

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

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Traditional Wisdom

DISCRIMINATION

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।
कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमेक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

The self-existent supreme Lord inflicted an injury on the sense organs in creating them with outgoing tendencies. Therefore man perceives only outer objects with them and not the inner Self. But a man of discrimination, desirous of immortality, beholds the inner Self with his eyes (senses) closed. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1)

ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्येत्येवंरूपो विनिश्चयः ।
सोऽयं नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः समुदाहृतः ॥

Brahman is real; the universe is unreal. A firm conviction of this fact is called discrimination between the eternal and the transient. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 20)

You must practise discrimination. 'Woman and gold' is impermanent. God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money? Food, clothes and a dwelling-place—nothing more. You cannot realize God with its help. Therefore money can never be the goal of life. That is the process of discrimination. ... Consider—what is there in money or in a beautiful body? Discriminate and you will find that even the body of a beautiful woman consists of bones, flesh, fat and other disagreeable things. Why should a man give up God and direct his attention to such things? Why should a man forget God for their sake? (*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 82)

Everything is illusory—husband, wife, even this body. These are the great shackles of maya. Unless you can free yourself from these shackles, you will never be able to cross to the other shore of the world. Attachment to the body, this identification of the Self with the body must go. What is this body, after all, my child? It is nothing but three pounds of ashes when it is cremated. However strong or beautiful this body may be, it ends up in those three pounds of ashes. Yet people are attracted to it. What maya! (Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi)

☪ This Month ☪

This month's editorial **Facets of Service** discusses different modes of service.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features excerpts from an article 'Spiritualization of Thought'.

Half a Decade in the Enchanting Environs of Along is the third part of a series of reminiscences of the early days of the Ramakrishna Mission work in Along, Arunachal Pradesh, by Swami Kirtidanandaji. He recalls here the inauguration of the school and the hostel in the new premises, besides narrating some interesting student-related incidents.

In the second and concluding instalment of his article **The First Hundred Years of the Immortal Gospel** Swami Prabhanandaji discusses some more important features of the *Gospel* and some facets of M's personality. A trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission, the author is head of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata.

The International Human Resources Development Centre (IHRDC) is a pioneering extension wing of the College of Education run by Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore. **Services to the Disabled—A Successful Venture** by Swami Abhiramanandaji is a story of the IHRDC and its service to the disabled in transforming their lives from one of lifelong dependence on others to one of gainful self-employment, besides helping them gain back their lost individuality and self-confidence—a task that would have pleased Swami Vivekananda. The author is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and heads the College of Education that runs

the IHRDC.

Tribute and Prayer for Peace and Unity is the text of Swami Shantarupanandaji's address at an interfaith programme entitled 'A Tribute to the Spiritual Oneness of Humanity' organized by Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, at the New School University Tishman Auditorium, New York, on 22 September 2002. A monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author is minister and spiritual leader of Vedanta Society of Portland.

In her stimulating article **Swami Vivekananda's Vision of Education—Its Relevance Today** Dr T K Jayalakshmi surveys the present Indian educational scenario and underlines the relevance of Swamiji's thoughts on education and the urgent need to put them into practice. A former Principal of RV College of Education, Bangalore, the author is presently Director of the RV Educational Consortium, Bangalore.

Turiyātita Avadhūta Upaniṣad is a translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur. The elaborate notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features incidents from the lives of Ashtavakra and a poor devoted couple, Ranka-Banka.

In his thought-provoking article **A Dilemma and A Decision** Dr S Dandapani describes some traits that make teaching a noble profession. The author is a former Professor of Educational Psychology at the Regional Institute of Education, Mysore.

Facets of Service

EDITORIAL

A farmer whose corn always secured the first prize at the state fair used to share his best corn with the farmers in the neighbourhood. When asked why, he said, 'The wind picks up the pollen and carries it from field to field. If my neighbours grow inferior corn the cross pollination will bring down the quality of my own corn. That's why I am concerned that they plant only the very best.' That was enlightened self-interest, a win-win situation for everyone.

There are a number of service organizations all over with diverse service programmes. True service does emanate from some of them, though in some cases accompanied by some inevitable publicity. At the individual level, there are unsung heroes noiselessly doing their bit for others. We shall try to examine here different kinds of service and the possible transforming effects service could have on the individual.

The Fivefold Human Personality

According to Vedanta, we are divine in the core of being. But since our body and mind are usually more real to us, they occupy our whole being making us oblivious of the divine core of our personality, the substratum of our physical and mental activities. The world perceived by our five senses is very real to us, beckoning us to seek in it lasting satisfaction and fulfilment. That this is a futile search becomes clear to us after we experience our quota of pleasure and pain. Most often, we learn more from misery and pain than from happiness. The latent divine core in us, called the Atman, is the source of all purity, power, strength and fulfilment. Sri Ramakrishna lived and taught that the manifestation of this hidden divinity—also called realization of the

indwelling God—is the goal of human life, and a struggle to attain that goal alone can lend meaning to human existence.

The Atman has somehow come to identify itself with the non-core aspects of our personality and, as a sequel, with the world and others outside. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* (Part II) describes five layers of human personality corresponding to our identification with these non-core parts of our being. We shall briefly survey these five layers and discuss the service appropriate to each layer. We purposefully use the term self rather than *kosha*, or sheath, in order to dispel a possible materialistic conception that the Atman is encased in five containers. These five selves are the result of the identification of the same 'I', Atman, with the five non-core layers of our personality. Purification of mind is nothing more than extricating the 'I' imprisoned, as it were, in these five layers. It follows that Self-realization is remaining, or being, as the pure 'I', unaffected by the body and mind.

Physical self: When we identify ourselves with the body we are the *annamaya* Atman, the physical self. The world and its objects are real to us in this state. We look upon ourselves and others as men or women and interact with people accordingly.

Energy self: Immediately next to the physical self, subtler than it and pervading it, is the *pranamaya* Atman, the energy self. Prana is usually translated as breath or life energy. But it is also responsible for all other activities like assimilation of food, excretion, circulation of blood and, finally, the exit of life breath from the body at death. It is prana that activates our hidden mental impressions, which influence our thoughts and actions. Again, during sleep it is prana that stimulates the mental impres-

sions giving rise to dreams.

Mental self: Subtler than the energy self and pervading it is the *manomaya* Atman, the mental self. We are this self when our 'I' is identified with the mind. As mental self, our happiness and misery alternate with varying states of the mind. Our own pet notions and opinions about others and ourselves bear a strong influence on our thoughts and actions. Our gross and subtle desires primarily determine our actions. Our emotions, feelings of pain and pleasure, love and hatred, the subtle impressions of our thoughts and actions—all this is a part of our mental self. Most people exist no more than as mental selves, hardly conscious of a higher self. As mental self, people are not aware that the mind takes them for a ride, more often in spite of themselves.

Intellectual self: This is the *vijnanamaya* Atman, subtler than the mental self and pervading it. Our sense of judgment, decision making, discrimination, ordering our lives according to a set of values—all this stems from the intellectual self. Technically, this self is referred to as buddhi. Whenever we consciously take decisions, buddhi is activated. Buddhi is again the important aspect of human personality by identifying with which one begins to strengthen one's personality by disciplining the wayward mind. The more discriminative and decisive we are, the greater the manifestation of buddhi. Taking decisions means assuming responsibility for the consequences. Afraid of this, people usually postpone things thinking that time will solve their problems for them. Such people cannot be more deluded. They may pride themselves in 'deciding not to decide', but it only means that their buddhi is in deep slumber—not something to make a song about.

Blissful self: Subtler than the intellectual self and pervading it is the *anandamaya* Atman. This self is the source of bliss arising from its proximity to the Atman, the blissful core of our personality. One gets an inkling of this bliss when one is not troubled by physical

and mental vagaries. This freedom from the body-mind thralldom is possible only by our ceasing to identify with them. This becomes possible in deep, dreamless sleep, when we are dissociated from the body and mind. This bliss also surfaces when one is deeply immersed in enchanting music or any form of art or beauty, or has some satisfaction resulting from a solution of some abstract problem.

What distinguishes sleep-induced bliss from that resulting from the realization of the Atman is the transforming effect the latter has on human personality. On awakening from sleep a person continues to be the same dullard he was before he courted sleep, if not duller with excess sleep. A realized soul, on the other hand, becomes a mine of knowledge and radiates bliss all over and knows that he, the real core of his being, is eternal even when the body falls. Second, the sleep-induced bliss is of the unconscious variety. We become aware of our happiness in sleep only after we awake. We are not conscious in sleep of any subject-object experience. All that we can say about sleep on waking is this: '*Sukham aham asvāpsam, na kiñcid avedīsam, I slept happily, but didn't know anything.*' Thus happiness and ignorance are intertwined in sleep. That emphasizes the significance of the waking state. It is our efforts for mind control when we are awake that determines the extent to which we are able to tap this hidden bliss *consciously*. And spiritual disciplines are nothing but these efforts. As they say, it is perfectly all right to build castles in the air as long as we wake up and start laying the foundation.

Service and the Five Selves

Dāna means what one can offer others, including service. All service can be classified into four types.

Physical help (anna dāna): Physical help obviously corresponds to the physical self and usually takes the form of the gift of food. But gifts of clothes and shelter also fall in the same category. In fact, any help rendered to the

body and its upkeep, including medical help to a certain extent, belongs to this category.

Saving of life (prāṇa dāna): Saving or prolonging of life by medical means or otherwise pertains to the energy self.

