



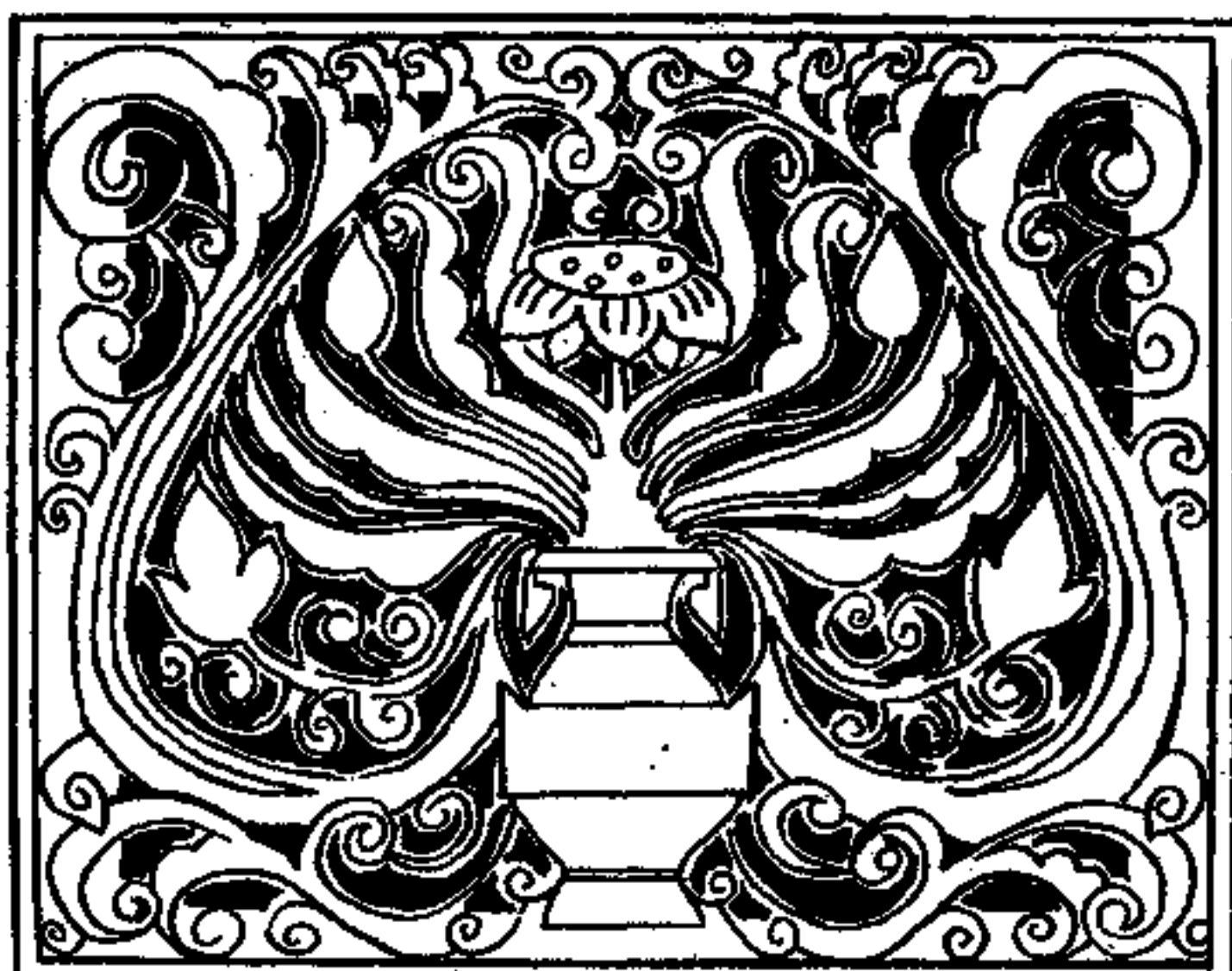
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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

Vol. 99

SEPTEMBER 1994

No. 9

Divine Wisdom

WITHOUT GOD, HUMAN LIFE IS VAIN

भारः परं पट्टकिरीटजुष्टम्
अप्युत्तमाङ्गं न नमेन्मुकुन्दम् ।
शावौ करौ नो कुरुतः सपर्या
हरेर्लसत्काञ्चनकङ्कुणौ वा ॥

जीवञ्छवो भागवताङ्घ्रिरेणुं
न जातु मर्त्योऽभिलभेत यस्तु ।
श्रीविष्णुपद्मा मनुजस्तुलस्याः
श्वसञ्छवो यस्तु न वेद गन्धम् ॥

The head of a man, though bedecked with silk turbans and diadems, is with all its adornments just a burden, if it does not bow down before the Lord. And a hand that never serves the Lord is verily a cadaverous limb in spite of the brilliant bracelets worn on it.

That man is a mere living corpse who has never contacted the dust of the feet of devotees; a breathing corpse is he who has never breathed the fragrance of the Tulasī (holy basil) leaves with which the Lord's feet have been worshipped.

बर्हायिते ते नयने नराणां
लिङ्गानि विष्णोर्न निरीक्षतो ये ।
पादौ नृणां तौ द्रुमजन्मभाजौ
क्षेत्राणि नानुव्रजतो हरेर्यौ ॥

तदश्मसारं हृदयं बतेदं
यद् गृह्यमाणैर्हरिनामधेयैः ।
न विक्रियेताथ यदा विकारो,
नेत्रे जलं गात्ररुहेषु हर्षः ॥

The eyes that are not accustomed to see the images of the Lord and holy men, are as purposeless as the eyes in the centre of a peacocks's feathers. And the feet that never tread the way to holy centres of His worship, are no better than those of trees that cannot move.

A man whose heart is unmoved—whose eyes shed not tears, and hairs stand not on end when the Lord's names are uttered—, he verily is possessed of a heart of stone.

—From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

Are Indians Religious?—III

The second objection raised was,

Why should we allow religion to influence our social life also? The scientific and secular outlook should continue to shape our life of pragmatism, freedom and creativity. Great scientific advances and benefits from technology came only after we shook off excessive religious control. Too much of religion, with its orthodoxy, conformity, selfishness and individualism, and otherworldliness, is not good.

Why we prefer secular science

We agree with you to some extent, because there are good reasons why religion as commonly practised is irrelevant to social life. At the *objective level*, first, its explanations of natural phenomena have been proved by the physical sciences to be all wrong. Second, it has no role to play in the various technologies. Third, it has no answer to its plurality, i.e. to the multiplicity of its theories on God and the world. Then, at the *subjective level*, at the level that concerns *us*, religion offers nothing compared with what we gain from the sciences (economics, political science, medicine, etc.). Second, no religion is capable of helping us cope with the extremely complex and changing society.

Thus, since its theories are irrational, its explanations are not universally true, and it gives no material benefits, we subordinate religion. On the other hand, since science has none of these defects, we give it a dominant role.

And why is it believed that science must be secular? Because the scientists say so.

How do they say that? Having disproved religion's elaborate description of the empirical world, they have dismissed the spiritual experiences too as spurious. Therefore all the sciences, those studying Nature (Physics etc.) and those affecting human beings and society (political science, economics, psychology, etc.), have remained adamantly secular.

Nevertheless, in practice it has been impossible for us to ignore the power of authenticity in the lives of prophets and saints. So, fortunately, we have not totally rejected religion, and have taken recourse to a low-key religion, confining it to our homes and places of worship.

Practical problems

Further, taking a closer view, we see some more reasons why no one of the religions if taken in its totality suits present social conditions. For instance, religion implies a generally insulated and institutionalized system of beliefs, rituals and code of conduct. We are born into it and are taught to remain loyal. Thus religion deprives us of choice or dissent. Consequently, in collective life we are forced to discard, as safely as possible, parts of our religion that are dissonant with science and the science-based educational, political and economic framework. How can any religion—down to its detailed regulation of routine, food, dress, civic laws, etc.—harmonize with the current demands of profession and social flux?

Besides, there are so many different and conflicting religious groups in our country.

So, any attempt to carry religion into public life will make India look like an arena with dozens of bulls. See how religious considerations are creating hurdles in the population-control programmes, and women's education and employment. Then there are these frequent caste-conflicts aroused by religious beliefs. We also see dominant religious groups adding to the unrest, going about destroying tribal religious cultures. Consider even simpler matters: In some parts of the country new city roads have to be realigned at great expense merely because of a mosque, a temple, a church, or a sacred tree. Then look at the carefree holy bulls and cows straying on our roads!

There is another important argument: Historically, organized religions have, given the opportunity, never failed to try their hand at the political-power game.

Would any sane person want religion to regulate the country? Certainly not.

Limitations of science

However, with every passing day the confidence behind this answer is being shaken by confusion. Today we hear people saying, 'I am not sure', instead of 'certainly not'. Why? Not because of any slackening in the pace of scientific and technological progress, but because of what is happening to us. We are being compelled to ask, Has the nett result of allowing only science and technology to shape our lives, to the near-total exclusion of religion, really helped?

Religion taught us frugality, contentment, modesty, sense-control and dependence on God—virtues all derived from a belief in God, soul and emancipation—i.e., a belief in trans-sensate realities. Science dispensed with the necessity of belief in any such reality. It riveted our attention to the sensate and the measurable, and to this world. And it gave us another set of ideas

for guidance—competition, individualism, dynamism, monetary gain, consumerism—, all derived from a secular view.

Consequently, we see that belief in God has no part to play in our collective life; for example, in preparing the country's plans for housing, industries, employment, commerce, trade, or administration. These are drawn up within the framework built by scientific knowledge. And the motives that dominate the minds of the planners are all secular.

Would any sane person want religion to regulate the country? Certainly not. ...But science has failed in a vital area: the one concerning us. The individualism nursed by it has marred family bonds, and homes have become frigid but unavoidable rest-houses.

On balance, science, we see, has succeeded only in some areas—bringing material prosperity, freeing us from superstitions, granting individual freedom, providing a common scheme for social activity, etc. But it has failed in a vital area: the one concerning us. It has left unfulfilled our longing for peace and joy, and its secularism has lured us into a desert. The individualism nursed by it has marred family bonds, and homes have become frigid but unavoidable rest-houses. Unable to stir people to their depths, even secular humanism is proving to be a weak substitute for spiritual humanism so far as the masses are concerned, because of the religious, casteistic and linguistic divisions. And two of the strong pillars of our civilization, viz the self-regulating villages and the rich diversity of cultural groups, are under unprecedented threat.

Our two mistakes

So we disagree with your idea that religion should have absolutely no influence on social life. For, it is clear we have gone

wrong somewhere. With hindsight we are able to identify two misjudgements: First, we imagined that the sciences are already complete and therefore absolutely authoritative, which they are not. Therefore, building our lives and national activities on those unfinished scientific views has become akin to building a house on shifting sand.

Neither psychology nor neurology nor anthropology has given a firm answer on what is our real nature. Nor has physics finally discovered the real nature and source of the cosmos. How can a society function smoothly if it guides itself on incomplete understanding?

Our two mistakes: First we imagined that the sciences are already complete, which they are not. Second, we demoted religion together with the spiritual values it gave us, because the scientists asserted that since religion's interpretation of the cosmos was all wrong, its mystical experiences too, the well-spring of those values, are conjectural.

Science is an ongoing search: Speculations of yesterday displace 'truths' of the day before yesterday; yesterday's 'truths' are swept aside today by another set of speculations, presented by science-priests with so much emphasis, like religion's priests, as to appear as new 'truths'—only waiting to be overthrown tomorrow by other 'truths'. And so it has been going on. The frequent revision of scientific 'truths', particularly in the fields that affect us, has reduced us to a state of rootlessness. After decades the consequences of the purely secular-scientific outlook is beginning to tell on us. Today we are not sure who we are, why we are here, why we do what we do, or what we should do differently and why. And yet we wish to go by science alone!

The second mistake was, we demoted

religion together with the spiritual values it gave us: We over-depended on the scientists' assertion that since religion's interpretation of the cosmos was all wrong, its mystical experiences too, the well-spring of those values, are conjectural. So we accepted only secular views and values.

You may say, this is no mistake, because some of these values—e.g., sense of equality, honesty, concern for others—are identical with those that religion teaches. But you miss the point that such secularized and utilitarian values lack the profundity which only religion gives. Besides, because of our secular views we have lost some typical religion-based attitudes mentioned earlier, viz sense-control, frugality, etc.

Further, we have been led to misunderstand religion. For instance, you have said that religion encourages selfishness. Perhaps you are referring to the common charge that religions induce people to withdraw from customary social activity, responsibility, etc., and practise pacifism. You are mistaken. To begin with, let us suppose religions do so. Is this better or worse than what modernism does? Going by social realities, what have secular individualism and activism blessed us with? Do we not see their end-effects—millions of unhappy families, and the exploitation of women and other vulnerable sections of society? When one person, or even thousands withdraw from too much of social involvement, money-churning, etc., and 'selfishly' seek a higher life of contentment, prayer and meditation, how are we affected? Is their 'individualism' our loss?

Or is it a gain? For there is a world of difference between the kind of 'individualism' and 'selfishness' that Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and many of their ardent followers practise, and the kind promoted by the sciences. Even centuries

after such great personalities chose to withdraw from the general social pursuits, the effects of their 'selfishness' have remained unfadingly beneficial.

