by the English translation by Swami Tapasyanandaji of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. This prepares the reader for the study of Saint Eknath's commentary. Justin E. Abbott, who had special love and fascination for oriental studies in general, and Marathi literature in particular, has translated the Marathi verses of Eknath into English with utmost care and facility.

The *Bikṣugītā* preaches a philosophy of life with special emphasis on the evil of avarice, on the virtue of controlling the mind, and on the *Bhakti-mārga*, with its essential love of God. Though essentially a work on the *Bhakti-mārga*, the reviewer feels that every serious minded person will find the work intellectually rewarding and emotionally satisfying. Be he of East or West, the reader will feel an inspiration for higher living to reach the spiritual ideals of life. Saint Eknath wished that the reading of his version of *Bhikṣugītā* might bring peace and tranquillity to those troubled by the turmoil of this earthly life.

The paper, printing and binding of the work are excellent. The glossary of Sanskrit and Marathi words, the life sketch of Eknath and the short note on *Bhikṣugītā* have enhanced the value of the book. Samata Books, Madras should be congratulated for presenting us such a splendid work.

*Sri Ranjit Kumar Acharjee*

GLIMPSES OF GREAT LIVES, BY SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA. Published by the Vedanta Society of New York, 1989, printed in India, pp. 247, Rs. 40.

*Glimpses of Great Lives* is a collection of very brief biographical sketches of some great men of the world in the fields of religion, science and culture. It is rather a unique collection in that the author has collected his *Lives* from both India and the West, and among them one finds some men of letters, some of scientific achievement, artists, literateurs and humanitarians. The names: Albert Einstein, Raja Rammohan Roy, John Wesley, Sri Aurobindo, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Lord Sri Krishna, Bhagavan Buddha, Friedreich Max Muller, Robert Browning, Mahatma Gandhi, Gauri Ma, and Madame Calve suggest the variety of the selections. Swami Tathagatananda mentions in his Preface that all were articles published in different periodicals in India before being collected for printing in this single volume. Nowhere does the Swami mention why he chose to write on so many different types of noteworthy personages, but one can after all appreciate that he has perceived the need of our times—the recognition of our one human family and recognition of nobility and human greatness without national, linguistic or religious-cultural consideration.

Browsing through these *Great Lives*, one becomes aware that not only greatness can be found in every nook and corner of the world if one chooses to look for it, but that greatness in human beings doesn't vary in quality from one society to another. One can feel reverence for the Divine Spirit on reading the life of John Wesley the same as for F. Max Muller, and for these two, a respect similar as for Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi.

All considered, Swami Tathagatananda's collection of great lives is educative. Yet for more permanent value of the work, better editing and proofreading would have eliminated the few spelling and syntactic slips. Otherwise, one would wish there were more lives included and even more expansive treatment. The book is interesting reading.

*Swami Sivaprasadananda*

A SURVEY OF HINDUISM, BY KLAUS K. KLOSTERMAIER. Published by The State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1989. 649 pages plus xvi, Price not given.

The book under review is obviously the outcome of many years of painstaking research. The author is a Professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba (Canada). He has written a lucid account of the multifaceted Hindu religious traditions with their vast interlocking philosophical dimensions—such as those embodied in the concept of *dharma*.

The book has two parts. Part One traces the philosophical background and historical development of Hinduism and identifies its essence. In so doing, the author gives a critical assessment of Hindu scriptures, viz. the *Upaniṣads*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. He cites relevant passages to demonstrate how the Hindus believe in one God and at the same time revere many gods.

Part Two gives a comprehensive survey of the three Hindu paths to liberation, viz. those of Work, Knowledge and Devotion. In the course of the discussion the author makes mention of countless sages, saints and prophets of India from time immemorial and how they realized truth through these paths.

The author analyzes incisively and illuminatively the complex religious life of the Hindus and its bearing on social, literary and mythological aspects. The numerous rituals and social practices rooted in the different doctrines of the various branches of Hinduism also get a good deal of attention. The observance of Hindu festivals and the worship of innumerable deities and saints also find a place in the book.

*A Survey of Hinduism* makes an indepth analysis of the Hindus' six systems of philosophical thought and highlights their importance. In the process, the author recognizes the great strength of Hinduism as lying in its capacity for accommodating and assimilating ideas from divergent source without surrendering its own intrinsic character. Hence the modern Hindu Renaissance is, as the author rightly shows, a regeneration of its basic strengths, brought



into focus by nineteenth and twentieth century contacts with the West.

Though carefully researched and cogently argued on the whole, the book has some factual errors. On page 87, Hanuman is described as the 'monkey king' which is only metaphorically true. On page 97, instead of Yudhishthira, Arjuna is described as the leader of the rightful claimants. Similarly, on pages 186 and 196, Vacaknavi Gargi is shown as one of the wives of the sage Yajnavalkya. In fact, Gargi was a daughter of sage Vacakna and one of the greatest of the *Upaniṣadic* seers. Balarama was not Krishna's younger brother (p. 280), but his elder brother. Finally, the years of birth of Sant Tukaram and Ramdas Swami should be 1608 A.D.

These are minor blemishes and do not greatly mar the value of the book.