Gift of education (vidyā dāna): Not only making man literate but educating him to think for himself and solve his own problems corresponds to the mental self. Service by way of dissemination of life-giving and invigorating ideas also falls under this group. Swami Vivekananda wanted education to help build a man's character: 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'¹

Spiritual help (jñāna dāna): Awakening man to his higher destiny, helping him discriminate between the real and the unreal, offering him spiritual instructions and a conducive environment for the manifestation of his inner divinity—such acts of service will end man's material needs for ever. This is spiritual help. This corresponds to the intellect and bliss selves of human personality. The goal of this help is to awaken the divine core, Atman, which usually remains identified with the five selves, and covered by them, as it were.

Grades of Service

Manifestation of hidden divinity being the goal of life, it is obvious that any service that takes one nearer the goal is considered superior. Manifestation of divinity signifies progressive de-identification of the 'I' with the five selves—the body and the mind—ending up with identification with the Atman, the pure, birthless, deathless, eternal Self. The relative merits of different types of service can thus be gauged from how far service helps in de-identification with the non-core parts of the personality. There is a second criterion to determine the gradation: How long does the service leave the recipient without want? Swami Vivekananda makes it clear that 'the gift of spirituality and spiritual knowledge is

the highest; the next gift is the gift of secular knowledge; the next is the gift of life; and the fourth is the gift of food.' (3.222)

In his lectures on karma yoga Swamiji discusses the relative merits of different forms of service. We summarize the points here. Physical help does not remove our wants permanently and it does not transform the recipient's character. In other words, it does not result in de-identification with the physical self. Swamiji sounds a note of caution to those who feel that physical help is the only help possible:

In considering the question of helping others, we must always strive not to commit the mistake of thinking that physical help is the only help that can be given. *It is not only the last but the least*, because it cannot bring about permanent satisfaction. The misery that I feel when I am hungry is satisfied by eating, but hunger returns; my misery can cease only when I am satisfied beyond all want. (1.52-3; emphasis added)

Saving or prolonging of life is a little higher than physical help. But a mere extension of lifespan without a qualitative change does not help the recipient advance towards the goal of life. Next is the gift of knowledge or education. In Swamiji's words, 'The gift of knowledge is a far higher gift than that of food and clothes; it is even higher than giving life to a man, because the real life of man consists of knowledge. Ignorance is death, knowledge is life. Life is of very little value, if it is a life in the dark, groping through ignorance and misery.' (1.52-3) 'The gift of spirituality and spiritual knowledge is the highest, for it saves from many and many a birth.' (5.267-8)

Ramakrishna Mission's Service Activities

In a press meet convened at one of our ashramas on the occasion of an important event, a reporter was a bit critical about the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in urban areas. He cited Swamiji's call to serve the masses in villages and wondered how the

Mission's work in urban areas, its spacious buildings, temples and auditoriums conform to Swamiji's teachings. The reporter, however, was not receptive to an explanation, his bias getting the better of him.

But the explanation lies here. The Ramakrishna Order has before it Swamiji's dictum, '*Ātmano mokṣārtharū, jagad hitāya ca*, for one's own Self-realization and for the good of the world.' And the good of the world consists in helping others move towards the goal of Self-realization, manifesting their latent divine nature.

And it is to be remembered that spiritual help is not possible on an empty stomach. In cases where basic survival is the issue, the Mission does offer physical help. This help includes the well-known relief and rehabilitation activities of the Mission after natural disasters like flood, famine, cyclone and earthquake.

Its hospitals, dispensaries and sanatoria render the second type of help: saving and prolonging life. These medical centres too have their own sections offering other kinds of service like organizing discourses, discussions and seminars on important topical themes.

Then come the educational institutions and hostels run by the Mission, offering character-building education on the lines of Swamiji's teachings, besides rendering physical help (free board, stay and education) to deserving cases. The Mission's publication wings are geared towards gift of knowledge through their many reasonably priced and subsidized publications on the eternal Vedantic truths lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swamiji.

As for spiritual help, spiritual initiation over decades by successive Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Order has put millions of people in touch with the spiritual current

set forth by Sri Ramakrishna, affording them a new meaning of life and a path for spiritual transformation and inner growth. Regular discourses on spiritual topics by monks of the Order serve as supplementary help in this important area.

Obviously, Swamiji was not for physical help alone, as the reporter thought. There are people in different levels of evolution. The sizable urban population in India is not much in need of physical help but need the third and fourth kinds of help: educational and spiritual. With the broad ideal of man making before it, the Mission caters to their needs through proper infrastructure like temples, buildings, bookshops, libraries, auditoriums and character-development centres for the young.

It may be mentioned that the Ramakrishna Order's service activities abroad, especially in developed countries, are usually of the educational and spiritual variety—education referring to dissemination of Vedantic truths, not running schools and colleges. Running educational institutions of repute and ministering to the physical self are usually taken care of by the state machinery.

* * *

The farmer who shared his best corn with the farmers in the neighbourhood was apparently helping them. But he was really helping himself. Even so, if performed in the right spirit, service can become a powerful tool for the inner growth of those who serve. How this becomes possible will be discussed in the next editorial.

Reference

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.342.

Are you unselfish? If you are, you will be perfect without going into a single church or temple.

—Swami Vivekananda

↔ Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago ↔

March 1903

Spiritualization of Thought

We are all liable to underestimate the value of what we are thinking about, which is partly owing to the circumstance that the world has yet to see the wonderful things that may be accomplished through this great agency—thought. Of all that concerns mankind, this subject has perhaps been hitherto the least treated of in regard to its significance. It therefore well behoves every one of us to search as deeply as possible for definite suggestions as to the particular lines along which true thought can be attained. In this twentieth century, amid the ruins of decaying systems of thought, we catch glimpses of a new life stirring in the hearts of earnest men and women, and the time is approaching when this ruling power of thought will be better understood. This is tantamount to saying that our relation with the basic principle Truth, of which we are each representatives, will be perceived and acknowledged. Mighty indeed are the results of this subtle force, extending as it does from the most trifling to the most important pursuits of life, and in the degree that it is spiritualized, does it become more cogent, more intense. Noble thoughts shed a flood of light on our lives, bringing out exalted character and self-hood, purifying our intellectual powers, transforming our physical nature, gradually connecting them to the spirit within and all that is true and beautiful. Such a declaration will in no sense be found extravagant or chimerical, if we remember the essential fact that thoughts are constructive, the precursors of our deeds: hence, good thoughts will produce all that is good and strong, uniting one as it does by an invisible chain to kindred spirits—who act and react on each other. Contrariwise, wrong thoughts return like boomerangs, producing disunion and discord. As only one kind of thought can possess us at one time, we should, bearing the above in mind, awaken to the necessity of checking the growth of delusive and undesirable ideas, immediately expelling them by substituting good for bad, thereby setting up harmonious currents which are capable of producing a rich harvest of sympathetic conditions. Just as an arm grows vigorous through proper exercise, in just the selfsame way does virtuous, honest thought gain increased power through the use of its capacities.

Every one of us possesses abundant energy for thought power: the questions are, how it should be directed, and what is the ultimate object which each one of us should aim at. It is absolutely necessary that we drill ourselves in right thinking, for the mental attitude we hold when we seek to work, affects our relative success or failure. When we have mastered the secret of thought power, the true determining factor of life, we may carry into our outer life the embodiment of our highest ideals. Thought control therefore must be acquired by concentration, and receptivity to thought is of primary importance to true advancement. The principle is simple, and its application is easy, if we will try to carry it into effect. The art of right thinking consists of disengaging one subject from the distracting stream of ever-varying thought, and dwelling in that alone, making an inlet for that enlightenment which finally leads us to becoming one with the higher Self. Regular thought training tends to this development and enables one to arouse the higher vibrations of thought, the most powerful of all the invisible forces.

It is when our lives are guided by a sound and understood principle that our action will be

self-sufficient and effective. Even in the hours when circumstances and things press heavily upon us, we can rise above all anxiety and gloom by the help of such a principle, as the best, bravest and noblest men and women of all ages have done. Now, if we would learn to do this, we must first deal with the within, before we can effectually deal with the without. Mental woes, forebodings and unhappy thoughts have a tendency to scatter, weaken and disorganize the powers of mind and interior vibratory forces: it is only by drawing on the higher Self that the mind is strengthened. ...

The ancient rishis were seers of thought and exhibited phases of spirituality and wisdom quite unparalleled in any age and in any country. In meditation they addressed themselves to effacing restlessness of their thought, reaching that fixity of mind by which the plane of Divine Consciousness is reached. Hence it is not surprising that these men, strong in their beliefs, and able to direct their range of vision to the invisible world, should, finding their lives in the realms of highest truth, feel their religion so strengthening and elevating. They carried conviction to numbers of their fellow men, for they believed with a belief which was not so much a faith as a certainty of absolute knowledge, that the Supreme Being, the innermost in the very core of things, was felt by them in the depths of their hearts as the life of their life and the breath of their breath. This claim has been made by yogis for long ages, and in their isolated and unique position (for they are grand exceptions to the majority of mankind) the verification of their god-like attainments is entirely conclusive of the strange things ascribed to their sight and hearing, and of the bliss transcending human thought, into which they are merged. ...