The fact is that religions recommend solitude and utter non-involvement in social matters only for a select few. For all others, spiritual aspirants and lay people, religions prescribe service to others, sharing, etc. Buddhism and Jainism also, which have often been criticized as world-negating, lay great emphasis on altruism and humanism. Christianity is famous for its charity, and Islam for equality. Even Hinduism, which too has been unfairly accused of eulogizing individual *mukti* (liberation), has its scriptures saying that among all the devotees of God, the yogis, and the knowers of Brahman, he is the greatest and the dearest of God who is ever engaged in the welfare of all creatures.

Conclusions

All this leads us to certain conclusions: First, we must certainly continue to develop and use the sciences to understand the world for our benefit. But as regards the definition of 'benefit' and the values involved in the use of these sciences, we must construct them on spiritual truths, i.e. on non-sensate realities—God, soul, and a hereafter.

Second, all the virtues we are missing today are amply found in the lives of mystics. So we should accept only the mystical parts of the religions. Not their demand of organizational fidelity, conformity, compulsory participation in rituals, and unquestioning belief in their theories. Third, we want the moral teachings of religion, and we should be able to erect them on a foundation other than the belief in hell, sin, rigid religious fraternity, etc.

That is to say, we need the spiritual

essence of all the existing religions, and something more that is compatible with the national ethos. We should have a system of thought that accommodates the best of both religion and science. We can go further and say that this system should make religion scientific, and science spiritual. It should be both religion and science at the same time — the kind of thought-system that worked in scientists such as Einstein; or in the sage-scientists of ancient India who developed astronomy, medicine, mining, architecture, etc. without losing sight of God. This will bring a wholeness to our personality. It will impart a consistency to our motives and attitudes, so that we can spare ourselves the ridiculous partitioning of our being into secular and religious.

Vedanta: the ideal system

The irony is that this need for such a system should be felt in India! We have forgotten that our forefathers had developed such a system. In the pre-Islamic millennia Vedanta was the very lifeblood of this nation. A majority of educated Indians are unaware that the religion-science conflict is alien to Vedanta. Yes, Christianity and Islam being in conflict with science is historically true. Popular Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism also being inconsistent with science is true. But Vedanta? Never. And we must remember that popular Hinduism, far from being synonymous with Vedanta, is only a miserable caricature of it.

In Vedanta, religion and science are not considered as opponents. On the other hand, they are treated as two fields of knowledge gained by humanity in its struggle to understand itself and the world. Vedanta sees science as we see it today: a systematic formulation of carefully verified knowledge of the whole range of sense-perceptions (sense includes mind). So all the sciences and technologies of the past, present and future form a part of Vedanta.

Naturally, here religions as commonly understood, i.e. as systems of beliefs, are invalid. You will be astonished to know that in Vedanta, the Vedas—the most sacred scriptures of the Indian tradition—are considered to be valid only in respect of suprasensual matters. Where they say anything on questions within the range of the senses, only that much should be accepted as is reasonable.

As for religion, Vedanta sees it as the knowledge of what are beyond the senses—God, soul, and their true nature—and of the means for directly attaining that knowledge. Logically, here the measurement-oriented physical sciences have no power to investigate.

So, in the first step, by clearly identifying the areas of science and religion, Vedanta removes one of the causes of conflict between the two. In the second step, it goes further to insist that the well-known criterion of science, viz verification, is applicable to every claim of religion. And that mere belief in God and soul is not enough—they can and should be personally perceived through appropriate disciplines. With these two steps Vedanta raises religion to the level of a science. Thus it resolves another cause of conflict—the charge that religion is unscientific and unverifiable.

Taking a third step—based on a verifiable mystical experience—it states that the sensate and the non-sensate are two aspects of one spiritual reality. Perceived through our senses that reality appears as the world, and perceived through a mystical experience it appears as spiritual. This destroys the last barrier between science and religion—the idea that science must be secular.

Then, having finally provided a vision bridging spiritual and scientific knowledge, it turns to focus on us and says: Anyone can

have spiritual experiences, because everyone is, even now, essentially spiritual. In this way, at the level of our daily life, it releases us from one of the perniciously powerful fallacies of religion: that, to be truly religious one should blindly belong to an organization.

Thus Vedanta embraces both religion and science, harmonizes them and finally integrates them into one system of knowledge. Where does this integration occur? First in our brains, in our reason, but ultimately in our being. Because, according to Vedanta, the course of human evolution is from the sensate level towards the realization of ourselves as spiritual beings.

So we see why Swamiji exhorted us to hold on to religion, to Vedanta. Unlike other religions, it stresses the need for science and technology, but desecularizes them, spiritualizes them—by revealing that what they deal with are in reality spiritual. Besides, it is open to investigation, and adoptable by all without rigid organizational guidance. Also, though it includes the best elements of all the religions, it is more than a new syncretic religion. Because it emphasizes realization. Similarly, though it is scientific, it is not *a* science. Because it has not remained an ongoing quest: it reached its conclusions thousands of years ago. Further, unlike the sciences, it gives us and the world a firm spiritual foundation and a goal.

Therefore, by adopting Vedanta our inmost urges get satisfied. At the same time we are able to function in the world, as scientifically, pragmatically and creatively as a spiritualized awareness of ourselves and the world allows. Our outlook changes, bringing forth in us the wonderful virtues seen in the mystic-scientists of ancient India. As we said before, what we urgently need now, in addition to our science and technology, are those virtues—rationality and spirituality—to manage our modernized country. □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

KARMA YOGA

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदाः निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

*Traigunyaaviṣayā vedā
nistraigunyo bhavārjuna;
Nirdvandvo nityasattvastho
niryogakṣema ātmavān. (2.45)*

O Arjuna, the Vedas have the effect of the three guṇas as their object. You become desireless, free from the pairs of duality, poised in unwavering sattva, devoid of (the desire for) acquisition and preservation, and dependent on the Self.

Traigunya means the effect of the three guṇas (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*), (i.e.) the mundane state, which is rooted in desire. The Vedas, which have that (mundane state) itself as the subject of their revelation, consist of the sections on rites and duties; i.e., they present that very fruit which a person desires. For, although there is a (Vedic) injunction, 'The *Darśa* and the *Pūrṇamāsa* sacrifices are the bearers of all kinds of fruits', still one does not get all the fruits by performing them once (only), since one does not desire all of them (when performing those sacrifices once). The conclusion arrived at in the section *Yoga-siddhi*¹ is that, the result of a certain performance (of a rite) is the same as the one for which he under-

takes it. 'Thus, since there is no fruit when there is absence of desire for it, therefore, O Arjuna, you become *nistraigunyah*, desireless.' Hereby is refuted the idea that the mundane state follows from the very nature of actions.

Is it not that for protection from such dualities as cold and heat there is need of clothing etc.? So how can there be desirelessness? Hence He says, *nirdvandvah*, free from the pairs of duality. (The verb) *bhava*, become, is to be supplied everywhere. 'According to the reasoning involved in, "But the contacts of the organs with the objects..." (2.14), become an endurer of the dualities such as cold and heat.' Anticipating the question, How, again, can unbearable pain be endured?, He says, '(Become) *nitya-sattvasthah*—one who remains poised (*stha*) in the unwavering (*nitya*) *sattva* which is otherwise called fortitude. Indeed, one whose *sattva* is overpowered by *rajas* and *tamas* turns away from righteousness, thinking, "I shall die from the torments of cold, heat, etc." You, however, adhere only to *sattva* alone by conquering *rajas* and *tamas*.' Is it not that, even if cold, heat, etc. are endured, still for appeasing hunger, thirst, etc., something not in hand has to be acquired, and what is acquired has to be preserved? When one has to endeavour for these, how can there be a poise in *sattva*? Hence He says, '(Become) *nir-yoga-kṣemah*, devoid of the desire for acquisition and preservation.' *Yoga* means acquisition of what is not in hand; *kṣema* is

1. *Jaimini-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, 4.3.11.

preservation of what has been acquired. Become free from these. That is, become free of possessions that perturb the mind. Moreover, there should not be any worry thus—'How shall I live in such a state?', since the supreme Lord, who is the Inner Controller of all, will Himself arrange for your acquisition and preservation.

Hence He says, '(Become) *ātmavān*—one to whom the *ātman*, the supreme Self, exists as the object of meditation and as the accomplisher of acquisition and preservation.' The idea is, be free from worries, being assured that 'when I adore the supreme Lord by abandoning all desires, He Himself will arrange for me all that is necessary for the bare preservation of the body.' Or *ātmavān* may mean 'become vigilant'.

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।
तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

*Yāvānārtha udapāne
sarvataḥ samplutodake;
Tāvānsarveṣu vedeṣu
brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ. (2.46)*

(As) the extent of need (fulfilled) in a well is fulfilled to that extent in a reservoir of water filled from all sides, (similarly) the extent of need fulfilled by all the Vedas (gets fulfilled) to that extent in the case of a seeker of Brahman when he has realization.

Nor should there be any such apprehension as, 'When I perform actions by giving up all desires, I shall become deprived of the pleasures resulting from those actions', since *yāvān arthaḥ*, the extent of need, such as bathing, drinking, etc.; fulfilled *udapāne*, in a well, in a small pond of water—the singular number is used to indicate a class—; gets surely fulfilled *tāvān*, to that extent; *sarvataḥ samplutodake*, in a reservoir

filled from all sides. As the mountain-streams flowing from all sides get united somewhere in a valley, and there the need of water served by each becomes more so in their collective form because all the streams become merged at the same place, the lake, similarly the extent of need—up to the bliss of the state of Hiranyagarbha—that is fulfilled *sarveṣu vedeṣu*, in all the Vedas, in the *kāmya-karmas* enjoined by the Vedas; does indeed get fulfilled *tāvān*, to that extent; *brāhmaṇasya*, in the case of a seeker of Brahman; *vijānataḥ*, when he has realization, when he has directly realized the Reality that is Brahman, because the smaller pleasures, being parts of the Bliss that is Brahman, become merged in It, as is stated in the Śruti, 'On a particle of this very Bliss other beings live',² which Bliss, though one, is spoken of as 'part' and 'whole' with the help of particular limitations imagined through ignorance, as space is (referred to as divided) by imagining (its) limitation by pot etc.

And thus you will achieve the bliss of supreme Brahman when the Knowledge of the Self will dawn on you after your mind has become purified through selfless work. And since through that very achievement all the pleasures will become attained, therefore there will remain no scope for anxiety regarding not getting the smaller pleasures. Hence undertake selfless works in order to attain the Knowledge of Reality, which leads to supreme Bliss. This is the idea.

Here (in this verse) the words '*yathā*, as', '*tathā*, similarly', and '*bhavati*, gets fulfilled' have to be supplied, and the repetition of the words '*yāvān*, the extent' and '*tāvān*, to that extent' has to be understood in what has been illustrated.

2. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 4.3.32.

If the acquisition of supreme Bliss is brought about by achieving Self-knowledge through selfless works, then in that case Self-knowledge itself should be achieved. What is the need for actions, which involve great effort and are the external means (to Self-knowledge)?

In answer to such a doubt He says:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

*Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣte
mā phaleṣu kadācana;
Mā karmaphalaheturbhūr
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi. (2.47)*

For you let there be the idea, 'this is my duty', only with regard to action; not with regard to its results, under any condition whatsoever. Do not become the producer of the result of action. Let there be no attachment in you to inaction!

Te, for you, whose mind is impure, who are not fit for the rise of the Knowledge of Reality; let there be adhikārah, the idea, 'this is my duty'; karmaṇi eva, only with regard to action, which is a purifier of the mind; but not with regard to vicāra (deliberation) on the texts of the upaniṣads, which is characterized as steadfastness in Knowledge. For you, again, while you are engaged in action, let there be no adhikārah, idea that 'this is to be enjoyed by me'; phaleṣu, with regard to its results, viz heaven etc.; kadācana, (at any time) under any condition whatsoever—before undertaking an action, or after it, or during the time of that (action).

(Arjuna:) Even if there be no such idea as 'this is to be enjoyed by me', will not action still produce its own result according to its

inherent power?

He (the Lord) says 'no' in 'mā karma-phala-hetuḥ bhūh'. One who undertakes action with a desire for its results becomes the *hetuḥ*, the producer, of the result. 'But you, by becoming motiveless, do not become the producer of the result of action.' For it has been said that, when action is undertaken by a desireless man, with the idea of dedication to God, it is not considered to be a producer of any fruit.

(Arjuna:) If there be no fruit, then what is the need of action?

Hence He says: *Mā astu*, let there be no; *saṅgaḥ*, attachment; *te*, in you; *akarmaṇi*, to inaction, under the idea, 'If the fruit is not sought for, what need is there of action which is full of pain?'

He (the Lord) elaborates what has already been said earlier:

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

*Yogasthaḥ kuru karmaṇi
saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya;
Siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā
samatvaṁ yoga ucyate. (2.48)*

By remaining established in Yoga, O Dhanañjaya (Arjuna), undertake actions, casting off attachment and remaining equipoised in success and failure. Equanimity is called Yoga.