With its elegant get up, numerous illustrations and very helpful bibliography, *A Survey of Hinduism* will be a valuable book for both the general reader and the specialist.

Swami Brahmasthananda

**THE SILENT PATH** by MICHAEL J. EASTCOTT; published by Rider, London, 1989; pp. 166; £ 4.95.

In a world torn by tensions, both voluntary and involuntary, individuals are bound to seek modes for their creative resolution. S/he would like not so much to repress as to recycle the manifest power behind these tensions. The process of recycling this tragically misdirected energy is intrinsic to meditative techniques. Hence the felt need for charts which, to use Paul Brunton's memorable words, "spiritualize and not sterilize" the apparently negative into the positive.

Here is one such map, a comprehensive introduction to the study of meditation which is, as the author rightly says, "an inner, silent, secret path which we carve out for ourselves." But, being secret does not mean there is something exotic (or something sordid as the die-hard Freudians would say) about it.

Viewed thus *meditation* is mediation, as Eastcott says, between what appear as binary oppositions: the body/mind, spirit/matter,

outer/inner. It is a dynamic interplay between the silent inner and the articulate outer, between the apparently cognising/experiencing 'I' and the silent/, witnessing 'Self'. Then, as the psychosynthesis idiom would put it, we become aware of the tremendous affirmation at the root of meditative techniques. "I *have* a body, but I *am not* a body; I *have* emotions but I *am not* emotions." In effect, once contraries are *seen* as mind-generated and not Self-based, we *see through* and *real-ise* ourselves to be centres of pure consciousness.

But, then, this requires what another writer has picturesquely called "minding the body and mending the mind." This would mean implicating the emotions, activating the will and above all chastening the intellect. It is what Eastcott calls "repolarizing the entire lower man". As such even what many people tend to regard as mere mechanics of meditation—a suitable place, regular time, the achievement of rhythm in practice, posture, mantra—play a crucial role. They "programme habits that develop spiritual life."

For this, clear awareness and right choice of the congenial path—among the many available—is necessary. As Eastcott frames them, we have the Reflective, the Receptive, the Creative Paths of meditation, buttressed, deepened and intensified by Invocation and Prayer. Here the role of mantra is crucial for, it is based, as the author rightly says, on the sound psychological principle that "through sound we factually affect the others, through word forms we house the potencies of thought." Above all, this is "no five-or fifteen-minutes process but belongs to the twenty-four hours of the day."

In short, on a subject which is increasingly eroded by the populist vagaries of consumer-oriented marketing, it is refreshing to come across the present book. Lucid and clear, and eminently pragmatic, *The Silent Path* (now in its third edition which is itself a pointer to its value) is marked by cool, passionless good sense. Reading it is itself an analogue to the meditative process and therefore it is indispensable for all those interested in the dynamics of inner transformation.

Dr. M. Sivaramkrishna

# PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

SURRENDER yourself wholeheartedly to God. Take refuge in Him. Pray constantly with a pure, sincere heart: "O Lord, I do not know what is good and what is bad for me. I am entirely dependent on You. Grant me what I most need for the spiritual life. Take me along the path which will lead me to the greatest good. Give me the faith and strength constantly to remember You and meditate on You."

It is no easy thing to dedicate oneself heart and soul to the Lord. Many people boast: "I have surrendered myself and my all to God. I do only what He tells me to do." But if we observe their lives we see differently. For the good they do they claim the credit and they boast of their achievements; but when adversity or trouble overtakes them they cry out against the Lord and blame Him for their misfortunes.

We judge men by their actions, but God looks into their innermost minds. Be sure of this: God runs to him who prays with a sincere heart. Be pure in heart and always make your thoughts and lips one.

Only one in a million sincerely longs for God, and few sustain that longing. Therefore you must try to intensify that longing. Whatever you do, whether you are sitting, or lying down, or eating, or working, pray constantly: "O Lord, make me able to understand and receive that grace which I know You are ready to give me." Know that your time on earth is but short, and that your real home is at the lotus feet of the Lord.

In his folly man will deny the very existence of God because of his own lack of

comprehension. He prefers to rely upon his own intellect, little realizing how unstable that intellect is. Even though what he accepts as true today he rejects as false tomorrow, yet he thinks that what appears as true to himself today is the final truth and must be accepted by all.

The Lord alone knows all the subtle ways by which a man may be deluded.

One who has known God does not limit Him. To him, God is not a matter of opinion: God is. He is boundless love and infinite mercy. He is beyond the grasp of the intellect. He who has realized God understands His mysteries. For him there is nothing hidden. The gates of knowledge are open, and he knows that he belongs to God even as God belongs to him.

Intelligence is but another name for ignorance, because its area is limited. Therefore, if a man wants to attain all knowledge and understand all mysteries, let him devote himself to the knowledge of God.

As children swing around a pillar in their play, holding tightly to it for their support, so must you hold fast to God—the Pillar of Life. Whichever path you follow, whether it be the path of work, or of devotion, or of knowledge, you will reach Him. Hold fast to the Pillar, and your life will be blessed, and you in turn will become a blessing to mankind.

*from The Eternal Companion*  
*by Swami Brahmananda*