The chiefest function of thought is to quicken the sensibilities of the Spirit within us, to urge it to new creative effort, to stimulate us to bring human life more into unison with our truest ideas. Moreover, the immutable law in nature that each atom in the universe must serve a universal end, eternally prevails and cannot be permanently set aside by man. Let this scientific fact inspire our hearts with noble purposes, and let us apply these truths to the efforts that will enable us to live for our best, to be earnest and capable workers for the service of the world: to kindle the hearts of men with the same lofty aims, and to help other souls whose environments do not give them the same advantages to surmount their ignorance and its attendant weakness. In our endeavour to interlink ourselves with the law of Oneness, we should recollect that one of its basic principles is service, and a sure test of our own vitality is shown by consecrating our lives to the service of some of the other parts of the one great Whole, that we may become living representatives of our divine Origin. We should keep the inner activities of life ever flowing with liquid love, mingling Love and Truth, for Love's vibrations are, through the thoughts of man, the renewing agents of Truth's almighty power. We can never exert great influence unless we live the life of love, of boundless pity and compassion for our fellow men. ... With tenderest love in our souls and affinitive thoughts vibrating towards all creatures, we can better take our position as workers in the world, comprehending the immensity of our real nature, estimating its value and wisdom, and seeing all in the One True Self, and the One Self in all. *

—Advaitin

Will and Character

Often the most splendid successes of life will be found to be due much less to extraordinary intellectual gifts than to an extraordinary strength and tenaciousness of will, to the abnormal courage, perseverance, and work-power that spring from it, or to the tact and judgment which make men skilful in seizing opportunities, and which of all intellectual qualities are most closely allied with character.

—News and Notes

Half a Decade in the Enchanting Environs of Along

SWAMI KIRTIDANANDA

Part 2: The Curtain-raiser (*continued*)

I was referring to Revered Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj's visit to Along for the inauguration of the school and the hostel in their new premises on 6 December 1969. There were others, too, to add to the joy of the occasion. Most important, the two thousand or more of the local people from surrounding areas, who came arrayed in their best outfits—men in their customary bamboo hat, the attractive *galu* coat, and the regal belt, and women in their colourful sarongs—and our own school children smartly dressed in their striking school uniforms.

Preparations for the Function

For days on end prior to the actual day of the function, people from distant villages had worked together to make the entire place look like a picturesque fairyland by putting up colonnades, arches, buntings, and what have you, with exquisite, artistic designs and patterns, all churned out of mere bamboo reeds and stem, using only their simple *dao*, as only they knew how to do it. A decorative pandal with a stage set up at the venue of the meeting by the Government officials completed the picture.

Mother Nature, too, appeared anxious not to be left behind in making the function a grand success. An early morning shower caused a few anxious moments. We were apprehensive that it would mar the function, as surely it would have if there had been a heavy downpour later. But it stopped, leaving a blanket of dark-blue clouds hanging around forming a canopy as it were over the site, and

also warming up the place considerably, making the usually gloomy winter morning most pleasing and charming. The colourful dresses of the tribals set against the blue background of the sky was a sight enchanting enough for the gods, and the whole atmosphere was scintillating with hope and expectation. Even after more than three decades, the memory of it makes me go ecstatic. 6 December 1969 was not just another day in the calendar, merely a day on which a new school building was inaugurated. It would not, indeed, be an exaggeration to say that it heralded a new chapter in the history of Arunachal Pradesh itself, as every speaker vied with the other to emphasize.

The morning session began with Vedic chanting by the tribal boys in an absolutely clear accent and pronunciation, which took an unwary and unsuspecting Mr Chavan's breath away. He hardly expected it from them tribal boys.

What, however, really raised our hopes in the bright future of the children and of our work for them was the cultural show put up by them in the evening. Swami Lokeshwaranandaji, the then Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, who had accompanied Revered Gambhiranandaji to the function, had his own apprehensions about the success of the show to be entirely presented by the tribal children. He asked diffidently during the lunch hour: 'Kirtidananda, are the Governor and other dignitaries coming for the evening function?' 'Yes,' I said. 'Is the show all by the local children?' 'Yes,' I said again. 'Are they doing it for the first time?'

'Yes,' I said. 'Do you think they will do well?' 'I hope so,' I said. 'Don't you think it is somewhat risky, when so many dignitaries are attending the function?' I merely said, 'Let us see what happens.' 'Why don't you take the help of the boys from our school? They can also put up something,' he said. He had brought four of them with him to arrange a science exhibition on the occasion, and thought that they could be of some help in saving face if something should go awry. 'No, Maharaj,' I said, 'I have purposely kept it as an exclusively local children's affair, and have deliberately kept away all the children from the plains studying in our own school here. Let us see what they will do.' But I was dead certain that nothing would go wrong, as we had prepared the children well.

Encomiums Galore

The first item was an invocation, a Bengali song by Rabindranath Tagore, sung unerringly by a group of tribal girls, dressed up elegantly in spotless white saris with a broad red border. Then came the rendering of Swami Vivekananda's address at the first session of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 by a tribal boy, Binduk Padu, with perfect accent, pronunciation, diction and feeling. Then the bhangra dance of Punjab, executed with verve and vigour typical of the race. At this stage, Revered Gambhiranandaji, who was normally not given to outward expression of his emotions, could hardly contain himself. He turned round in his seat and exclaimed: 'Kirtidananda, excellent!'

More things, however, were to follow: the tableau on the life of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, a Malayali stick dance, and the classic piece, enactment of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in English, which threw the entire audience into raptures, especially Governor Mr B K Nehru. He wanted to step on to the stage immediately to congratulate the artists, particularly the impresario of the piece, Mrs Ela Dutta (the wife of the local DMO, who had

her training in Shantiniketan), and wanted to be photographed with them. It was an improvised bamboo stage, again an artistic creation of the local people. None had expected this eventuality, and no provision had been made to get on to the stage. Nor was Mrs Ela Dutta prepared to come to the stage to receive the encomium. She was behind the scenes, and shy by nature. But Mr Nehru was not the man to be deterred by these considerations. He jumped on to the stage with a leap reminiscent of his youthful days. There were shouts of joy. The function concluded with rejoicing all around.

At the end of his three-day visit, before he left Along, Revered Gambhiranandaji suddenly asked me one day, 'Kirtidananda, how long have you been here?' 'Three months,' I said. There was an enigmatic smile on his face, and he relapsed into his usual silence. I understood, however, and was elated. And then came the letter quoted earlier.

But truly speaking, I had hardly done anything worthwhile during those three months. It was a strange experience I had then. On the one hand, I was feeling guilty that I was doing nothing, and at the same time there seemed nothing that I could do. Sure, the impending inaugural function was just round the corner. But I had little part to play in it, as it seemed to me. The officials were doing whatever was to be done. I had been sent by our headquarters in such haste, and here I was, for all practical purposes, idling away my time! It constantly pricked my conscience. Then, I remembered one of the short stories by the famous English author Somerset Maugham. A British secret agent had been sent to Paris on a particular mission. What the exact mission was, they had not revealed to him. They had simply asked him to go and wait for further instructions. He was just lazing about within the four walls of the hotel where he had taken quarters, eagerly awaiting instructions. None came until one day they asked him to return, saying that his job was over. He was sur-

prised. Actually, his very presence there was enough to create sufficient panic in the enemy camp and push them into acts of indiscretion, which finally led to their falling into the trap set for them. 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' (Milton) Perfectly true it seemed! So it happened. Everything went well in the inaugural function. Augurs well for the future, I thought. Mysterious things do happen. Inscrutable are the ways of God! Why worry?

Back to Ground Realities

Once, however, the euphoria of the event was over, we were face to face with realities. The first problem faced was that the boys and girls who had been admitted to the school and the hostel were over-age by ordinary standards, more than the allowable limits. A boy of 14 or 15 (their exact age was difficult to determine with any degree of certainty in the absence of birth certificate or horoscope) in standard I—you can well imagine! That was how it was everywhere. In the Government schools a boy of 28 studied in standard IV or V. At this rate, I thought, we would be in the same predicament year after year. Why not give them a push to standard V, and then from the next year admit children to the school at the proper age? After all, had they not done so wonderfully well in the cultural show arranged on the occasion of the inaugural function? They would, with some exertion on their part as also ours, do equally well at academics, too—that was my line of thinking.

Talent Needs Training for Its Cultivation

But the truth was soon to dawn on me: one swallow does not make a summer. A stray successful cultural function does not imply brilliance all round. Not all the children had participated in the programmes; the majority had to be mere spectators. Nor did all those

that had done well on the stage have an aptitude for learning in other fields, which required a different kind of training and discipline, a different kind of more strenuous effort. In fact, as it turned out to be later, the dull-est fellows in the classes were very often found to be at their best on the stage. I wondered how. Perhaps, that required a different kind of talent. Tribals had a natural flair for art. But I realized later that if inherent talent had to be of any real worth, it had to be cultivated by sustained training. Few had the patience or will power for it. A case in point brought out this truth to me most vividly. The design for the altar that adorns the shrine today at Along, which was the centre of attraction there, was got done in Madras (now Chennai), miles away from Along in the far south. Now the problem was how to give the person through

At this stage, Revered Gambhiranandaji, who was normally not given to outward expression of his emotions, could hardly contain himself. He turned round in his seat and exclaimed: 'Kirtidananda, excellent!'

whom it was to be done an idea of the design I had in mind. So, I called a boy who by nature had a taste for painting and drawing, gave him a rough idea of what I had in mind and asked him to draw the design on paper. While he could easily draw that portion of the altar which had only straight surfaces and lines, he was perplexed when he had to draw the curved surfaces and round figures like lotuses. Any amount of explanation and practical demonstration would not persuade him to even make an attempt. That was a revelation. Natural aptitude is one thing, and attaining perfection in a particular thing is another. For that a regular course of training and thorough intellectual discipline is necessary. That was a difficult pill to swallow for the tribals, used as

they were to a free life of ease and comfort in the sylvan surroundings of the hills and forests.