Yogasthaḥ, by remaining established in Yoga; *O Dhanañjaya*, *tyaktvā*, casting off; *saṅgam*, attachment, desire for fruit and the idea of agentship; *kuru*, you undertake; *karmaṇi*, actions. Since the plural number is

(Continued on page 379)

Illusion*

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

(During the 1899 term of his work in New York, Swami Vivekananda heard these verses read out to him by the poetess herself, inspired, she said, by his teachings of Vedanta.)

God and I in space alone
And nobody else in view.
'And where are the people, O Lord,' I said,
'The earth below, and the sky o'er head
And the dead whom once I knew?'

'That was a dream,' God smiled and said,
'A dream that seemed to be true.
There were no people, living or dead,
There was no earth, and no sky o'er head
There was only myself—in you.'

'Why do I feel no fear,' I asked,
'Meeting you here this way,
For I have sinned I know full well,
And is there heaven, and is there hell,
And is this the judgment day?'

'Nay, those were but dreams,' the Great God said,
'Dreams, that have ceased to be.
There are no such things as fear or sin,
There is no you—you never have been—
There is nothing at all but ME.'

* 'One night, after coming from a lecture (of Vivekananda's)... I prepared for retiring, and then sat down to my moments of concentration. Suddenly I felt that I must go to my desk. I had no idea what I was to do; I had finished my day's work before I went to the lecture; and I had no least thought of writing anything more that day. Yet so strong was the urge that I arose, went to my desk, and took up my pen and began to write. I was perfectly conscious, yet my mortal brain certainly had nothing to do with what my pen wrote down. It was as if some one thought for me. I watched my hand form the words with interest, as I would have watched a friend write. This is the poem which came under those peculiar conditions.'—from the author's autographical work, *The Worlds and I*, quoted by M.L. Burke in *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, Vol. 5, p. 172.

Importance of Ayurveda as Noticed by Hiuen Tsang

DR. APARNA CHATTOPADHYAY

The expensive modern medical treatment has gone beyond the reach of the masses, and many of its assumptions and practices have come under critical re-evaluation. Traditional Indian medical science is being revived and adapted. In this article the author, a former Reader in History at the Banaras Hindu University, draws our attention to the great importance Āyurveda had in medieval India.

From the accounts of Hiuen Tsang we find that when he visited India in the seventh century AD, the Brahmins studied four Vedas. Of them the first, which he refers to as *Shau* (longevity), concerned nourishment and regulation of the life of humans and also of animals. Obviously he was referring to the Āyurveda. The fourth Veda also, which he calls *Shu* (secret mysteries), was found to teach medicine as well as various other sciences, e.g. the science of incantations. The other two Vedas were on the performance of sacrifices and military science respectively.¹

Hiuen Tsang had also observed that Āyurveda (Medical Science), taught in the first and the fourth Veda, was of foremost importance as a subject of study in India.² In his accounts we also find that there were five *vidyās*, branches of knowledge, which were to be learnt by every child from the age of seven. The third among these *vidyās* was the *Cikitsā-vidyā*, the science of medical treat-

ment.³ This is a remarkable fact, because we do not find *Cikitsā-vidyā* included in the list of the well-known fourteen *vidyās* a person was expected to master to gain distinction as a scholar in those days.⁴

Hiuen Tsang's observations are confirmed by other independent sources as well. In the *Agnipurāṇa* of the contemporary period there are eighteen chapters on Āyurveda and one on *Vṛkṣa-āyurveda* (the science of cultivation of trees.) These eighteen chapters include five chapters on the diseases of horses and elephants, and their treatment. In the *Śukranīti* too there are ten kinds of medical practices relating to surgery.⁵ That medicine was an important subject in the early medieval period of Indian history was noticed by Al Beruni also.⁶ It is worth noting that according to Rājaśekhara, the court poet of King Mahendra Pāla (AD 885—910) of

1. S. Beal, *Chinese Accounts of India*, Vol. 2, p. 136.

2. The great importance attached to Āyurvedic studies in the period under review grew from very early times. Even in the fourth century BC, the Greeks had noted that medicine was the best studied subject in India.

3. The five *vidyās* are: *Śabda-vidyā*, *Śilpasthāna-vidyā*, *Cikitsā-vidyā*, *Hetu-vidyā*, and *Adhyātma-vidyā*. See S. Beal, *Chinese Accounts*, pp. 135-6.)

4. The fourteen *vidyās* are: the four Vedas, the six *Vedāṅgas*, the *Dharmaśāstra*, *Purāṇas*, *Mīmāṃsā*, and *Tarka*.—A.S. Altekar, *Education in Ancient India*, p. 128.

5. *Kalā-daśakam-etaddhi*, Śukra, 4.71-6.

6. *Al Beruni's India*, ed. E.C. Sachau (Delhi: S. Chand & Co.).

the Gurjara Pratihara dynasty (Rajabali Pandey, *Bharatiya Itihas Ki Bhumika*, p. 282), Āyurveda was a compulsory subject of study even for one who aspired to be a poet.⁷

The high standard of Āyurveda as practised then is proved by the fact that during the period of Khalifa Harun Al Rashid (AD 786—809), Indian scholars went to Baghdad and were engaged in translating into Arabic the Sanskrit texts on Āyurveda, Pharmacology, etc., and Arab scholars came to India in large numbers to learn these sciences at first hand from Indian authorities. A Hindu physician was the Director of a hospital in Baghdad during this period.⁸ In this connection it is worth noting that an Indian surgeon, called Manakā (Māṇikyā), was invited to cure an ailment of Sultan Harun. Whereas the Arabian physicians had failed to cure the Sultan, Manakā succeeded in his treatment. So, with great regard he was persuaded to become the Director of the Sultan's hospitals and also to translate the works of Śuśrūta into Arabic.⁹ Al Rashid had also induced about twenty Indian doctors to come to Baghdad to become chief medical officers of the state hospitals and to translate Sanskrit medical works into Arabic.¹⁰

This is all history. Now it is time India

rediscovered her own medical genius and put it to good use once more in the service of her people.

[Note: According to both Caraka and Śuśrūta, Āyurveda is a supplementary work (*upāṅga*) of the *Atharva-veda* (Śuśrūta-saṁhitā, *Sūtrasthānam*, Ch. 1, 6; Caraka-saṁhitā, *Sūtrasthānam*, Ch. 30, 17-18). Since the *Atharva-Veda* prescribes the performance of certain religious rites (*bali*, *homa*, *niyama*, *prāyascitta* and *upavāsa*) that cure diseases, Āyurveda should rightly and logically be connected with the *Atharva-Veda*, says Caraka.

Thomas Watters has observed that Hiuen Tsang, due to his unfamiliarity with Vedic literature, has given the wrong idea that Āyurveda is the first Veda (T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Part 1, ed. T.W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushell, second Indian edition, 1973, p. 159).

However, the *Śukranīti* clearly says that Āyurveda is a supplement (*upaveda*) of the *Rg-veda*. It also gives a full definition of Āyurveda: Āyurveda is that science in which the symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of diseases are taught (*Śukranīti*, Ch. 4, *Vidyā-kalā-nirūpaṇa-prakaraṇam*, 36).

It is to be further noted that V.S. Apte, in his Sanskrit-English Dictionary (p. 112), has defined Āyurveda as a supplement (*upaveda*) of the *Rg-Veda*.] □

I am the companion of them that commemorate Me and the friend of them that take Me as their friend.

If thou art with all, thou art without all when thou art without Me: and if thou are without all, thou art with all when thou art with Me.

—Prophet Muhammed

7. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, 7, 11, 26ff.

8. *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 451.

9. A.S. Altekar, *Education in Ancient India*, p. 191.

10. *Ibid.*

Bhagavad-Gita and the Poetry of Swami Vivekananda

RACHNA MERHOTRA

As exhaustive a comparison as this one has not been undertaken before. The author, a young research scholar, presents her painstaking study of Swamiji's poems which had inspired her. Readers will be pleasantly surprised at the numerous similarities between his poems and the ideas conveyed by the Gītā-verses.

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is one of the 'Five Jewels' (*pañcaratnāni*) of Devanāgarī literature. It is a sublime poem which carries the mind with unfailing delight to all that is lofty, eternal and divine. It is a perennial source of peace and bliss, and has not lost its grace and charm through the passage of time. Its message to humanity is still fresh and invigourating. All human aspirations are realized through the knowledge of the teachings of the *Gītā*. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, or 'the Lord's Song', is a book of devotion and edification for every Hindu. It is a valuable aid for helping one to understand the meaning and value of life and existence.

The celestial Sanskrit poem, which dates back to the fifth century BC, occurs as an episode in the *Mahābhārata*, and its eighteen chapters form chapters twenty-three to forty of the sixth—or *Bhīṣma-Parva*—of the great epic. Its versification is attributed to Vyāsa, the legendary compiler of the *Mahābhārata*. The Sanskrit original is written in the *anuṣṭubh* metre. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his beautiful English rendering, *Song-Celestial*, has cast it in flexible blank verse, changing into lyrical measures where the text itself similarly breaks into its usual rhythm.

'The great popularity of this scripture is due to the marvellous way in which it remains faithful to the Upaniṣadic teach-

ings, and at the same time re-interprets them and applies them to practical life.'¹ The *Gītā* is also called an Upaniṣad as its spiritual message is based on the ancient wisdom of the Upaniṣads. Swami Vivekananda, in his lecture, '*Thoughts on the Gita*', says:

If we study the Upaniṣads we notice, in wandering through the mazes of many irrelevant subjects, the sudden introduction of the discussion of a great truth, just as in the midst of a huge wilderness a traveller unexpectedly comes across here and there an exquisitely beautiful rose, with its leaves, thorns, roots, all entangled. Compared with that, the *Gītā* is like these truths beautifully arranged together in their proper places—like a fine garland or a bouquet of the choicest flowers. The Upaniṣads deal elaborately with *śraddhā* in many places, but hardly mention *bhakti*. In the *Gītā*, on the other hand, the subject of *bhakti* is not only again and again dealt with, but in it the innate spirit of *bhakti* has attained its culmination.²

1. K.M. Munshi, *Hinduism Through the Ages*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) 'The Epic Age', p. 25.

2. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1962)

The *Gītā* sets forth a perennial philosophy in which many apparently conflicting beliefs are worked into a simple unity to meet the needs of the times. 'In plain but noble language it unfolds a philosophical system which remains to this day the prevailing belief, blending as it does with the doctrines of Kapila, Patañjali and the Vedas.'³ Lord Kṛṣṇa, the great teacher, has harmonized the different currents of ancient thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upaniṣadic teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the *Bhāgavata*'s tender piety and theism, the *Sāṅkhyan* dualism, and the *Yoga*-mditation, all into an organic unity. All the different paths of worship lead to the same goal. The *Gītā* is a brilliant synthesis of all the Indian systems of philosophy. In Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's words, 'The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is both metaphysics and ethics, *brahma-vidyā* and *yogaśāstra*, the science of reality and the art of union with reality.'⁴

The simple form of the *Gītā* consists of a discourse between Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Deity in the guise of a charioteer, and Arjuna. Sri Paramahansa Yogananda says,

The words of Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are at once a profound scripture on the science of Yoga, union with God, and a text book for everyday living. The student is led step by step with Arjuna from the mortal consciousness of spiritual doubt and weak-heartedness to divine attunement and

inner resolve. The timeless and universal message of the *Gītā* is all-encompassing in its expression of truth. The *Gītā* teaches man his rightful duty in life, and how to discharge it with the dispassion that avoids pain and nurtures wisdom and success.⁵

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* occupies a highly esteemed place among the world's great scriptures. Its teachings serve as a beacon light to the innumerable aspirants of spiritual life and wisdom. Many great personalities have received inspiration from it to strive for enlightenment. This religious classic exercised great influence on the builders of modern India, the great philosophers and literary artists. It has acted as a powerful factor shaping Indian-English poetry. Dr. Carebanu Cooper says about the many-faceted personality of Swami Vivekananda, that he 'is well known as a giant intellect, an outstanding writer of pragmatic, inspirational prose and poetry, an orator, and a patriotic Hindu, whose powerful messages revolve around the Vedantic axiom: *Ekam sat; vipra bahudhā vadanti*—'Truth is one; wise men describe it in various ways.'⁶ The fact that Swami Vivekananda was a living embodiment of the teachings of the *Gītā* is evident from his cosmic consciousness and evenness of mind free from dualities and firmly fixed in purity and the Self.

Vivekananda was deeply impressed by the teacher of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa. His five memorable lectures are there in *The Complete Works*: one lecture on 'Lord Krishna', and three on the *Gītā*. The other is

'Thoughts on the Gita', p. 106.

3. Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad Gita* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1981) *Preface*, p. vii.

All the *Gītā* quotes which follow are taken from Sir Edwin Arnold; hereafter noted only with the page number in the book and verse number.

4. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita* (Bombay, Blackie & Son Ltd., 1977) p. 12.

5. *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad Gita*. Paramahansa Yogananda—quoted from the book cover of Sir Edwin Arnold's.

6. Carebanu Cooper, *Swami Vivekananda: Literary Biography* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1984) *Preface*.

Thoughts on the Gita. In Swamiji's view the two special features of the *Gītā* are 'the reconciliation of the different paths of *dharma*, and work without desire or attachment.'⁷ The third verse in the second chapter of the *Gītā*, in which the message of the entire *Gītā* is summed up, left an everlasting mark on his mind. Man forgets his true Divine nature and yields to unmanliness, considers himself a sinner, and identifies himself with bodily evils and mental grief. He needs to realize the Divine within himself and tread the path of truth and virtue to get rid of all unhappiness. A glorious path lies ahead for such a person who performs his actions with non-attachment to the fruit of his actions, with faith in his Divinity and with devotion to God. Lord Kṛṣṇa's appeal to mankind is to work for work's sake, to worship for worship's sake, and to do good because it is good to do good. All our actions must be guided by the aim of achieving the welfare of humanity. Service to mankind is the best way of worshipping the Lord.

Vivekananda's poetry shows clear evidence of the influence of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. His poems are a treasure of joy and inspiration. The central message of his poems is the message of the *Gītā*, of renunciation (*tyāga*), and service (*sevā*). Another idea that comes again and again in his poems is fearlessness. His poems give us a vision of truth.

The subject matter of the *Gītā* entails comprehending some basic truths about spiritual existence—that the science of God-Knowledge (*Brahma-vidyā*) is called a science because it is in some ways exacting: that is, it requires one to follow a self-controlled and disciplined life to attain this Knowledge, and that a clear intellectual grasp of the nature of the individual Soul

(*jīva*) and the supreme Controller of the universe (*Īśwara*), are helpful to this end, as are also understanding the nature of *Māyā*, God's power, and the nature of matter or the material world.⁸

The supreme Reality is Brahman. He is the universal Spirit who supports this cosmic manifestation. The God of the *Gītā* extends beyond the cosmic processes, and beyond time and space also. This world is a living manifestation of God, but God the Supreme is Unmanifest: As the *Gītā* says:

By Me the whole vast Universe of
Is spread abroad—by Me,
the Unmanifest!
In Me are all existences contained;
Not I in them. (p. 74, ch. 9.4)

Vivekananda, a truly liberated soul, has expressed this truth in the following couplet:

Not two nor many, 'tis but One,
And thus in me all me's I have.⁹

The Divine Being creates and sustains all, but still dwells outside all. The human beings are not merely products of nature, since God is the cause of the birth of every individual. All beings are derived from Him. God is the Father (*Puruṣa*), and Mother (*Prakṛti*) of all living forms. Lord Kṛṣṇa says thus in the *Gītā*:

This Universe the Womb is where I plant
Seed of all lives! Thence, Prince of India,
comes

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, p. 107.

8. Dr. Satish Kumar, *The Influence of the Gita on the Poetry of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha*—a Paper, p. 5.

9. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God & Other Poems* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975) p. 7.

Birth to all beings! Who, Kunti's Son,
 Mothers each mortal form; Brahman
 conceives,
 And I am He that fathers, sending seed !
 (p. 123, ch. 14.3-4)

The world exists through God. He is the source of all beings. Everything subsists in Him. All objects are supported by His vital energy. Thus the *Gītā*:

Know, too, from Me
 Shineth the gathered glory of the suns
 Which lighten all the world, from Me
 the moon
 Draws silvery beams, and fire fierce
 loveliness,
 I penetrate the clay, and lend all shapes
 Their living force; I glide into the plant-
 Root leaf, and bloom—to make the
 woodlands green
 With springing sap. (pp. 132-3, ch. 15.12-13)

The same idea is expressed by Swami Vivekananda in the following lines from 'In Search of God':

The moon's soft light, the stars so bright,
 The glorious orb of day,
 He shines in them; His beauty—might—
 Reflected lights are they.
 The majestic morn, the melting eve,
 The boundless billowy sea,
 In nature's beauty, songs of birds,
 I see through them—it is He...¹⁰

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* includes the Upaniṣadic element of negation, that the Real is not this, not this (*na iti, na iti*). The Soul is 'Impenetrable, unentered, unasailed, unharmed, untouched/ Immortal, all-arriving, stable, sure, invisible, ineffable by word/ And thought uncompassed, ever all itself.' This true nature of the Spirit is revealed by Swami Vivekananda in the

poem, 'The Song of the Free':

Know these are but the outer crust—
 All space and time, all effect, cause,
 I am beyond all sense, all thought,
 The Witness of the Universe.¹¹

The Spirit which transcends all dualities is both transcendent and immanent, inside and outside the world. It is birthless, deathless and changeless. The truth about the Para-Brahman, the All, is that He is... 'the Uncreated; not *Asat*, not *Sat*/ Not Form, nor the Unformed; yet both, and more.' (p. 112, ch. 13.12)

The supreme Reality is above all empirical oppositions of existence and non-existence, beginning and end. Swamiji has also described Brahman in this positive way in his poem, 'A Song of Creation':

One Mass, devoid of form, name,
 and colour,
 Timeless, devoid of time past and future,
 Spaceless, voiceless, boundless,
 devoid of all—
 Where rests hushed even
 speech of negation.¹²

He has again introduced the principle of negation in the last stanza of the poem:

Verily, the Sun is He, His the ray,
 Nay, the Sun is He, and He is the ray.¹³

When our *sattva*-nature is purified, we experience a sudden flash, an inward illumination, and realize the supreme Lord who dwells in the innermost being of every individual. God is seated in the hearts of all creatures. 'The Light of Lights He is, in the heart of the Dark/ Shining eternally.'

11. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

(p. 118, ch. 13.17). The illumined sages like Vivekananda realize God within their hearts. 'Holy souls see/ Which strive there-to. Enlightened, they perceive/ That spirit in themselves.' (p. 132, ch. 15.11). The poet has revealed his realization:

A flash illumined all my soul;
The heart of my heart opened wide.
O joy, O bliss, what do I find!
My love, my love, you are here,
And you are here, my love, my all.¹⁴

Man is the reservoir of omnipotent power. The holy souls realize the Divinity within themselves and enjoy supreme Bliss. The truth that God is in each and every individual is frequently repeated in the *Gītā* and in the poems of Vivekananda. Arjuna calls out, 'Hail to Thee! Praise to Thee! Thou one in all;/ For Thou art All! Yea, Thou!' (p. 105, ch. 11.39-40). The human souls are intrinsically like Brahman, beyond any cause and effect, and are eternal. The absolute Spirit is not bound within time limits and is not subject to birth and death:

Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall
cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and
Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless
remaineth the spirit for ever;
Death hath not touched it at all,
dead though the house of it seems!
(pp. 14-15, ch. 2.20)

The poem, 'The Living God', reveals this concept of Ātman. Swami Vivekananda had realized the true nature of his Spirit. He writes in his poem, 'The Song of the Free':

Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
Before the stars or comets free,

Before e'en Time had had its birth—
I was, I am, and I will be!¹⁵

'When the soul is stirred to its inmost depth/ Great ones unfold their best!'¹⁶ Such a great individual in reality is a partial manifestation of the Divine. 'Each of us is a ray of Divine consciousness into which our being, if we will only allow it, can be transfigured.'¹⁷ The enlightened ones recognize their eternal significance in the cosmos. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

When, in this world of manifested life,
The undying Spirit, setting forth from Me,
Taketh on form, it draweth to itself
From Being's storehouse,—which
containeth all,—
Senses and intellect. (pp. 131-2, ch. 15.7)

Swamiji's call to all individuals, in his poem, 'The Song of the Free', is to bring out the reality that the individual soul is Divine:

All nature wear one angry frown
To crush you out—still know, my soul,
You are Divine.¹⁸

He again writes:

From dreams awake,
from bonds be free!
Be not afraid! This mystery,
My shadow, cannot frighten me!
Know once for all that I am He!¹⁹

The supreme Lord abides everywhere equally. The manifold state of beings is centred in the One. This truth is revealed to illumined persons. Vivekananda attained Brahman and he saw that,

15. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, p. 329.

18. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God & Other Poems*, p. 6.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

From highest Brahman to
the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body, at their feet.²⁰

A person who loves all as his own self
sees the same self in all beings, and he attains
the supreme goal:

He sees indeed who sees in all alike
The living, lordly Soul; the Soul Supreme,
Imperishable amid the Perishing:
For, whoso thus beholds, in every place,
In every form, the same, one, Living Life,
Doth no more wrongfulness unto himself,
But goes the highest road which
brings to bliss. (p. 120, ch. 13. 27-8)

The 'supreme Self pervades all beings
without any distinction. The same *Gītā*-ideal
is brought forth by Swamiji in his poem, 'To
a Friend':

These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.²¹

All actions are performed by Nature. The
Self is not the doer, It is only the witness. The
supreme Self dwells in the body, but It
neither acts nor is It tainted:

That Ultimate, High Spirit, Uncreate,
Unqualified, even when it entereth flesh
Taketh no stain of acts, worketh in nought!
Like to th' ethereal air, pervading all,
Which, for sheer subtlety, avoideth taint,
The subtle Soul sits everywhere, unstained.
(p. 121, ch. 13.31-2)

Vivekananda was one of those wise persons
who knew that, 'The Soul's light

shineth pure in every place;/ And they who,
by such eye of wisdom, see/ How Matter,
and what deals with it, divine;/ And how
the Spirit and the flesh have strife.' (p. 121,
ch. 13. 32-4) He has expressed the real nature
of the Self in the poem, 'To My Own Soul':

In thee is friendship, faith,
For thou didst warn when evil
thoughts were brewing—
And though, alas, thy warning
thrown away,
Went on the same as ever—
good and true.²²

The Self is not tainted by the actions of
the individual. It is not charmed by material
objects:

No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself.²³

This world is subject to transitoriness.
Lord Kṛṣṇa asks us to take refuge in the
Divine. Swami Vivekananda realized
through spiritual experience that 'God is
true, all else is *nothing*.'²⁴ This world is
unreal; the supreme reality is God who is
eternal:

Ah! ye who into this ill world are come—
Fleeting and false—set your faith fast
on Me!
Fix heart and thought on Me! Adore Me!
.....
Me your supremest joy! (p. 80, ch. 9.34)

Swamiji, who was a devotee of Lord
Kṛṣṇa also, recognized this fact:

This world's a dream
Though true it seem.
And only Truth is *He* the living!

20. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The real *me* is none but *He*
And never never *matter* changing!²⁵

The unreal which is subject to change veils the unchanging Reality which is forever manifest. In the *Gītā*, *Māyā* is called Śakti, or the Energy of God, which enables Him to produce mutable nature. God is belied by His creative power (*yogamāyā*) and is not revealed to all:

Blind are the eyes
Which deem th' Unmanifested manifest,
Not comprehending Me in My true Self!
Imperishable, viewless, undeclared,
Hidden behind My magic veil of shows,
I am not seen by all; I am not known—
Unborn and changeless—
to the idle world. (p. 65, ch. 7.27)

25. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

God 'is the One behind the ever-changing many, who stands beyond all forms, the Immutable centre of endless mobility.'²⁶ The Supreme can only be realized through Yoga. Swamiji says:

I play with My own *Maya*,
My Power Divine.
The One, I become the many,
to behold
My own Form.
All this creation comes into being
By the unfoldment of My
power supreme...²⁷

(to be concluded)

26. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, p. 223.

27. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God & Other Poems*, p. 57.

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 369)

used here (in *karmāṇi*), therefore the singular (in *karmani*) in '*karmani eva adhikārah te*' (2.47) is used to denote a class. He (the Lord) states the means of renouncing attachment: *samaḥ bhūtvā*, remaining equipoised; *siddhyasiddhyoḥ*, in success and failure; i.e. giving up elation at gaining a fruit and dejection at not gaining a fruit, perform actions merely with the idea of adoring the Lord.

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that, by the word '*yoga*' action was meant earlier, but here it is said, 'By remaining established in Yoga undertake actions'? So how can this be understood?

Hence He says, *samatvam*, equanimity; *ucyate*, is called; *yogaḥ*, Yoga. This very fact, (viz) this equipoise in success and failure—but not action—is meant by the word *yoga* in *yogasthaḥ*. So there is no contradiction.

This is the idea. Here the interpretation by the Commentator is that, since the first half (of the verse) is explained by the second half, therefore there is no fault of repetition. In the text, 'Treating happiness and sorrow...with equanimity' (2.38), what has been referred to is the mere duty of engaging in battle by treating equally victory and defeat, because that was the subject under discussion. But here (what has been referred to is) the duty of undertaking all actions by renouncing all the fruits, seen or unseen. This is the distinction.

(to be continued)

The most noble of prayers is when he who prays is transformed inwardly into that before which he kneels.

—*Angelus Silesius*

Spiritual Unity of Mankind, and the Harmony of Religions

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA

Welcome address at the Celebration of Swami Vivekananda's Centenary in America and his participation in the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

This observance, led by Swami Adiswarananda who is the spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, was held in the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium on 6 November 1993.

The Parliament of 1893 is a landmark in the history of religions. Never before had the representatives of the great religions of the world assembled on one platform in search of unity and understanding. Though the idea of the Parliament of Religions was an afterthought of the organizers of the Columbian Exposition, the entire dynamics of the event changed radically because of one person—and he was Swami Vivekananda. By his presence and his message of spiritual unity and harmony, he profoundly influenced the spiritual thought currents of the world.