Some Student-related Incidents

So, pushing the boys higher up to the level of boys and girls elsewhere age-wise was all right. The children were jubilant and exultant. But of what use is it or of what value, or how would it help if they were not actually brought up to the same standard academically as well? That meant hard work for us and for them—more so for them. But they were unable to understand that. How could they, tiny toddlers that they were? Only we knew the long distance they had to cover. When pressure was put, naturally there was resistance, at least inwardly. One of the boys, Tumken Bagra, now an advocate, visited Chandigarh years later, in 1983 or '84, to do his postgraduate course in the Punjab University, and I happened to be in charge of our centre there. He confessed to me how the children were very much irritated at that time on my insistence on their paying undivided attention to their stud-

'See, so many of you couldn't do it! I did it alone with just a click of my fingers!' This boy immediately retorted: 'That is because you drink milk!' Milk was taboo in their society then, as much as beef is taboo with us!

ies. 'Swamiji,' he said remorsefully, 'we used to feel those days: why doesn't this swami also, like his assistant, let us be merry and play around without having to worry about books, lessons, study or homework? Why this over-emphasis on studies? We used to grumble behind your back, cursing our fate that had cast our lot with you. But now we know that we have learnt nothing after we left the Ramakrishna Mission school in a huff (of the circumstances that led to it, later). Now we have got a degree. But it is worse than useless. We feel we were better off without it. Here are

these Punjabi boys and girls scoring over sixty per cent marks just for the asking, as it were, whereas we have to struggle hard even to get just the marks to pass, forty per cent.' The point was the boys and girls from Punjab or other states of India, at least those that had the means, had a history and tradition of learning running through generations for five thousand years or more. Whereas the society from which he hailed was just now emerging from a moribund state of existence to have a taste of education and learning, and in modern sciences and arts at that. Obviously, they had to put in more effort to come up to the standard of others within a short time. Needless to say, it is a matter of pride and joy to us that they could do it.

For all his caustic remarks, he was a good-natured boy, very chummy with me, so to say. My first encounter with him was very amusing. I had just arrived at Along, and we were all living, as I mentioned earlier, in bamboo huts in what is now the playground. A few days after my arrival, the most important festival of Malayalis, a good number of whom

were employed in Government offices there, namely Onam, was being observed by them in the town. A big feast with all the choicest Malayali and other South Indian dishes had been arranged for the special invitees, including me. They sent all those well-flavoured dainty delicacies of the day to our boys as well. I just went in the evening to the hostel when they were having a repast of the tasteful items that had been sent. That was the first time I was visiting the hostel after my arrival. I was inquiring of every one of the boys how he liked the menu that day. When this boy's turn came, he stood up and said, 'Oh, very nice! How we wish our food were like this every day!' Every day their fare was simple dal (lentils) and rice, along with some fresh green chillies to add to the taste. The

straightforward reply knit a bond of close friendship between us.

On another occasion, preparations were going on in our new campus for the Independence Day celebrations. I had asked the boys to paint the heavy iron flag mast with the tricolour of our national flag spirally. They were finding it difficult to turn it around for doing so, the weight of the flag mast being too much for their young shoulders. I just did it with one twist of the wrist, and instead of keeping quiet, jokingly taunted them, saying, 'See, so many of you couldn't do it! I did it alone with just a click of my fingers!' This boy immediately retorted: 'That is because you drink milk!' Milk was taboo in their society then, as much as beef is taboo with us! And I was just having two or three spoons of it or curds daily, which was all that was available there! I mention this to indicate how free he was with me.

On another occasion, long before my arrival in Along, some boys had been taken on an excursion to some of the big cities of India, and this boy was one of them. He was still very small then. He could not remember much of what he saw, but one thing was clearly imprinted in his mind. In Bombay (now Mumbai), the boys stayed in somebody's house, where they had a feast arranged in their honour almost every day. That he remembered very well. And, then, somebody in the house

just made a sarcastic remark on their similarity in looks to the Chinese, which made him feel that the Indians outside did not regard them as their own wholeheartedly. That also he remembered very well. I thought he would turn out to be our worst enemy in later life. By God's grace, nothing of the sort happened. On the other hand it is gratifying that he wrote a soulful article later on in the *Prabuddha Bharata* (April 1988, 153-4), where he goes into ecstasy eulogizing our school at Along and the wonderful way it was working for the welfare and uplift of the local people.

Another boy also, Tujo Ango, had a similar experience when he came to Belur Math once. The people in the street would shout at him in a mocking tone: 'See, there goes Bruce Lee,' and he would run for his life. This was one of the major difficulties we encountered in working with them: how to disabuse them of the notion they had in this regard and convince them that we regarded them as our own flesh and blood.

(to be continued)

[In the first instalment of this article in the January 2003 issue (page 40), the Bengali song cited should read as 'Na dekhe nam sune kane man giye tai lipto holo.' The song is by Ramprasad and not by Swami Abhedanandaji as mentioned earlier. —Editor]

Chicken Broth for the Dead

The play was in progress at the village theatre when the curtain was suddenly lowered and the manager stepped before the audience. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said, 'it distresses me deeply to have to announce that the leading actor, our great and beloved mayor himself, has just had a fatal heart attack in his dressing room. We are therefore forced to stop the play.' On hearing this, a huge middle-aged woman in the front row stood up and shouted agitatedly, 'Quick! Give him chicken broth.' 'Madam,' said the manager, 'the heart attack was fatal. The man is dead!' 'So give it to him at once!' The manager was desperate. 'Madam,' he pleaded, 'what good will chicken broth do to a dead man?' 'What harm will it do?' she shouted.

Chicken broth does for the dead what religion does for the unconscious.

—Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*, 1.90

The First Hundred Years of the Immortal *Gospel*

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

Now a few words on the greatness of the *Gospel*. The *Gospel* is truly an outstanding literary work—not just in the field of religion, but in the field of literature as a whole. First of all, it is a wonderful record that presents a part of Sri Ramakrishna's life along with his message. But what makes the presentation unique is that if we read it carefully and contemplate on the scenes, we feel Sri Ramakrishna very close to us. Sometimes he is talking before us, sometimes singing, sometimes dancing, and at other times he is in deep samadhi: we are able to feel his living presence. This is something we do not find in any biography or study of any other Incarnation of God. This one feature alone makes the *Gospel* an extraordinary work.

The Charm of the *Gospel* Songs

There is yet another salient feature of the *Gospel*. In India there are some very interesting traditions. In South India there is something called *hari katha*, which means the story of the Lord. In North India too there is something similar called *bhagavata katha*. In a *hari katha* the narrator tells a story of the Lord, interspersing it with songs and dance, either by himself or a companion. The narration creates a wonderful atmosphere charged with devotional fervour. Even so, in the *Gospel* we find many songs. In its pages M recorded 182 songs sung by Sri Ramakrishna himself—sometimes while he was dancing. Holy Mother, who had often heard the Master sing, had this to say about his singing: 'Ah! His singing was saturated with honey, as it were. He used to float, as it were, on the waves of the songs. His singing still rings in my ears.'

Besides the songs sung by the Master, M recorded another twenty-two songs discussed by the Master, and about a hundred other songs sung by Narendranath (Swami Vivekananda), Trailokyanath Sanyal, Nilkanta Mukherjee, and others. Altogether, these songs are spread over 472 places in the *Gospel*. Those who seek devotional fervour may find it in the *Gospel* as in a *hari katha* or a *bhagavata katha*. The charming atmosphere the *Gospel* creates is truly fascinating.

Sri Chaitanya's Spiritual Moods Authenticated

Then again, the *Gospel* is a mine of information on the study of saints and spiritual life. A student of the life of Sri Chaitanya, another incarnation of God, may find it difficult to understand and appreciate the three states of consciousness in which he dwelt. But in the *Gospel* one finds Sri Ramakrishna explaining these three levels of consciousness—the conscious state, the semi-conscious state, and the inmost state—the states he himself habitually dwelt in. In fact, in those days people could hardly appreciate the spiritual states of Sri Chaitanya. Some even doubted what had been written about him. But people who came to Sri Ramakrishna were amazed to find that everything was verified in his own life and teachings. Thus, both the Master's words and life presented in the *Gospel* bear testimony to Sri Chaitanya's life. Moreover, we can also safely conclude that Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual condition was similar to that of Sri Chaitanya.

About these states of consciousness, it might also helpful to consider Sri Ramakrish-

na's concept of the vijnani. A jnani is one who knows beyond doubt that a log of wood contains fire. But a vijnani is one who lights the log, cooks over the fire, and is nourished by the food. Sri Ramakrishna made it clear that a vijnani alone can live in all these three states of consciousness. While explaining this point to Pundit Shashadhar, he said: 'The vijnani always sees God. That is why he is so indifferent about the world. He sees God even with his eyes open. Sometimes he comes down to the Lilā from the Nitya, and sometimes he goes up to the Nitya from the Lilā. ... One attains this state after realizing Reality in both aspects: Personal and Impersonal.'¹

Reality beyond Words Explained

Ordinarily it is very difficult to comprehend what is meant by samadhi, or deep ecstasy. Many people were curious about samadhi in those days. But those who were completely ignorant of it could not understand even when they saw Sri Ramakrishna in that state. They saw that his face was beaming, and sometimes tears of joy were rolling down his cheeks, but he could not say anything. Some people even became suspicious. Once a doctor stuck his finger into Sri Ramakrishna's eye to check whether he had any physical consciousness; some physicians tested him with a stethoscope. But people who understood something of the Master's states of consciousness asked him: 'What do you feel in that state? What is it like?' and he tried his best to explain. But then he had to admit, 'I would like to describe to you what I feel during samadhi, but unfortunately it is as if someone is holding my tongue.' In fact, the highest spiritual experience—the Advaitic experience of the non-dual Reality—cannot be expressed in words. Sri Ramakrishna told the great scholar Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, 'No one has been able to utter by the tongue what

Brahman is.' Vidyasagar appreciated the idea very much.