The Bicentennial Committee of 1976 honoured Swami Vivekananda for the profound influence he left on the American mind. The National Portrait Gallery mounted a large picture of Swami Vivekananda, and I had the good fortune to go and see that in the Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.

In 1993 I attended the Chicago Parliament of Religions, where 7000 religious people of all denominations of all countries,

assembled. The first day when someone, from another country, mentioned Swami Vivekananda's name there was spontaneous applause, and they applauded repeatedly whenever there was mention of his name. No one in recent history so eloquently articulated and courageously defended the message of religious unity as did the Swami. Swami Vivekananda spoke at the Parliament not just as a representative of Hinduism, but as a defender of the spiritual core of the teachings of all prophets of all religions. Unknown and unsupported by any organization or religious denomination, the Swami arrived in America. As if guided by destiny he came to the Parliament to present his message. The message was heard. People were thrilled to hear it. Newspapers, tabloids, and other organizations, heralded his appearance and reported his every word. In his words people heard the unmistakable ring of universal truth. His voice became the voice of hope and spiritual freedom. Unity of religions has always been a chaste goal of humankind. While the prophets declared unity among faiths, the traders in religion declared otherwise.

Attempts have been made in the past to unite religion through eclectic, sectarian, economic, political, and humanistic means, but none of these withstood the stresses of ethnic and nationalistic tensions.

The two major roadblocks to religious unity and harmony are: intolerance and dogmatism. We assume that anyone who does not belong to our religion is a heretic or a heathen. Narrowness passes for orthodoxy. Formality of conviction so easily degenerates into religious intolerance, blind and bloodthirsty. Ancient superstition is often sanctified as revealed truth. The pharisees and sadducees die hard. The savageness of religious wars show how in the name of God people can hate and kill one another with impunity and without remorse.

In the background of this spiritual unity and helplessness, Swami Vivekananda presented his message of unity and harmony, based on the four common creeds of all religions—non-duality of the Godhead, divinity of the Soul, oneness of existence, and spiritual unity of all religions.

Where do religions agree? And where do they disagree? What should be the basis of their unity?

The differences among religions are due to differences in sacraments, ceremonies, myths, and symbols. Such differences are due to the diverse tastes and temperaments of different individuals and groups. Uniformity in this regard is neither desirable nor possible.

Where do religions agree?

They all agree on the Goal. The end and aim of every religion is communion with the Divine, though the methods employed to

attain this goal may differ. All religions exhort their followers in the practice of virtues that are common and universal, in order to reach the goal, that is God. The Goal is the basis of all unity and harmony. Different religions are like different roads, leading to the same goal. 'All roads lead to Rome', provided Rome is your destination.

Harmony and Uniformity

Harmony is not uniformity, but unity is in diversity. It is not to be attained, but to be discovered and realized by deepening our God-consciousness. Religious dissension begins when spirituality is forgotten, neglected or compromised. Harmony calls for recognition of the natural necessity of diversity, and acceptance of the fact that Truth is nobody's monopoly, and can be expressed in a hundred different ways. 'In the face of this evidence, if anybody,' writes Swami Vivekananda, 'dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart.'

The world has undergone great change since the time of Swami Vivekananda, from improvement of the means of communication. And this world has shrunk and become pluralistic in every way. Unity of religions, once a dream of the noble-minded, is now a crying need of our time. Cultural plurality and religious diversity, without spiritual unity, is morally reprehensible, philosophically unjustifiable, socially dangerous. Swami Vivekananda left us a legacy of unity and harmony. He called for a united stand against bigotry—the ancient enemy that has repeatedly deluged the world with blood, and continues to do so. His is the voice of truth, of noble-minded men and women of all countries and times, and the voice of all the prophets and God-men of all ages. □

Swami Vivekananda in America

DR. JEROME J. POLLITT

Speech given at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium on 6 November 1993 as part of the celebration of Swami Vivekananda's Centennial in America and his participation in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Dr. Pollitt is a Professor in Art Archeology at Yale University and is the President of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York.

As part of our celebration of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the World's Parliament of Religions a hundred years ago, I would like to focus on some of the realistic, everyday, human-side of his years in the United States, to suggest at least one reason why it is appropriate that we have a meeting here at the United Nations, and also to pay a small indirect salute to, of all places, New York City. I do this not in a spirit of petty chauvinism, but because it does seem to me that it was really in New York City—that aftermath of the Parliament of Religions—just across town, on 39th Street, and also in the Old Madison Square Garden, that the explosion of spiritual energy that took place in Chicago found its enduring form.

When we summon up our personal visions of Vivekananda in Chicago, we are apt to think of the thunderous applause and of people scrambling over the seats of the auditorium to touch the hem of his garment. Those pictures, true as they are, shouldn't deceive us, however, into thinking that his time in the West was one long and untroubled triumph. In the early years, he was not only vilified by insecure missionaries, but also at times treated as some-

thing of a circus curiosity. And he himself often had doubts about the meaningfulness of the time that he was spending in the West, particularly right at the beginning.

It wasn't really until 1895, when he settled down in New York City and began that tentative series of classes, that Vivekananda first seems to have come to the definite conclusion that he had a universal message, one aimed at both the West and at India, and that he was going to give this message its definitive form in the West. As things worked out, he finally did this in New York, between 9th December 1895 and 25th February 1896, in what may have been the most concentrated, intense, exhausting outpouring of spiritual inspiration and philosophical reasoning in human history.

Vivekananda shaped, through classes and public lectures at that time, his four great treatises on *Yoga*, and his fundamental thoughts about the universality of religious enquiry. I don't mean, of course, that all of his thoughts came to him at this time out of the blue. He had been contemplating them for years; and he did, of course, refine them later in London and California. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it was in the rainy, cold, dingy New York City that he really put

together for the first time what might be called the 'New Testament' of Vedanta'. Here he harmonized and made coherent the disparate and often seemingly contradictory traditions that subsumed under the common term *Hinduism*, and he made them intelligible in straight-forward uncomplicated language.

Let me remind you of the human setting for this remarkable achievement. After spending the summer of 1895 at Thousand Island Park in upper New York State, a now famous period of course in his life and history, Vivekananda had gone to London in response to an invitation from some English admirers, partly to encourage an appreciation for Indian thought in England, and partly out of curiosity, to see the country that ruled his own. After an active autumn in England, of lecturing and simply getting to know London, he returned to New York on 6th December 1895 to begin a series of classes for a circle of friends and interested people in the City. When he arrived, at about 4:30 in the morning, it was of course dark, and it was six degrees below zero Fahrenheit. For the previous ten days he had been sailing through violent storms, and he had, by his own account, been 'very badly sea sick'. In spite of the weary condition in which he arrived, Vivekananda nevertheless immediately settled down on 39th Street, just across town, in what a contemporary described as 'one of the monotonous row of dingy boarding houses, without a private bath, and without a kitchen for his own use, surrounded by people who were devoted but sometimes very temperamental', to begin what would be his most concentrated teaching in the West. And aside from declining the food from the common kitchen of the boarding house—because it seemed to him obviously unclean—he never complained about any of this.

Within three days after this weary arrival he began teaching classes, usually two a day, on weekdays and on Saturdays. And on

Sundays he would give a free public lecture for large audiences—so large, in fact, that the series was eventually moved to the Old Madison Square Garden (which, believe it or not, was actually on a square adjacent to Madison Avenue). In a period of about ten weeks, not counting a little time off for a Christmas vacation, he delivered an astonishing 80 lectures and classes, while also teaching individual students, writing articles, editing texts, and translating various Hindu scriptures.

Not only did he essentially complete the contents of his books on unselfish work and on devotion, on philosophical discrimination and on control of the mind, but he also first gave those great lectures—like 'The Real and the Apparent Man', that miraculously seemed to put the entire gamut of human religious thought into a coherent framework. His outpouring at this time, as Marie Louise Burke has expressed it, was simply prodigious.

It is appropriate that we are celebrating these events and his accomplishments in the United Nations building. Vivekananda created a Charter for seekers of spiritual peace, everywhere in the world, in the same way that the United Nations, from its home in New York City, offers a Charter that aims to promote social harmony and peace among all the diverse peoples of the world. What Vivekananda taught in a sense created a model for the United Nations. It was not intended for one country, or one class, or one race, or even for one religious tradition. It was for everybody.

It's worth remembering, however, that this work was difficult, tiring, and done for the most part without great public acclaim, and that in subsequent years, as students of Vivekananda's *Life* know, it was fraught with frustrations and disappointments. These are conditions that supporters of the United Nations will of course find all too

(Continued on page 400)

Glimpses of the Savant Mahendranath Dutta

DR. SWAPNA BASU

Mahendra Nath Dutta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, was an original thinker and an accomplished personality in his own right; he was also an earnest spiritual aspirant. Dr. (Ms) Basu, a Research Associate-cum-Lecturer in the Department of Geography, Calcutta University, gives us a brief account of his life and thoughts.

It was a bright spring morning of 1896. A Bengalee young man who had just set foot in England was walking hurriedly along the Cheap Side Road of London to meet his elder brother. He had not met him for the last six years, and now, upon his summon, had arrived in London with a view to studying Law.

He was striding through the crowded street of this foreign land with a somewhat puzzled and bewildered gaze, when suddenly his eyes fell upon a familiar face. Yes, indeed that was his elder brother greeting him with a smile. Yet how completely changed he seemed to be! His physical appearance didn't seem much different, only his long stay in the Western climate had made his complexion fairer. But there was something else that made him seem altogether different: There was a beaming selfconfidence in him, and in his eyes a spiritual glow; he had such a power as could attract and command anyone he wished. He realized that a great spiritual force had filled his elder brother and he was no longer the person whom he used to know.

The elder brother in the above narrated meeting was Swami Vivekananda, and the younger brother was Mahendra Nath Dutta, about whom once Swamiji wrote to Mr. J. Fox: 'Kindly write Mohin that he has my blessings in whatever he does. I am quite proud of him now.'¹ On another occasion he

wrote to Mrs. Sara Bull: 'I want him to be daring, bold, and struggle to cut a new path for himself and his nation.'²

Incidentally, though Mahendranath inherited a close family tie with Swamiji, still, had he not been Swamiji's younger brother, he nevertheless would have become a great and distinct personality in his own right, owing to his deep erudition and mastery in different spheres of learning. Mahendranath was a great thinker, a philosopher and world-traveller, and was reputed for his inimitable and original way of writing. His interests covered an extensive field in Science—both oriental and occidental, and in culture, religion, sociology, psychology and economics. He was also keenly familiar with architecture, sculpture and painting; topping all was his very intimate and integrated knowledge about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

His biographer writes that Mahendranath Dutta was born in Calcutta on the first day of August 1869, the next brother to Swami Vivekananda. When the family lost their father in 1884, Mahendra with the rest had to face great mental anguish along with physical and financial trouble. At that

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 8, pp. 531-2.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 363.

tender age he and all the family members were unlawfully forced out of their ancestral house by some of their relatives, only Narendranath, at this time spending part of his time at home and the rest at Dakshineswar or busy with his studies, being able to provide the family with bare sustenance. Later, after Sri Ramakrishna's *mahāsamādhi* in August 1886, when Narendra and the other young monks took up their residence at the Baranagar Math, Mahendranath used to visit them. This influence of his elder bother, and also of Swami Abhedananda, Swami Saradananda, Girish Ghosh and other disciples of the Master, helped him to grow a strong yearning and love for both secular and spiritual knowledge. The young *sannyāsins*, when they were not deeply absorbed in meditation, worship and *bhajan* (devotional singing), also studied and discussed Philosophy, Literature and Science. Mahendra also, inspired by them, followed suit. He developed great inquisitiveness for both Eastern and Western philosophy. On the other hand, his regular contact with these disciples of Sri Ramakrishna kindled a light of spirituality within him. When he was a mere child he also was fortunate enough to see Sri Ramakrishna and was blessed by him. Possibly this led Mahendranath gradually toward the life of renunciation. He began to strive for emancipation, though possibly without being aware of the fact. He passed the Entrance Examination from the Metropolitan School of Calcutta in 1888 and eventually passed the F.A. from General Assembly (now Scottish Church) college in 1891.³

In 1896 Mahendranath went to London as wished by Swamiji, and there intended to take a degree in Law. But Swamiji advised him to study electrical engineering instead

of becoming a lawyer. He wrote to Mrs. Bull in 1896; 'I do not like any one whom I love to become a lawyer, although my father was one.... What my nation wants is pluck and scientific genius. So I want Mohin to be an electrician. Even if he fails in life, still I will have the satisfaction that he strove to become great and really useful to his country.'⁴

Mahendranath got acquainted with Miss Muller, Madam Sevier, Mr. J. Fox, Mr. Goodwin, and Mr. Sturdy, all of whom were involved in Vivekananda's mission of work. He began to study seriously, doing research in Western literature, history, politics, etc. at the British Museum in London. Here he met many learned and distinguished personalities, one of whom—Sun Yat Sen—became a great Chinese political leader.

After about a year and a half in England, Mahendranath left in 1897 and started on his way back home. He walked great distances, and sometimes rode, in different parts of Europe and Asia. He started walking from Gibraltar and crossed Morocco, Malta, Alexandria and Cairo. In Egypt he visited the famous Pyramids. He even had a journey across the Sahara. From Egypt he went to Jerusalem, then to Beirut and Damascus and finally to Constantinople. From Constantinople he went to Sofia and the Balkan states and then to Armenia, the Caucasus and Georgia. Later he went to Baku situated on the Caspian Sea. After this he went through Persia and came to Karachi where he broke his journey, finally coming back to Calcutta in 1902, when his elder brother Swami Vivekananda was no more on the earth.

Mahendranath was deeply attached to his elder brother for whom he had a deep veneration. The news of Swamiji's passing and the bereavement to him was such a

3. Br. Pranesh Kumar, *Sri Mahendra Nath Dutta Sange Baro Batsar* (Bengali); (Calcutta: Sri Ramakrishna Archanalaya, 1359 B.S.).

4. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, p. 363.

strong blow that he got completely unnerved. A brief stay in the Belur Math in the company of Swami Brahmananda and the other monks helped him to get over this mental shock. Soon he was his old self again. Later he set out on a pilgrimage and passed some time in meditations at Hardwar where he ultimately attained realization of a high level of spirituality. Afterwards he came back to Calcutta and settled down at his ancestral house (which had come back to the family through litigation), where he stayed till he breathed his last.

Mahendranath had no craving for earthly reputation or wealth. He led a very simple life and looked after his mother and family. He went through extreme economic stringencies at times, but nothing could upset his mental peace. Many of the young educated people of the surrounding locality used to gather in his house and were charmed by his profound knowledge and saintly behaviour.

On the *Mahāṣṭami* day of Durgā Pujā in the year 1956, Mahendranath was stricken and went back to his heavenly abode. Before falling unconscious he met a messenger from the savant Brahmachari Jnan Maharaj (a disciple of Swami Vivekananda), who came from Belur Math, bowed down to him and conveyed: 'Jnan Maharaj sent me and asked me to convey his *praṇāms* (salutations) to you.' Mahendranath exclaimed: 'Who sent *praṇāms*?' ... 'Jnan?' And with these words he fell into a fatal coma.⁵

The news spread far and wide and disciples thronged round him. His body was radiant with a spiritual glow. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, who was then the Chief Minister of West Bengal, one of the most

eminent doctors of the day, examined him and wondered how Mahendranath was still breathing—his body was so much wasted. He remained in a deep slumber thus for two days more, and then on the *Vijaya-Daśami* day, 15th October 1956, he passed away. A large congregation of common people as well as dignitaries bade him farewell for the last time when his mortal body was consigned to fire. The great wish of his life was, 'I don't desire for heaven, I shall again be born in India. It is India which is my heaven.'⁶

He had an insatiable thirst for knowledge, which led to the scholastic activities of his life. He wrote more than eighty-seven books in English and in his mother tongue.

Some of the special traits of Mahendranath Dutta, brother of Swami Vivekananda, may be highlighted as follows:

1. A strong power of observation with a meticulous scientific and rational outlook. He always made his inference after critical analysis supported by strong rationalization. He never made a sweeping comment.
2. He had a deep inquisitiveness and insatiable thirst for knowledge, which led to the scholastic activities of his life. He wrote more than eighty-seven books in English and in his mother tongue.
3. He had always an original and independent mode of thinking and was never overshadowed by the way of thinking of Swamiji. He always advised others: 'Be an independent thinker.'⁷

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5. Peary Mohan Mukherjee, *Smṛti Tarpan* (Bengali); (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 1371 B.S.), pp. 219 ff.

6. Sri Dhirendranath Basu, *Sanglape Sri Mahendra Nath* (Bengali); (Calcutta: 1967).

7. Chintanayak Mahendranath Dutta, *Sankhipta Parichiti*, Ed. D. K. Mukherjee (Bengali); (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 1992).

A Morning on a Campus

SWAMI SOMESWARANANDA

Swami Vivekananda had identified proper education as the magic wand to dispel all individual and collective ills. So, since the author, presently the Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Branch in Khetri, travels extensively in India, we had requested him to write on any institution where he noticed Swamiji's ideas on education put into practice. The following is an interesting narrative of the author's visit to a university.

It is not just another university, but one that is refreshingly different from the others. Its objectives are well set, and procedures are more informal. Consequently, it is vibrant with new and newer experiments. Vedanta is its Philosophy. More, the teachers know what the country expects of them.

Chitrakoot is in Madhya Pradesh, only 125 kms from Allahabad. The University referred to is the Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya. Spread over more than 2000 acres of land, surrounded by hills, rivers and lush green vegetation all around, it is a rural university symbolizing a breakthrough in Indian education.

I was invited to deliver a series of lectures there, but I learnt more than I taught.

Professor Bagaria, in his mid-thirties, is the Dean of the Computer Engineering Department there. 'Swamiji, we are producing engineers,' he said, 'but the more important question is what kind of civilization are we trying to create?' Dr. Kapoor, Vice Chancellor of the University, spoke in the same tone: 'Man-making is our objective, not just producing engineers, doctors, or managers. What are the teachers elsewhere doing? Universities in India are taking students in the wrong direction. Their students neither get jobs nor are able to do anything on their own. There are many reputed educational

institutes in the country, but what are they doing? Producing selfish giants!'

Dr. Kapoor is a very simple person, living in a two-room flat. The only photo he has in his room is that of Swami Vivekananda. And you will rarely find him in his chamber. He is always on the move—going to the various departments, talking to students, discussing with the workers, meeting the villagers, and so on. He has a dream, and he is in a hurry to realize it: 'Life is so short, and there are so many things to do!'

The teachers in this University are very clear about their objectives, about the purpose of education, that students should grow at the physical, mental and spiritual levels to serve humanity. The students here are made aware of the purpose of their life. They are guided to learn how to serve the people. They are here to have first-hand experience of the life of their countrymen—how they live, how they struggle hard to earn their livelihood, what their aspirations are, their sufferings, their hardships. The students also have first-hand experience with the way of thinking of the common people, their culture, their indigenous science and technology, and their needs. 'You are here not just to learn, but to create history with the help of your countrymen,' Dr. Kapoor reminds them. He asks the teachers, 'Tell me, what does this University mean to these people who live in villages? Is

this University only for the students, or is it also for the villagers, these faceless millions—these silent, illiterate, ignorant millions of villagers? Swami Vivekananda said that this nation lives in its cottages. Think what this University can do to build the nation.'

I attended a meeting where the students who had been sent to work in some of the surrounding villages were presenting their reports. Dr. Kapoor interrupted a student and asked, 'How did you select that village?' The student replied that, as per government reports, members of that particular village were very poor, and so he had chosen to work for them. 'Nonsense,' shouted Dr. Kapoor, 'I will not give your degree if you work like that! You should go to the villages, live with the villagers, understand them, feel their agony, and then decide.'

The University is conducted on Vedanta-principles. Students are made self-confident first. 'Tattovamasi: You are That; you have immense potentialities'—their life starts with this lesson. And next, *Ātmānam viddhi*: Know yourself; know the special area of your strength and grow according to your natural aptitude. Don't try to go for Arts just because your performance was poor in the sciences. Don't try to undergo Management-courses merely because it will help you get a good job. *Ātmano-mokṣārtham jagat-hitāya ca*: Work for self-development and for the good of humanity. These are the basic principles of this University.

Dr. Mushafir Singh, a Philosophy teacher, says: 'Ultimately Swami Vivekananda will prevail. His teachings are idealistic, yet so practical. The question is, How to implement these in the changed situation? We are searching for the answer.' This attitude has made the teaching method very flexible. The teachers always keep it in mind that they are to help the students to be

good citizens. So the students are taught to care for the people, especially the villagers. They are now working in more than 1,000 villages around Chitrakoot. The Biology students discovered that earthworms turn soil into fertilizer. The University is now producing tonnes of such fertilizer for the villages. Engineering students are taught to understand the indigenous science and technology used by the villagers and to develop these. Even the Management students are taught the indigenous management techniques. Thus the whole educational philosophy here has a very down-to-earth approach. The University does not want to produce scholars who are divorced from the history and geography of their country. It does not wish to produce white-collar job-seekers!

'In fact, stereotype thinking has ruined the teachers. If they are motivated, if they really love the students, they can do many things in any university.'

'We want the students to become self-reliant, who will help the people to become self-dependent,' said Professor Srivastava, Dean of the Engineering Department. 'So an attitudinal change is most important. We want our students to be engineers of a different kind. They should understand the problems of the country, offer practical solutions, and thus help the people to develop. See the craze in the name of hi-tech! What we need is appropriate technology, but we are only imitating the West. This blind imitation is leading us nowhere.' During a question-answer session with the B. Tech students, I noticed the change in their attitudes. They were trying to understand the problems of modernization. They were more keen on knowing indigenous technology and its relation with modern hi-tech. A couple of months back I had gone to one of the IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology).

The Chitrakoot engineering students are different from the IIT students. The former have a more open mind and they are socially more aware; their approach is down-to-earth.

Do the teachers face any problem? Yes and No. Yes, because they are to follow a university curriculum that does not make much sense in the present national situation. No, because Dr. Kapoor, the VC, always encourages them to break new grounds and remain creative and practical. A Physics teacher said, 'Science does not mean only theory and formula. A student should know the history and philosophy of science. The Theory of Relativity is all right, but a student must know why Einstein had to evolve that theory, what was the old concept, and what are the implications of this new theory. But these are not there in the Physics textbook'. A management student asked, 'Well, Swamiji, why should we "manage" at all? And management for what? To produce results or performers?' Even IIM (Indian Institute of Management) students had not asked me such basic questions!

Villagers come to the University regularly and students learn from them. The farmers are asked to express their opinions frankly. How does a group of students work in their village? What is the result of their projects? Is there a change of awareness among the villagers? Are they tapping the available resources to solve their common problems? How to preserve their folk-culture—their music, dance, handicrafts, folk-tales, etc.? I attended such a meeting and was thrilled to see the university students so keen to work on the advice of the village farmers, artisans, iron-smiths, and even the village ladies.

'A university is a learning organization,' said Dr. Kapoor. 'Even the teachers here should learn.'

We had three sessions with the students and four with the teachers. There was serious discussion with the Deans on how to make Vedanta practical in education. Producing brilliant students is secondary, the most important thing is to make them men. Job-skill is not enough. Imparting life-skill is more urgent. And they decided to learn more so that they could also help the students in the true sense. 'Passing on of information is not education,' said Professor Vyas. They wanted to impart holistic management and make it compulsory for all the students. So it was decided that the following items were to be introduced in the curriculum. Life-skill: increasing self-confidence, tapping one's inner strength, imbibing the spirit of sacrifice and service, creativity, and self-reliance; the other areas were leadership and team-building, forming self-managing teams, self-motivation, planning and implementation, etc. I was asked to conduct a training programme for a selected group of teachers who in turn would later offer similar programmes to the students regularly. I was also asked to conduct a similar programme, including a training on entrepreneurship, for the students. What I liked most was that the VC and teachers were always ready to introduce new items in the syllabus if they felt it was urgent.

'Like other universities, you too are to follow a curriculum. Under these circumstances how are you bringing in such a change?' I asked. 'It is not difficult,' said Dr. Kapoor. 'Like other universities we also have freedom in many areas. So one can do a lot even in this system. For example, we can give some extra input, we can change the mode of teaching, we can make education more practical. In fact, stereotype thinking has ruined the teachers. If they are motivated, if they really love the students, they can do many things in any university.' Dr. Verma commented, 'Right. It is not

enough to study history. Students are to understand the implication of history: how they themselves can play the role of a change-agent in history. And for that you need inspired and dedicated teachers. History means history of mankind. How did men evolve? How did self-management help them to evolve as a total Man? The interaction between the micro-cosmos and macro-cosmos, the urge for freedom, and the urge to transcend the limitation of the senses—how did all these affect history, and how are these affecting the present world? A student must know these and try to contribute to making history—this is the purpose of learning history! I see history everywhere. Patañjali, in his *Yoga-sūtra*, stated the history of evolution of man. The *Upaniṣads* gave us a vision, and the *Gītā* laid down the action-steps towards realizing that vision. Once we understand the significance of all these, we are better equipped as change-agents of history.'

'We want to impart that education by which one becomes more fearless, can stand on his own feet, and work selflessly for the people...otherwise what is the use of this university? There are more than 200 ordinary universities in this country. We do not want to join this bandwagon.'

No doubt Dr. Verma's ideas are revolutionary. Professor Srivastava, Professor Bagaria, Dr. Vyas, Dr. Singh and other teachers have made this University a laboratory. New and newer experiments in various fields of education are being carried out. They are aware of the needs of the country. They are not armchair theoreticians, but persons who believe more in setting examples and in producing results.

'We want health for all,' said Dr. Kapoor, 'but tell me, can allopathy help us? Can the poor Indians bear the expenses of allopathic

treatment? So we have started an Ayurvedic department. We have to learn a lot from our villagers. Trees, roots, fruits and leaves—all these have curative value. But we ignore these and flood the country with medicines that the poor majority cannot afford to buy. Should we ignore the wisdom of common men, the villagers, the so-called illiterate people? We have to learn the alternative treatments, the techniques, and blend naturopathy and other indigenous methods to reach out to more and more poor people.'