In spite of this, however, samadhi has been discussed in great detail in the *Gospel*. There are different kinds of samadhi, but on the whole it can be said that it is a state in which one becomes entirely unconscious of the external world—unconscious of one's own body and of everything else. Yet at the same time one remains fully conscious within. One is filled with the consciousness of God. For the first time all this has been elucidated in the *Gospel*. It has been explained both in Sri Ramakrishna's own words as well as through vivid descriptions of him in samadhi. The *Gospel* is an extraordinary work not only on samadhi, but on many other aspects of spiritual life as well.

A Spiritual Manual for All Faiths

There is yet another interesting feature proclaiming the *Gospel's* greatness: though Sri Ramakrishna was born and brought up as a Hindu, his teachings in the *Gospel* are not meant exclusively only for Hindus. They are for everyone—every traveller who wants to reach that highest goal known as Self-realization, or God-realization. I can cite a couple of

In the Gospel one finds Sri Ramakrishna explaining these three levels of consciousness—the conscious state, the semi-conscious state, and the inmost state—the states he himself habitually dwelt in.

cases in point. Father Clooney, a well-known Christian leader in America, acknowledged in an article in *Prabuddha Bharata* that he had a better understanding of the life of Christ after reading the *Gospel*. Then again, I heard a Muslim scholar, Rezaul Karim, admit that after reading the *Gospel* he had a better grasp of his own faith.

Transforming Power of Holy Company Vindicated

But still more interesting is the fact that this *Gospel* is a case study of the transforming power of a truly holy man like Sri Ramakrishna. And this transformation is evident in the life of M himself. M was a brilliant scholar. Among all the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, monastic or lay, he was the most brilliant from the standpoint of university records. He was also a successful headmaster of a school. He had so many outstanding qualities of head and heart. Despite all this, he was a failure in his life in the world, in his family life—so much so that he decided to commit suicide. It was just then that by chance he met Sri Ramakrishna. At the very beginning of the *Gospel*

Though Sri Ramakrishna was born and brought up as a Hindu, his teachings in the Gospel are not meant exclusively only for Hindus. They are for everyone—every traveller who wants to reach that highest goal known as Self-realization, or God-realization.

we find a young man taking M for a walk, and their going from one garden to another and reaching the temple garden of Rani Rasmani. There they find a group of people assembled in a room. They peep in and see Sri Ramakrishna sitting on his cot, talking to the group. After listening to him for a few minutes, M feels charmed. From this moment a radical change begins in his life.

This transformation in his life has been recorded in the *Gospel* by M himself, but, unfortunately, the term he used to describe it has been omitted from the English *Gospel*. What was that transformation? In M's own words, he was at first a householder devotee and was transformed into an ascetic householder. In his own translation of the *Gospel* M used the

words 'ascetic householder'. This concept is well known, and has been elaborated in the *Devi Bhagavata*. Who is an ascetic householder? A person who does all his worldly duties dispassionately, with detachment. He relegates his ego to the background. He does everything, but with a transformed outlook that helps him progress spiritually.

The Ascetic Householder

During M's second meeting with him, Sri Ramakrishna elaborated the life of an ascetic householder with several beautiful illustrations. He told M, 'You need not renounce the family life; you need not go to the forest to realize God. You can stay with your family, but live like a maidservant in a rich man's house.'

Here we have to understand Sri Ramakrishna's illustration in the Indian context. He said, 'A maidservant lives in a rich man's house. She works hard, and she treats everyone in the family as her own. But she knows in the heart of her heart that her real home is in a village and that there she has a little boy. She often thinks of her boy, but she takes care of the rich man's child, looking upon it as her own. Thus, as she works, she is not always aware of her real home, and she sometimes imagines that she is part and parcel of this rich man's family. But in the heart of her heart she knows that she really does not belong to them.' Sri Ramakrishna has explained the ascetic householder's life through several other examples also.

Thus gradually M transformed into an ascetic householder, and was able to tackle the problems of life satisfactorily. He could live at peace with his family members, and at the same time was able to raise himself to higher levels in spiritual life. In fact, M not only solved the problem of his own life, but later proved to be a wonderful 'evangelist', guiding many others on the spiritual path. He was rec-

ognized as a living example of his Master's message: living the life of an ascetic householder. The *Gospel* is thus a case study of the transformation of a householder into an ascetic householder. In the history of religious studies, such a case study is rare and of inestimable value.

M Hidden in the *Gospel*

Then there is another fascinating point: M tried very hard to keep himself hidden in the *Gospel*—so much so that he used as many as eleven pseudonyms in his work. Swami Vivekananda once wrote M: 'Socratic dialogues are Plato all over. You are entirely hidden.' Yet, next to Sri Ramakrishna, M is the most prominent character in the *Gospel*. He is present everywhere. Wherever Sri Ramakrishna is, there is M. Otherwise how could he listen to the Master's words and record them? Also, even when the Master was not around, M is present in the *Gospel*, talking or thinking about him. But whenever M had some interaction with Sri Ramakrishna, he had to use a name, so he used different pseudonyms. Among them four are prominent. In the Bengali *Kathamrita* they are Bhakta, Master, Mani and Mohini. In the English *Gospel*, however, in many cases the translator has simply used M.

It is important to note that these names have not been used randomly or haphazardly: they have a deep significance. They represent precisely four important aspects of M's personality. 'Mani' refers to that aspect of his personality in which he was a philosopher, a poet or a man of independent spirit. He was not an ordinary man. He was an intellectual who could ask searching questions. M says in the beginning of the *Gospel* that he could not argue with Sri Ramakrishna after his 'first argument with the Master, and happily his last'. Perhaps

it is true that he did not openly argue with the Master, but he did have several doubts to be resolved and went on raising questions. This was Mani.

As 'Bhakta' (devotee), M was a quiet person who was swimming uncomfortably in the river of worldly life. He cherished the desire to realize God in his present life, but he did not know how to do it.

When he called himself 'Master' (school-teacher), he was a typical teacher of nineteenth-century Bengal. Well-read, humble, soft-spoken and devoted to his profession, he had loving concern for his pupils. The good of his students was his principal concern.

Gradually M transformed into an ascetic householder, and was able to tackle the problems of life satisfactorily. He could live at peace with his family members, and at the same time was able to raise himself to higher levels in spiritual life. ... He was recognized as a living example of his Master's message: living the life of an ascetic householder.

'Mohini' was a typical lower middle class Bengali of his day. What is more, his wife had lost her mental balance when their eight-year-old son died. Mohini found himself almost defeated in the struggle of life. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there are four classes of human beings. The last category was the *baddhajiva*—the bound soul, a person who is tied down by strong fetters. M was just that, and he did not know how to break free. Whenever that aspect dominated in his life or in his words he used the name 'Mohini' in the *Gospel*.

These four characters of the *Gospel* are four mirrors, each reflecting a prominent aspect of M's integrated personality. When these reflected pictures are put together, as if in a

photo frame, one gets an idea of M's personality from the *Gospel*, which could be said to be a sort of comprehensive autobiography of his. English literature is rich with autobiographies as well as critical studies of autobiographies. This autobiography can fit into any definition given by literary critics. It is a fascinating study. I am sure readers will enjoy exploring this.

Contemporary Calcutta and Its People

Now, the next important feature of the *Gospel*: M paints in it a very clear and authentic picture of contemporary Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna met many great people of his time: Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Mahendralal Sarkar, Shashadhar Tarkachudamani, to mention a few. Of them Keshab Chandra Sen was probably the most prominent. He was so prominent that an English daily once wrote in an editorial, 'When Keshab speaks, the whole world listens.' Keshab became very famous in 1870, when he gave a series of lectures in England. That same Keshab visited Sri Ramakrishna

The Gospel is truly a wonderful spiritual guide as it answers practically all our questions on spiritual life. In M's first seven meetings with Sri Ramakrishna we find the Master giving him twelve commandments.

and sat before him for hours together. All the references in the *Gospel* to these great personalities portray some very intimate facets of their personalities, the like of which we do not come across anywhere else.

But besides people, the reader also gets in the *Gospel* a good idea of contemporary Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna visited so many places: the Ochterloney Monument, the museum, the zoological garden, the Wilson Circus, the Star

Theatre, and so on. He went to the Maidan once to see a balloon ascension, to the home of Nandalal Bose to see his gallery of paintings, and to a photo studio at Radhabazar. He also enjoyed seeing the beautiful mansions on the well-lighted Calcutta streets. In fact, the Master saw everything worthwhile in the city. He travelled by horse carriage, train, boat, steamship, palanquin, and also perhaps in a tram car. He was curious like a child. However, before he could see much he would go into deep ecstasy. But in whatever he saw, he always found some deeper meaning.

'Framework of Illusion' and 'Mansion of Mirth'

The next point is still more interesting: In the *Gospel* one finds Sri Ramakrishna painting two pictures of this world. One picture can be described by the Bengali expression '*dhonkar tati*, a framework of illusion'; this world is not a permanent reality, but something illusory. According to Advaita Vedanta, this world as an illusion; there is nothing real in it. Apparently things exist, but if you think deeply you will find there is no real and permanent existence.

This is one side of the picture. Sri Ramakrishna has also painted this world as a '*majar kuti*, mansion of mirth'. He offers many hints on how we can change our outlook and bring about a transformation in ourselves. There is happiness in this world and also misery.

There are all kinds of dualities that make up this apparent world, and we suffer so much because of them. But if we go beyond these dualities, then we place ourselves securely in another world. The *Isha Upanishad* says, 'Cover everything with the Lord.'² The Lord is the highest Reality. When you perceive that highest Reality—which is nothing other than Bliss—in everything of this universe, you are transformed, and this world also gets transformed for you. This world then becomes

a *majar kuti*, a mansion of mirth. Sri Ramakrishna is there to help you. Follow Sri Ramakrishna. Follow the instructions that he has given you in the *Gospel* and transform yourself. Then you will find unending joy and bliss.