I met the ṛṣi whose brain-child this University is. He is fondly called 'Nānājī' (uncle) by all. A calm and gracious person, who talks very little. But when he does speak, his eyes become brighter and his words pour out from his heart: 'We need the right kind of men and women to build this country. Dependence on the government and external aid has ruined this country. People must come up to make the country great. They should take up the responsibility.'

Nanaji was sitting in his chair. A photo of Swami Vivekananda was hanging on the wall behind him. He continued: 'We need experiments in every field; science, technology, management, history, arts, sociology, economics—everywhere. India has a great role to play in the world. But are we Indians aware of this? We lack self-confidence. We have lost respect for our forefathers and for our people. That is the tragedy. We have to give them back their lost individuality.'

Chitrakoot University is not just another university. It knows the needs of the country, of its people. It is organized as a growth centre for the surrounding villages. The faculty have shown that, in spite of the general system of university education, one can do a lot if one is determined to do something meaningful. 'When we buy a watch, we get a guarantee-card. When we buy a

pressure-cooker or a mixer or a typewriter, they give us a guarantee-card. Can your university give guarantee-cards to the students that they will either get jobs or will be able to start something on their own after passing out of this university?' I jokingly asked. But they took it very seriously. 'That is what we are trying to do,' said Professor Srivastava. 'The students are putting in so much time and energy to their studies. They must get back the value of this. We are taking up a detailed programme to materialize this dream. Your training programme

will be the first step. We do not like to produce mere job-seekers. We must produce entrepreneurs because our country needs them badly. We want to impart that education by which one becomes more fearless, can stand on his own feet, and work selflessly for the people. That was what Swami Vivekananda wanted. We know it is a difficult task, but we must make this practical. Otherwise what is the use of this university? There are more than 200 ordinary universities in this country. We do not want to join this bandwagon.' □

Glimpses of the Savant Mahendranath Dutta

(Continued from page 386)

4. He was a great philanthropist and always sympathized with the downtrodden, always opposing social injustice and hatred. He also held a deep sense of regard for women and toilers. He used to say that these two classes will one day rule over the entire world.

5. He always believed in synthesis and unification. He said that there was no dualism or pluralism in the very layout of the universe. The same source of energy gradually gave rise to different views and ideas.

6. He was never a theist in a true sense. Rather he used to say that the bias of theocentricity has led the nation to a feeble corner. It is time to concentrate on homocentricity and do away with all sorts of religious dichotomy.

7. He always emphasized that both men and women should work to provide a healthy sustenance for their own families as also for others. He used to say that the central theme of the nation should be 'bread, medicine and education'.

8. Mahendranath had great predilection for language and he had command over a number of Indian and

European languages. He had a deep knowledge of linguistics and etymology.

9. He had a natural aptitude for science. On reading his book, *Energy*, Romain Rolland wrote to him: 'I send my warm thanks and express my appreciation of your striking study and interpretation of the great problem of energy.'⁸

10. Mahendranath's knowledge of art—paintings and sculpture—was acclaimed by Abanindranath Tagore: In the preface to the book, *Dissertation on Paintings*, he commented that Mahendranath had critically studied the ancient and modern art and culture in different parts of the world; that this has, together with his own perception, led him to reach a field of true realization in art; and that this book must be praised by the learned society of both East and West.

Mahendranath was a man of many rare virtues and qualities. He was truly, as Brahmanandaji Maharaj said, 'more than a monk in his householder's attire.' □

8. Dutta, Mahendra Nath, *Natural Religion* Ed. P. M. Mukherjee (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing Committee, 1934), p. 105.

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

TRUE FREEDOM

Guru Nanak was on a pilgrimage to Mecca. One day a pious man surprised him with a question: 'Revered sir, who is greater, a Hindu or a Muslim?'

Nanak gravely replied: 'Your question is indeed difficult to answer. In fact, he alone is greater who always does good to others and also delights in the Supreme Self.'

The man asked again: 'Which caste and what religious denomination do you belong to, revered sir?'

The Guru promptly replied: 'I belong to the denomination of "pious-man", and my caste is that of air and light. I live as a tree or the earth does, and am always prepared to be mercilessly cut like a tree or dug like the earth. Like a river I take no notice of whether people throw at me flowers or filth. I consider only him to be alive who, like sandal-wood, spontaneously spreads the fragrance of his noble qualities, always and everywhere.'

SELF-CONQUEST

The queen of the state of Kuru was an irreverent lady. She did not appreciate even Lord Buddha's teachings. So when she learnt that the Buddha was coming to visit her state she ordered her subjects to dishonour him when he came. Naturally, as soon as he entered the kingdom, people tried to humiliate him in various ways, calling him a fool, a thief, an ass, and so on! This was how he was received, day after day, no matter in which part of the state he went for alms. But nothing touched him; he remained as serene as ever. Does a lion take notice if foxes snarl at it?

However, Ananda, the Lord's favourite disciple, could not bear the insults for long, so one day he pleaded with his Master: 'Lord, we had better go away from here.'

'But where do you want to go?'

'To any place where none will speak ill of us.'

'And if, by chance, people insult us there too?'

'We shall then move to some other place further.'

Lord Buddha: 'No, my child; that is not the way. If the people of a place misbehave with us, we should rather not leave that place until they learn right conduct. Haven't you noticed that my inner power goes on multiplying as adversities increase? As the mighty elephant withstands attacks on it from all sides, likewise should we face the insults hurled at us by the wicked. People value highly a tamed stallion from Sindh or a wild elephant, but remember, Ananda, real greatness lies in self-conquest. My dear Ananda, never be excited.'

News & Reports

Activities of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Gretz, France, for the year 1993

The work of the Centre went ahead satisfactorily during the past year. A lecture or some other programme was given each Sunday afternoon regularly by Swami Veetamohananda, Swami Vidyatmananda, or Swami Devatmananda. There were other occasional speakers from outside, two dance recitals and a cultural programme composed of recitations and songs concerning Swami Vivekananda. On Saturday evenings Swami Veetamohananda conducted a class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated into and commented on in French.

The number of friends wishing to have retreats increased so that on important holidays, during the summer, and during most week-ends the ashrama facilities were virtually 'fully booked'.

As usual the morning *pūjā* and two meditation periods were observed daily. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Brahmananda were observed. There were special worships for Sri Ganesha, Sri Durga, Mother Kali, and Lord Shiva. *Ram-nam* was sung every *ekadashi* day, and Kalpataru Day was marked with a special programme.

On 17 February Swami Ritajananda returned from a trip to India where he had been hospitalized for several weeks. He recovered at Gretz but continued throughout the year in poor health due to the troubles of age and cardiac insufficiency. Swami Veetamohananda, at Gretz since May of 1990 to assist Swami Ritajananda, participated as speaker in numerous meet-

ings in France (Lille, Suresnes, Nice, Fontainebleau, and Bitche) and abroad (Aachen, Bad Nauheim, Frankfurt, and Berlin in Germany, and Leiden and Assendelft in Holland). In January Swami Vidyatmananda spoke at a meeting at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London to help celebrate the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893.

On 18-20 June at Helvoirt in Holland there occurred the first all-European Vedanta Conference attended by some one hundred seventy-five devotees from the United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, and Switzerland. It was another occasion to celebrate the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's 1893 appearance at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Speakers included Swamis Bhavyananda, Vidyatmananda, Chidbhasananda, Veetamohananda, Amarananda, Dayatmananda and Tripurananda, as well as devotees from the countries represented. A delegation of some twenty-five Gretz devotees attended.

On 8 October a further celebration of the Vivekananda Centenary was held at the headquarters of the UNESCO in Paris, sponsored by the Embassy of India in France, the delegation of India to the UNESCO, the Association France-Union Indienne, and the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna. About 700 people attended. The celebration was entitled 'Swami Vivekananda, l'Homme Universel'. The occasion was opened by the Director General of UNESCO, Dr. Federico Mayor, who gave a talk on Swami Vivekananda's universalist ideas and inaugurated an exhibition prepared by Swami Devatmananda of texts and illustrations concerning Vivekananda and the

Ramakrishna movement. That exhibition is now on permanent display in the Ashrama auditorium. The Vivekananda Centenary also was celebrated in Berlin and Leiden.

On 26-28 November a retreat-seminar was held at the Centre, during which some twenty persons, several previously unacquainted with the Centre, participated in a concentrated weekend of meditation, study, and practical activity designed to effect 'A Renewal of the Self'.

Our magazine *Vedanta* came out regularly, 800 copies being printed each trimester, distributed to members and paid subscribers.

Favourable weather permitted us to harvest a good crop of vegetables and fruits, a large portion of which were canned or frozen for winter. The herd of cows, at present four milch cows, gave 12,500 litres of milk, all but 5,000 litres being sold by the dairy. From our nine beehives we harvested 200 kilos of honey. The chickens gave some 10,000 eggs during the year.

The Swamis and members of the Board of Trustees wish to thank all who cooperated so well during the year in offering various kinds of help. Swami Ritajananda sends his best wishes and benedictions for the Season and throughout the year.

[We are sorry to say Swami Ritajananda passed away on 22 January 1994—Ed.]

A Short Report of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Nadi, Fiji, for 1992

A Spiritual Retreat was held in the Ashrama on 1st January 1992, the holy occasion of Kalpataru Utsav. The daily worship of Sri Ramakrishna, the evening *pūjā*, prayers and *satsaṅg* were conducted throughout the year. As in previous years,

the weekly classes for children, Saturday evening meditation classes, Sunday classes on *Gītā*, *Bhāgavatam*, *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the life and teachings of Holy Mother, and Swamiji's life and teachings were conducted from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Mission Centre, followed by lunch-*prasād*. *Tulsī Rāmāyaṇa* classes were regularly conducted on Monday evenings.

The *tithi-pūjā* and the public celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji, Sri Krishna-Jayanti, Ram-Navami, Siva-Ratri, Guru-Pūrṇimā, *Chandī-pūjā* and *pārāyaṇam* during Navarātri, Christmas Eve, and Prophet Mohammed's birthday functions were also celebrated.

Revered Swami Gahananandaji, Vice President of the Order, paid a visit to Fiji and Australia. He, along with the Minister of Education, performed the opening ceremony of the new Auditorium at Shri Vivekananda High School. During their visit to Australia, both Revered Swami Gahananandaji and Swami Damodarananda visited the Vedanta Centres and many groups of devotees in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. Here and there a few devotees were also initiated in Australia.

Shri Vivekananda High School near Nadi Town, and the Rural Development School in the village of Nawaicoba, a little away from Nadi Town, for Secondary dropouts are being managed by our Mission Centre here.

The Religious and Cultural library, the Text Book library for Secondary students, and a general section for Primary students were functioning as usual, at the Library and Reading-room of the Mission.

The Bee-keeping and honey-project,

with about 15 bee hives scattered about in the premises of Shri Vivekananda High School and the Rural Development School (now re-named 'Nawaicoba Vocational Centre' as per the suggestion from the Ministry of Education), are functioning well.

The National Youth Day was celebrated on 12th January 1992 with some youth programmes. many local youths and devotees attended this programme at the Mission Ashrama.

The Mission has started a new project of assisting the poor people of Bangladesh in the Squatter-Colony of the poor landless refugees near Nadi Town. Though not on a large scale, the needy are supplied with books, uniforms and footwear, wherever required.

Maa Sarada Seva Samiti of the lady devotees helped in various ways in all the activities of the Ashrama.

Both the Mission Swamis visited various schools, temples and other institutions for giving talks on Religion and Culture. They gave interviews to various persons when required. They also visited New Zealand and Australia on invitation from the devotees.

Annual statistics:

| | Boys | Girls |
|------------------------------|------|-------|
| Shri Vivekananda High School | 483 | 531 |
| Rural Development School | 28 | nil |

| | |
|--|--|
| Ramakrishna Mission Library & Reading Room | Total Books: 2852 Newspaper: 2 Periodicals: 38 |
|--|--|

The Centenary Observance s of Swamiji's Talks at the Chicago Parliament of Religions: 1993.

To celebrate the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to, and his talks at, the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, various functions in Fiji, New Zealand and Australia were organized.

In this connection we invited Swami Sridharanandaji of Ramakrishna Mission Poly Clinic, Lucknow, India. He arrived in Fiji on 2nd June 1993 and delivered several talks both in Hindi and English, in important towns and cities throughout Fiji, highlighting Swamiji's message of manifesting divinity in the day-to-day lives of the people.

The first function was organized at our Shri Vivekananda High School, more than a thousand students attending, and presided over by Rev. Paula Niukula, one of the past Presidents of the Methodist Mission of Fiji, which happens to be the largest group here. Everywhere people appreciated the talks very much, especially the student population, about three thousand of them being from many important Secondary schools of Fiji.

Another special feature of Swami Sridharanandaji's visit was a Day-Retreat (for all the devotees in connection with Sri Ramakrishna's Annual Celebrations) at a distant island reached after an hour's travel by ship. This was organized for the first time and the devotees enjoyed it very much: this sort of Spiritual Retreat in a far-off island !

Swami Sridharanandaji along with Swami Damodarananda next visited Wellington and Auckland in New Zealand, delivering talks at three public functions organized in connection with Swamiji's Centenary. Both the Swamis also visited the

(Continued on page 400)

Reviews & Notices

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: PATRIOT-PROPHET—A STUDY, by Dr. Bhupendranath Datta. Nababharat Publishers, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta. 306 pages plus xxv; Rs. 125/-.