The *Gospel* is truly a wonderful spiritual guide as it answers practically all our questions on spiritual life. In M's first seven meetings with Sri Ramakrishna we find the Master giving him twelve commandments. All these and a few others have been elaborated in the rest of the *Gospel*. If we study the *Gospel* carefully we will find that there is enough guidance to help us build our spiritual life. Whatever be our level of spiritual development—whether we are beginners or advanced souls—there is clear spiritual guidance for all of us.

But besides this, the *Gospel* can also serve as a guide in our day-to-day life. There are people who earmark pages of the *Gospel* in such a way that whenever in need, they refer to Sri Ramakrishna's advice. Suppose I am grief-stricken over something, what would Sri Ramakrishna say about that? I turn to the page of the *Gospel* that has been suitably earmarked. Or suppose I feel very bad about some unjustified insult heaped on me, how do I get over it? I go to the relevant page in the *Gospel*. So, Sri Ramakrishna is there to help us not only in our spiritual life, but also in our everyday life.

A Seed Certain to Bear Fruit

In fact, if we seriously strive to make good use of the *Gospel* and assimilate its teachings, we will find that its real aim is to make us

true men. The Master used to say that *manush* (man) has to become *manhush* (conscious of his real nature). The *Gospel* has tremendous potential to actualize this possibility. It is like an instruction manual. Explaining the efficacy of repeating the Lord's name, Sri Ramakrishna once said, 'It is like a seed that has been left on the cornice of a building. After many days the house crumbles, and the seed falls on the earth, germinates, and at last bears fruit.'³ Likewise, if the teachings of the Master percolate into the reader's mind, his dormant spirituality will become manifest, and he will gradually attain the Highest. He will become a true man.

Clearly the *Gospel* is an outstanding work. Its careful study will reveal to us a window through which we can see a beautiful meadow created by the Master's blessing. This is the Master's glory. This magnificent meadow is for everyone. And if we look afar, we will find in the blue horizon something more: great promise and hope for a bright future—people belonging to different races, speaking different languages, of different faiths will all be living together in peace and harmony. That is why I consider the *Gospel* so extraordinary. *

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1. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 477-8.
2. *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*. —*Īśa Upaniṣad*, 1.
3. *Gospel*, 146.

Call upon the Master and take refuge in him. Our Master is living and is bound to respond if you pray to him earnestly. For the good of the many, God—the universal Spirit—incarnated Himself in this age as Sri Ramakrishna. You have nothing to worry about as you have come under the shelter of Sri Ramakrishna, the Incarnation of the age.

—Mahapurush Swami Shivananda

Services to the Disabled—A Successful Venture

SWAMI ABHIRAMANANDA

Marimuthu is now 24. Seven years ago, when he came for the first time to the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, he did not have the slightest idea of the external world. Born blind, his parents had kept him in the strict privacy of their house. He was like a vegetable depending on his mother for practically all his daily needs. His mother was reconciled to the assumption that her child would depend on her for life and was ready to look after him as long as she was alive. She did not allow him to do any kind of work and made him completely dependent on her. She was even ashamed to disclose to her neighbours that she had such a child.

Today, Marimuthu is a bright young man, a picture of confidence, going from house to house, selling incense sticks, vessel cleaning powder, candles, phenol, liquid detergent for washing floors, liquid blue for whitening clothes, and so on—all manufactured by himself. He earns Rs 3000 a month on an average and proudly flashes his passbook, which shows a balance of Rs 25,000!

Marimuthu's is not an isolated case. At the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, persons like him with congenital blindness and without any education are given a three-week intensive vocational training that fetches them self-employment opportunities. At the end of the training, the clients are given raw materials worth about Rs 1000. With this as initial investment, they start production of the above-mentioned consumables and sell them door to door. They are given training even in mobility skills, daily living skills and the art of marketing their products.

The International Human Resource Development Centre for the Disabled (IHRDC) at

the Vidyalaya has trained more than 300 such blind adults in self-employment vocations over the last 10 years with a 90% success rate.

The IHRDC was started in 1980 as a small department of the Vidyalaya College of Education. In the beginning it was called the Resource and Development Centre (RDC). Its object was to provide integrated education to visually impaired children of the Vidyalaya High School. Since then, the Centre has achieved phenomenal success in the field of special education; that is, education provided to the disabled as against general education given to the normal person. The subsequent years after 1980 witnessed several national and international seminars, introduction of BEd, MEd, MPhil and PhD courses in special education, standardization of BEd syllabus (special education) for the whole country, and rehabilitation of the disabled through numerous field-oriented programmes.

Today the IHRDC is a unique, cross-disability institute in the country imparting training to professionals and field workers in the management of the visually impaired, hearing and speech impaired, mentally retarded, orthopaedically handicapped and persons with multiple disabilities. The training programmes range from courses for the absolutely illiterate to students for doctorates in special education. The IHRDC also promotes the educational and rehabilitation needs of the disabled with particular reference to community-based rehabilitation and inclusive education. To achieve this end, it networks with leading national and international organizations.

The Centre in its present form was inaugurated by Swami Smarananandaji, General

Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 24 June 2001, to commemorate the golden jubilee of the Vidyalaya College of Education.

Activities of the IHRDC

The activities of the IHRDC are summed up below.

- * Offers a one-year training programme for preparing field supervisors and managers of community-based rehabilitation programmes covering all disability areas
- * Organizes short-term training programmes (of three- to six-week duration) for preparing field workers for community-based rehabilitation programmes
- * Organizes awareness programmes for parents, administrators and the public for facilitating effective functioning of community-based rehabilitation programmes for the disabled
- * Prepares literature such as handouts and brochures on community-based rehabilitation and also on disabled persons
- * Promotes the concept of inclusive education for disabled children and developing context-specific models for delivery of services within the ambit of the general education system
- * Organizes orientation courses for general classroom teachers for implementing inclusive education programmes for disabled children
- * Develops tailor-made programmes in education and rehabilitation for the benefit of special education personnel from developing countries
- * Promotes research in specific educational and rehabilitative issues and problems

whose results may enhance the goals and development of inclusive schooling and community-based rehabilitation programmes

- * Offers continuing education programmes for existing personnel working in the field of education and rehabilitation of the disabled
- * Provides consultancy services to developing countries to promote inclusive education

Departments of the IHRDC

The Centre has various departments offering specialized training programmes for both disabled clients and professionals working in the field of disability. Besides training programmes, its facilities are also used by disabled clients for educational and rehabilita-



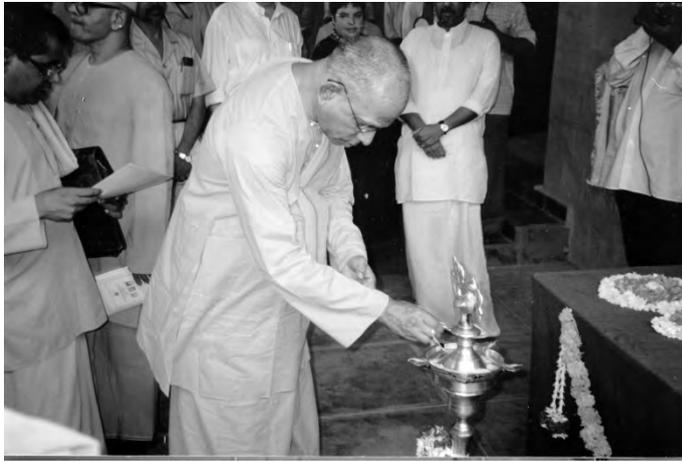
International Human Resources Development Centre for the Disabled

tion services. Brief descriptions of the Centre's different activities follow.

The *Low Vision Clinic* does both clinical and functional assessment of visually impaired persons. Under clinical assessment, visual acuity tests and visual field tests are conducted. Under functional assessment, visual efficiency skills of children with low vision are developed and their reading preferences tested. Computer-based assessment is also made to find out the reading preference of low-vision children. Magnifiers necessary for

children are tested and prescribed. The clinic also conducts in-service courses for special teachers working in integrated and special schools. Referral services are made to reputed eye hospitals in Coimbatore for medical correction.

The *Braille Production Unit* produces Braille textbooks for standards I to XII. The capacity of the unit is more than 10,000 Braille pages per day with Braille characters embossed on both sides of the page. A unique feature of this unit is that the books it produces con-



Swami Smarananandaji inaugurating the Centre

tain tactually attractive diagrams made from low-cost and no-cost materials. Such books are supplied to more than 4000 blind children studying in nearly 200 integrated and special schools. The unit also organizes need-based services to other Braille production units in the country. 'Handy Braille', a user-friendly software produced by the centre, is supplied free of cost to Braille production centres, where needed.

The *Braille Maintenance Unit* has the capacity to service nearly 150 Braille machines a month. Apart from providing maintenance services, the unit also provides a short-term training course on Braille maintenance.

The *Talking Book Production Unit* produces audio cassettes for textbooks of various

classes. These audio cassettes are then distributed on request to visually impaired students all over Tamil Nadu. The unit has a hi-tech dubbing system to produce three duplicate cassettes from a master tape in less than a minute.

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and *Inclusive Education Units* were started in 1984 to cater to the needs of the rural blind. It was initially implemented in the Perianaickenpalayam block covering a population of about 2 lakh. More than 350 incurable blind people in various age groups and nearly 3000 persons with other disabilities have been served so far. Appropriate education and rehabilitation training through trained rehabilitation workers are provided to clients with the involvement of their family and community. Other government concessions and facilities are also provided to help them lead happy and respectable lives in their respective communities.