This book is a revised version of Dr. Bhupendranath's work published under the same title in 1954. The author, a pioneer among Indian socialist leaders and a revolutionary of great standing, was the youngest among the three brothers of Swami Vivekananda, and hence could provide a firsthand account of the monk's life, activities and perceptions on the basis of his reminiscences and family sources. The main argument of the book is that Swami Vivekananda was not a sannyasin of the old variety—engaged in the pursuit of God and oblivious to the problems faced by humanity—but a patriot-prophet with a cosmopolitan outlook, a man of vision who could look into the future and suggest remedies for the most complicated problems faced by mankind. He was no Marxist or an economist but he foresaw the stage which would bring about "the resurrection of the Indian people" and finally lead to a synthesis of the best in the Eastern and Western traditions.

Those who dubbed Swamiji as a reactionary in his lifetime on the puerile ground that he refused to join the bandwagon of those reformers who were clamouring for the remarriage of widows and intercaste marriages, failed to understand that the great monk was not interested in trivial reformation but in the total transformation of society. The orthodox were as much upset by his attack on baneful superstitions, meaningless rites and ceremonies, untouchability and the rigidity of the caste system as by his assertion that India's downfall was mainly

due to the *kupamanduka-mentality* of its people.

The vested interests of the upper classes in keeping the shudras and the toiling masses under subjection, the snobbery of the elite educated in western culture, and its disparagement of the Indian cultural heritage, the collaboration of the middle classes with the Imperial bourgeoisie for petty gains (which made him remark: "Slaves want power to make slaves") and their callousness towards the agony of the poor masses, goaded Swamiji to expose and even rebuke the exploitative sections of society, who "by degrading the lower classes had, in turn, been degraded by the English rulers into shudrahood." Datta rightly points out that long before Lenin and Mao conceived the idea of establishing a proletarian classless state, Swamiji had made the prophecy that "the first shudra state" would be born either in Russia or in China.

Swami Vivekananda revived what deserved to be revived—the perennial message of the Vedantā proclaiming liberty and equality for one and all—and reviled whatever was puerile and redundant in the Indian tradition, without caring for opposition or even slanderous attacks from conservative quarters.

Datta is at his best when he gives Swami Vivekananda the credit for being the first to exhort his countrymen to raise the downtrodden, the first to speak of "the new civilisation to be ushered in by the proletariat," the first to "envisage a government of the toiling masses," and to prognosticate about "the proletarian culture of the future world."

Before expatiating on Swamiji's views on different subjects such as religion, national issues, art or the plight of Indian society,

Datta makes a comprehensive study of the Indian renaissance of the 19th century and the social environment of his times. The account of Swamiji's early life and the factors that influenced his personality, the role of Sri Ramakrishna in reconciling the diverse religious views that prevailed at that time, Swamiji's trials and triumphs in the West and his lasting impact in India and outside countries—these and other aspects of his great life have been discussed in a succinct and splendid manner. Some important sayings of Swamiji have also been included in the pages of this book, annotated by the author's observations.

The Editors: Ansupati Dasgupta and Kunjabihari Kundu, deserve to be congratulated for meticulously revising the original copy, and fulfilling its publisher's wish to bring out the second edition of this work "as his humble tribute to the cherished memory of this great son of India" at the fag end of his life.

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor
Jalandhar City, Punjab.

OLD PATHS WHITE CLOUDS, by Thich Nhat Hanh, Rider Books, Random Century House, 20 Vaux Hall Bridge Road, London SW IV 2 SA; 1991. 572 pages; £ 19.99

In lucid language this book presents the wonderful life story of Buddha and his trials and triumphs. The author has drawn material directly from twenty-four Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese sources. The eighty years of the divine drama of the Great One unfolds before our eyes slowly and gently. The arresting narrative takes readers through Buddha's childhood, spiritual struggles, the establishment of the Sangha, hostility by jealous people and lastly, the long spiritual ministration by the Enlightened One on this earth. The author has wisely avoided the portraying of Buddha as a superhuman being performing

miracles. Instead, Buddha as a man of supreme wisdom and with a human heart comes close to people and shares their sorrows and pains. The beauty and charm of the book lies in this touching portrayal. A fascinating book on the life of Buddha.

S.M.

THE LORE OF THE MAHABHARATA, by Amallesh Bhattacharya, Translated from Bengali by Kalyan Kumar Chaudhuri; Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency, Pondicherry, 1992. 436 pages; Rs. 150/-.

The lore of the *Mahābhārata* is narrated in the manner of an ancient story told by a master storyteller. The raconteur here is the Rishi Ugrashrava, the presiding hermit at the Ashram of Shaunaka. Sauti recounts the tales of the *Mahābhārata* as compiled by Veda Vyasa to a group of eager and expectant rishis.

The unfolding of the vast Mahabharata in the succeeding chapters continue to enthrall the heart and intellect of the discerning reader with its timeless, and poignant tale of the greatest possible human suffering redeemed by the realisation of the highest possible wisdom. In the introduction itself we are told that in this tale, "Shakuni the sly, the hate-filled Duryodhana, the evil-minded Karna, even these, housed behind their surface character amazing nobility, valour, strength and power of renunciation. . . ." (p. 2). The *Mahābhārata* is described as the fifth Veda, surpassing the other four Vedas in terms of its "weight and vastness." (p. 8)

The book is divided into thirty-six chapters. Each chapter has a colourful metaphor for its title—as for instance: "Nectar Charged With Fire" (Ch. 3); "The Perfumed Pollen of a Stricken Flower" (Ch. 8); "In Thunder the Flute Calls" (Ch. 22); and "Debt of Blood" (Ch. 26). Kalyan Kumar Chaudhuri has done a commendable job in translating the work into English from its original

Bengali. However, translations are, more than often, inadequate substitutes for the original. The language, as it appears in English, may probably appear archaic and pedantic to the modern reader. The figurative embellishments, the stylistic and semantic convolutions, and the plain verbosity of some of the utterances may well exhaust the patience of an average reader.

But one has to accept the musicality and sheer expressive originality of the narrative. The comprehensive and informative "Cast of Persons" at the end of the book is an invaluable aid to one's comprehension of the text.

This book transports us once again into the magical world of heroic exploits, great wisdom and human expiation. It certainly refreshes and enlightens one's mind with its incomparable exposition of dharma and other universal truths.

Dr. Rama Nair
Secunderabad.

GO FORWARD: Letters of Swami Premeshananda, compiled by Satchidananda Dhar and translated from Bengali by Swami Swahananda, Published by S. Dhar, 95 Bosepukur Road, Calcutta, 600 042. 281 pages plus xxxviii; Rs. 40/- in hard cover.

This is a compilation of the letters written by Swami Premeshananda of the Ramakrishna Order to various young people who came under his benevolent influence. The letters contain valuable advice regarding how to go forward on the spiritual path. Readers of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna are familiar with the parable wherein the wood-cutter is advised to 'go forward'—therefrom this book derives its title.

The Swami exhorts the recipients of his letters to read the Gita and Swami Vivekananda—particularly his four Yogas—and to develop a love for India. The letters, being addressed to different people, vary naturally in the type of spiritual advice they

contain, but as Dhar says in the Preface, they contain 'a universal message which can be embraced by all'. The letters also reveal the paternal love and concern the venerable Swami had for the young spiritual aspirants.

The letters were written over a period of three decades, till the Swami's passing away in 1967. The fact that they have been preserved so long shows how valuable in content they are.

The book also contains a philosophical note by the Swami, on how to become fearless. A brief biographical sketch of the Swami is also provided. He had started an Ashram of his own, and interestingly, some of his disciples had joined the Ramakrishna Order before he did.

The print of the book is very clear and the quality of the paper is good. A highly readable book.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao
Hyderabad

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO KNOW YOURSELF (Conversations with Sri Ramana Maharshi), compiled by A.R. Natarajan, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore, 560 003. 260 pages plus xvi; Rs. 75/-.

Sri Ramana Maharshi taught the method of *Ātma-Vichara* or Self-Enquiry: by trying to seek what is the 'I' that constantly asserts itself, one should try to realize one's true nature.

Many were the people who came to him and got answers to their problems and doubts. Many of these conversations and reminiscences have been published; yet, many have not been made public. Sri A.R. Natarajan has compiled some of these, which include conversations great personalities like Ganpati Muni, Kapali Shastri, Paul Brunton and Dilip Kumar Roy had with Sri Ramana.

The conversations have been grouped according to the subject of discussion and the book is divided into thirty-four chapters,

each with an appropriate title. It would have been more convenient if the chapters were numbered because the references have been provided at the end of the book. There are also a glossary, bibliography and index at the end of the book. Each chapter begins with some explanatory notes by the compiler.

Although the book is titled 'a practical guide', one should not expect this to be a step-by-step aid to travel on the path of self-enquiry. The book is more a source of reference, giving us the Maharshi's opinion on various spiritual topics.

Mr. Natarajan, who has dedicated his life to the propagation of the Maharshi's teachings, needs to be complimented for bringing out these hitherto unpublished teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The get-up of the book is very good and it has a beautiful picture of the Great Sage on the front cover.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao
Hyderabad

FLOWERS AND THEIR MESSAGES: The Mother. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Publication Department, Pondicherry, 605 002. Fourth Revised Edition, 1992. 309 pages; Rs. 125/-.

Flowers and Their Messages is a beautifully produced book wherein pictures and photographs are more eloquent than words. This is the creation of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and it spells the psychological analysis of the different planes of consciousness as expounded by Sri Aurobindo.

"By communicating with flowers we can see that the vegetal kingdom already has its own way of aspiring for the Divine," says the Mother. The Mother further says that the flowers silently teach us tenderness and love and thus we unknowingly surmount our lower nature. Eventually this can lead us to the highest human experience.

The volume opens with an introduction which consists of words of Sri Aurobindo

and the Mother. These are occasional expressions showings sublimity of flowers and plants. Often the questions were asked to the Mother about certain flowers and she divined spiritual potencies of these and expressed them. The book is the compilation of such expressions. Thus, the flower, *Abelmoschus esculentus*, popularly known as Okra or Gumbo, stands for promise and assures us that the supramental goal will be realized. (p. 1) Another flower, *Alcea rosea*, known as Hollyhock, symbolizes an offering and indicates the spontaneous attitude of the psychic in relation to the Divine. (p. 9) Dahlia stands for dignity. It affirms its worth but asks for nothing. The pink Dahlia, which stands for psychic dignity, refuses to accept anything that lowers or debases. The orange-yellow Dahlia stands for Supramentalised Mental Dignity. It tolerates no pettiness in its thought turned towards the Truth. (p. 84)

Hibiscus also has various indications. It stands for Agni. Also for *Ananda* and beauty of new creation and of supramental youth. It is described as aesthetic power. *Hibiscus* is again equated with faith, eternal smile and eternal youth. The eternal smile is again described as the self existent joy and eternal youth is a gift that the Divine gives us when we unite ourselves with Him. (pp. 114-17) In this way it goes on, flower by flower. The book educates the reader and makes him more competent to understand the floral language.

The spiritual truths are laid in red print. This helps the reader in paying more attention to the spiritual content of the book.

The book contains two coloured plates of flowers of various hues and a small chapter on the symbolism of colours. This is followed by a brief chapter of Floral Language. Years back, in 1929-1930, the Mother used to make up sentences in English based on the significances she had given to various flowers. One could read these sentences merely by looking at the flowers held by the

Mother in her hand. A few such sentences are included in this chapter. An index consisting of the classified lists of significances is very useful for learning the floral language. The glossary of philosophical and psychological terms used in the book also adds to the utility of the book.

The book carries the inspiring message of

the Mother in her own hand: Life must blossom like a flower offering itself to the Divine.

The last page contains a brief sketch of the Mother.

Dr. N.B. Patil
Bombay

Reviews & Notices

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six main cities of Australia—Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, highlighting Swamiji's character-building and man-making religion. In Canberra the devotees of Vedanta had organized a Parliament of Religions, where the Swamis spoke along with the other rep-

resentatives of various religions, including that the Australian aborigines.

Early in July Swami Sridharanandaji flew back to Singapore and Malaysia to participate in the Centenary functions of that region.

Swami Vivekananda in America

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familiar. During the 20th century there have been times when even Vivekananda's most devoted followers may have been caught up in a sense of despair when they contemplated the spiritual, not to mention the political, state of the world. But during those months of 39th Street, Vivekananda set an example of how to bear with the occasionally dismal conditions and inevitable frustrating problems of simply living, and how to push forward towards one's highest Ideal. One feels that the affect of the 'jolt' he gave to the world's thought at that time is still

working itself out. The seed that was sown in Chicago, and came up as a distinct tree during that cold 19th century winter in New York, is still growing.

Vivekananda pressed on despite all obstacles towards what he knew was the truth, and hence what would be of the greatest benefit to his fellow human beings. What we can do today to honour his memory is to resolve to do exactly the same. □

In Him exists neither action nor organ of action; no one is found His equal or superior to Him. His supreme power is revealed in manifold forms; inherent to His nature is the working of His strength and wisdom.

—*Krishna Yajur Veda, Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, 6.8.*