The following major programmes are being carried out in this unit.

a) *Community-Based Education and Rehabilitation Services (CBER)*: With the support of CBM International, Germany, a project on CBER is being implemented in the Perianaickenpalayam block. The objective of this project is to include and educate all educable disabled children in local schools with the support of trained field teachers, regular schoolteachers and community members. This unit also plans to rehabilitate all adult disabled people by providing appropriate skills and other vocational training within the community and help them live happily and with dignity. Medical and rehabilitative services are also arranged. The CBER is a model of the comprehensive inclusive education imparted by the Centre.

b) *Project on Inclusive Education (Serndhu*

Padippom): This project has been started in the Karamadai block, which covers a population of 2 lakh. More than 245 children with disabilities have been identified in this block and the objective of this project is to educate all the disabled children in the local (regular schools) with the support of cluster-based teachers who are specially trained, regular teachers and the community. Action Aid, Chennai, supports this programme.

c) Integrated Education: The schools in the Vidyalaya campus provide integrated education services to children with visual impairment, hearing impairment and mental retardation with the assistance of resource teachers. Children who require preparatory training are provided such individualized training in the resource room of the school and also at the IHRDC. The integrated education programme implemented in the Vidyalaya High School since 1980 is perhaps the first of its kind in India. The programme served as a model for the replication of other similar programmes in the country.

The primary objective of the *Notebook Production and Training Unit* is to prove to the community that any work done by/for persons with disabilities need not be a liability to society. This unit has workers with all kinds of disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, locomotor disability and mental retardation. The unit functions throughout the year and produces nearly 80,000 notebooks annually. They are supplied to more than 30 schools in and around Coimbatore and Nilgiris districts, and also to other parts of Tamil Nadu. Need-based training in notebook production is also provided here. Besides this, the unit also manufactures envelopes of different sizes.

The *Department of Physical Medicine and*

Rehabilitation has two sub-units:

a) The Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Unit: Occupational therapy is a mode of treatment provided with the use of purposeful activity for individuals who are disabled due to physical injuries or psychological and neurological deficiencies. It is a goal-directed activity to promote independent day-to-day functioning of persons with disabilities. Physiotherapy deals with treating the patient with physical modalities like heat, cold, electric current and various types of exercise



Talking book production

therapy to accelerate his recovery from injuries and diseases that have affected his normal way of living. The different electrical modalities used in the unit are Short-Wave Diathermy (SWD), Interferential Therapy (IFT), Electrical Muscle Stimulation (EMS) and Ultra-Sound Therapy. These facilities are made use of by clients with various disorders like musculo-skeletal disorders, nervous system disorders, developmental and sensory disorders, cognition and psychomotor disorders, skin disorders and other injuries, mental health disorders, cerebral palsy, polio and arthritis, besides hemiplegic patients and amputees.

b) The Orthotic and Prosthetic Unit: This unit deals with conditions like polio and cere-

bral palsy, and treats amputees and hemiplegic and paraplegic patients. Orthosis is a mechanical device fitted to any part of the body, keeping that part in the maximum possible anatomical and functional position. The different types of orthoses manufactured by this unit are HKAFO, KAFO and AFO. These are fitted to the patients depending on their conditions and according to the doctor's prescription.



Incense-stick making

tion. Prosthesis is replacement of a lost body part. The different types of prostheses manufactured by this centre are above-knee, below-knee, Syme's, above-elbow and below-elbow devices. Besides producing conventional prostheses, this unit also assembles improvised versions using imported parts. Special footwear for diabetics and heel- and knee-pain patients, known as the Micro-Cellular Rubber (MCR) footwear is also manufactured.

The *Research Department* conducts need-based action research on various aspects of education and rehabilitation of disabled persons. Long-term research studies are also undertaken, the latest being the development of contractions for Tamil Braille.

Deaf people communicate through sign language. However, the sign language used by the deaf community all over India is not the same. This fact can be attributed to the reason that there has been no standardized sign language material or document in India. So the IHRDC, under its *Sign Language Research and Development Unit*, embarked upon a very unique project in collaboration with CBM International known as the Indian Sign Language Development Project. The project was started in January 1999 and the first ever Indian sign language dictionary was released in January 2001. Expected to form the basis for further research and development in the area of sign language, this dictionary contains 1600 words with over 2500 signs for daily usage. Efforts are now on to develop signs for technical vocabulary used in specialized fields like polytechnics and Information Technology courses. Apart from this, the unit is also involved in training programmes and the first-ever one-year diploma course in Sign Language Interpretation is already under way.

Through its *Speech Therapy Unit* the IHRDC provides speech therapy to students suffering from speech impairment. The unit also has an audiometer to test hearing loss in children. By providing speech therapy and training in sign language, the Centre aims to promote a total communication system among hearing-impaired people.

Mentally retarded children have to be trained and educated right from their early age. The *Play Therapy Unit for the Mentally Retarded* concentrates on developing the skills of such children by employing the play-way method. Through play therapy the children learn daily living skills, concept development, social interaction, behavioural modification,

reading, writing, play activities with peer groups and speech training. These efforts are designed to prepare the child to get into the general education stream. This unit also imparts orientation training to parents of mentally retarded children.

Infrastructure for Practical Training

Since training in the field of disability demands practical experience, the IHRDC offers client-oriented services too. These service bases are used to provide hands-on training to trainees at the Centre. Therefore, the following training-cum-service departments are also functional at the IHRDC: Low Vision Clinic; Computer Laboratory for Blind and Deaf Persons; Notebook Production and Training Unit; Physiotherapy Unit; Orthotic and Prosthetic Unit; Electrotherapy Unit; Computerized Braille Book Production and Training Unit; Audio Book Production Unit; Brailleur Maintenance and Training Unit; Community-Based



Notebook production

Rehabilitation Training Unit; Inclusive Education Programme and Training Unit; Sign Language Research and Training Unit; Vocational Training Unit; Play Therapy and Assessment Unit; Guidance and Counselling Unit.

Courses

The following tables give an idea of the training programmes offered at the Centre for disabled individuals and disability managers.

No	Programme	Educational Qualification	Age	Duration	Number of Trainees
1	Vocational Training Camp for the Disabled	Nil	15-40	3 weeks	15
2	Tailoring for the Deaf	X Standard	15-35	6 months	20
3	Computer Training for the Blind	+2	20-35	6 months	10
4	Computer Training for the Deaf	+2	20-35	3 months	20
5	Toy Making	X Standard	15-40	1 month	30

No	Course	Educational Qualification	Duration	Number of Trainees
1	Brailleur Maintenance	+2	2 weeks	20
2	Low Vision Assessment and Instructional Strategies	Degree	12 days	25
3	Assessment of Learning Disabilities	+2	6 days	30

4	Adapted Physical Education	+2	1 month	30
5	Sign Language Interpretation	+2	3 months	10
6	Community-Based Rehabilitation (for Middle Level Supervisors)	+2	9 months	15
7	Orientation and Mobility	+2	6 months	15
8	Braille Codes for Braille Book Production	X Standard	2 weeks	25
9	Refresher Course for Special Teachers	Teachers	10 days	40
10	Refresher Course for CBR Workers	CBR Workers	10 days	40
11	Workshop on Preparation of Teaching Aids	Teachers	5 days	20
12	Application of Psychological Tests	Teachers	5 days	25
13	Workshop on Orthotic and Prosthetic Aids	+2	12 days	30
14	Teaching Deaf-Blind Children	Parents	14 days	25
15	Assessment of Mental Retardation and Remedial Activities	Parents	10 days	20

Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

The concept of SHGs has caught up very well with the disabled. They are first made to undergo an aptitude test to find out the field of work in which they have talents. Then they are given intensive training in the chosen trade. Finally, five of them are grouped together to form an SHG. Each SHG is given a substantial subsidy by the Government in the form of seed money to start their business. The Government also gives them long-term soft loans to enable them to conduct the business effectively. The IHRDC has trained and formed a number of SHGs for the disabled, who are profitably self-employed.

Conclusion

Disability-awareness is quite a recent phenomenon in India. For the first time in the country, details pertaining to disabled people were gathered during the 2001 census. Their number is estimated at about 10% of the total population, which is a whopping 10 crore! The

need to infuse confidence in them, ignite their minds with hopes of a happy future and integrate them with the mainstream of society should be the bounden duty of all thoughtful citizens. Without their rehabilitation and economic independence, the country cannot think of making progress and keep in pace with the rest of the world. As the saying goes, poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.

So more disability model centres like the IHRDC need to be set up throughout the country. More than the infrastructure, what counts is a pool of dedicated and committed professionals to manage them. Emotional involvement is needed to a certain extent but a professional approach alone can deliver the goods effectively. Only when a sea change is brought about in the lot of our less fortunate brethren can we expect to become a developed power by 2020, as envisaged by President Dr Abdul Kalam. *

Those who only do what they are told are seldom told to do anything.

Tribute and Prayer for Peace and Unity

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA

We have assembled here today to offer our tributes and prayers for world peace and the unity of humankind. The terrible devastation of the World Trade Center in this city of New York on 11 September 2001 has brought about a formidable challenge to peace and unity not only in America, but in the whole world. But, I am sure, out of this ground zero, like the mythical phoenix will emerge in the future an angel of peace and harmony.

Strangely enough, on the same day, 11 September, in 1893, Swami Vivekananda, the great spiritual teacher from India, burst on the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago as a spiritual explosion, as it were. He declared:

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.¹

On the same occasion, at the final session on 27 September 1893, he sounded a note of warning to fanatics: '... if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissen-

sion."²

Please mark the words 'in spite of resistance'. Yes, the 11 September incident in New York was a terrible resistance to world peace. In addition to the destruction of the imposing building and shedding of blood, it has overwhelmed millions of people all over the globe with a feeling of bitterness. The cloud of perplexity is so dense that the present generation is bewildered about what to do next. Has the idea of peace and unity turned into a dream that can never come true? Is this beautiful earth going to be just a playground of fighting and killing?

That underlines the dire need of spiritual awareness now more than ever. We need to probe deeper and deeper into the scene and within ourselves and realize that despite all seeming differences, we are all one in the spiritual dimension of life. We belong to one another. None is a stranger. What we have in common is much more valuable and sustaining than apparent differences. Spiritual awareness helps us approach life from a totally different perspective, making us free from the imprisonment of transient life. It is a blasphemy that followers of any religion should show supremacy over others. All religions lead to the same spiritual goal, and that is God. God is not a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Jew or a Christian or a Muslim. God is Love, and Love makes for oneness, unity.

Swami Vivekananda expressed his heartfelt thanks to America for the great attempt it was making to break down the walls of this little world of ours. I do hope that with God's grace in future it will reach the goal of oneness of humanity.

According to our tradition, peace is not opposed to suffering or war or any negative

aspect of life. On the other hand, it is a state of being, the primordial ground of our existence, called in Sanskrit 'shanti'. It is due to our ignorance, ego, jealousy and pride that we are alienated from our original nature. Our innate nature of peace is disturbed by three factors: first, individual, my body and mind; second, environmental, animate and inanimate objects outside me; and third, the cosmic whole.

In order to go back to our original nature of Peace and Bliss we need a threefold action plan: First, yoga, nourishing food, regular physical exercise for the body; meditation, calming down, and reflection for the mind; second, compassion, love, service, charity, and respect for all living and non-living objects of the environment I am in; third, oneness with the cosmic whole, a sense of connection

with the whole universe, resulting in the desire to make the whole world our own, and prayer for world peace.

Let me conclude with a Vedic prayer.

Om. May there be peace in heaven. May there be peace in the sky. May there be peace on earth. May there be peace in water. May there be peace in the plants. May there be peace in the trees. May there be peace in the gods. May there be peace in all, the peace that is Brahman. Om. Peace, Peace, Peace.

Thank you.

*

References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.4.
2. *ibid.*, 1.24.

Austerity

There was once a very austere man who let no food or drink pass his lips while the sun was in the heavens. In what seemed to be a sign of heavenly approval for his austerities a bright star shone on the top of a nearby mountain, visible to everyone in broad daylight, though no one knew what brought the star there.

One day the man decided to climb the mountain. A little village girl insisted on going with him. The day was warm and soon the two were thirsty.

He urged the child to drink but she said she would not unless he drank too.

The poor man was in a quandary. He hated to break his fast; but he hated to see the child suffer from thirst. Finally, he drank and the child with him.

For a long time he dared not to look up to the sky, for he feared the star had gone.

So imagine his surprise when, on looking up after a while, he saw two stars shining brightly above the mountain.

—Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*, 2.110

Swami Vivekananda's Vision of Education— Its Relevance Today

DR T K JAYALAKSHMI

Swami Vivekananda's thundering call for the youth reverberates even today: 'Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached!'¹ What was the goal he held before us? Have we made efforts to reach that goal? Are we struggling in the right direction? Such questions constantly occupy those concerned with education. It is about a hundred and twenty years ago that Swami Vivekananda envisioned what education should mean for this great country. And he was not a classroom teacher; he was a world teacher, visionary, practical philosopher and guide for mankind. He can only be compared to the galaxy of great teachers of the world: Buddha, Christ, Prophet Mohammed, Guru Gobind Singh and Mahatma Gandhi.

In the very land where this great soul was born, today we hear cries of value erosion and the need for value-based education at all levels. This is indeed a pointer to an all-time low in the quality of education. It is difficult to set a standard of educational quality since people have different opinions about the real needs of the country, of its citizens. Every child has a right to learn, and live and enjoy life. Every citizen wants peace, security and education. The Constitution guarantees to everyone the right to education. Here the term education has all along been used in the narrow sense of schooling. No great teacher is in agreement with it. 'Education is life and life is education,' said Gandhiji. The National Policy of Education (1986) has accepted child-centred, value-based education at all levels. Discussions, seminars, researches on the subject are legion. However, our vision is yet unclear about the real meaning of education. Hence it is neces-

sary to study Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on the subject.

The Present Crisis

India is passing through a crisis in education, marked by a significant deterioration in standards. We often fail to educate our children, but load them with useless information unrelated to their life. That underlines the need for an all-round change. The present scenario in India depicts alarming numbers of uncared-for children, school dropouts, unemployed youths taking to violence, aimless youngsters with psychological problems, stressful parents, the public, the politicians—the list is long. The entire country needs an overhauling, a thorough shake-up. Negative thoughts, ill feelings, anti-national behaviour, unscholarly professors, teachers and students without a sense of duty—these are some maladies affecting the educational system. We miss scholarly professors, their loving mentorship, the eager and enthusiastic aspirant (*vidyārthin*, 'one who aspires for education'), and meaningful thoughts that penetrate and shape good, wholesome personalities. Today's education is geared towards handing out certificates.

Technical education, commerce and banking, and medicine were the leading faculties during the first three decades after Independence. Slowly they are giving way to technology, e-learning and e-education where 'e' appears to stand less for 'electronic' or 'emotional' fervour to learn than for 'earning' and 'economic' considerations. Thus there is a distinct trend of commercialization in education to the neglect of life skills or man-making con-

cepts. The educational system is structured in a big way in a large democracy like ours without commensurate good results. It is like a ship without a rudder, a beautiful flower without fragrance.

This underlines the urgent need to give relevant education to the masses. The vast majority of the population is yet to have even basic education. Right education for the masses has been a global concern since the last decade of the twentieth century. The UNESCO conference of 1990 declared the motto 'Education for All' and later through the Dakar Report (2000) reiterated and laid greater emphasis on the education of every child — especially the girl child—and children with special needs. Our country is yet a developing nation in spite of its rich cultural heritage and ideas in its collective consciousness like 'Asato mā sad-

gamaya, Lead us from the unreal to the Real' and 'Sarve bhavantu sukhinahḥ sarve santu nīrāmayāḥ, May everyone be happy and free from disease.' *The globe perceives India as an awakened nation while we are still only half-awake.* Swami Vivekananda had a strong vision about educating the masses and especially the girl child. Swamiji has clearly spelt out how this can be accomplished in practice, resulting in better job potential and earning capacity. Let us examine his vision and see how relevant they are to the present times.

Mass Education

We have not made much headway in the education of the masses, partly because of the unfounded notion that it is difficult to achieve and partly because of ignorance of the benefits of education. But it is astonishing that Swamiji had many proactive ideas about the impor-

tance and value of education. It was only a hundred years ago that he made the keen observation that education is the panacea for all social evils. Speaking of the uplift of the masses, he said, 'Education, education, and education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? *Education was the answer I got.*' (4.483; emphasis added)

Swamiji continues with his logical reasoning: 'Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant. Swamiji observes that we in India have all the strength within us but we are not aware

of it.' (4.483) In his scheme the thrust was on the need for *education* and not mere literacy. Speaking about the masses, he said: 'Bring light to the poor; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous!' (3.247)

Looking back over the last century, if only we had paid heed to these pronouncements! Wise men of our country and some great teachers did acknowledge Swami Vivekananda's vision. We have principally accepted the need for all-round development. Based on Swamiji's views on education, Gandhiji advocated a life-building education by way of basic education, or *Nayee Talim*. Gandhiji stressed that education is the process of bringing out the best in the child, 'an all-round development of the child—body, mind and

Education has been reduced to loading students' brains with information, to find its way out by mechanical reproduction from memory. There is no assimilation of ideas, but only undigested ideas creating stress and suffering.

soul'. Our motto in the National Policy of Education emphasized the all-round development of the child—and there it stopped. According to Swami Vivekananda, 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.' (4.358) All such thoughts have remained a vision, a dream; we have not acted on them. Vision without action remains a dream, and action without vision is a waste of energy. But vision backed by action can change the world.

Unfortunately, we have not given importance to education as a means of making the masses stand on their own feet. We lack the insight to perceive this self-reliance as a relevant component of education. Swamiji's philosophy of education is so practical, reasonable and humane that it suits any millennium and is relevant for all times. Today we speak of mass education as a stupendous task. Swamiji felt that 'the uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India'. (6.490) Thus, it is our first duty to serve the masses and raise them to the highest level possible. Swamiji further spoke to the educated with an accusing finger: 'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them!' (5.58) He called upon the youth to 'lay down your comforts, your pleasures, your names, fame or position, nay, even your lives, and make a bridge of human chains over which millions will cross this ocean of life.' (4.352) 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' (3.193) And what was the goal he set forth? Man-making education.

Education for Inner Growth

The present educational system has brought with it more of discrimination, unhealthy competition, malpractices in the framing, monitoring and transacting of curricula, and in the conduct of examinations. The consequent insecurity among the youth and the

masses is palpable. Education has been equated with schooling, and schooling in turn with certification or passing examinations. Education has been reduced to loading students' brains with information, to find its way out by mechanical reproduction from memory. There is no assimilation of ideas, but only undigested ideas creating stress and suffering.

Swami Vivekananda had predicted this state long back. Even in technical subjects or practical sciences like health, hygiene, nutrition, physics and chemistry, there is hardly any correlation between learning and living. Knowledge is important but that knowledge should help us mould our lives on sound lines. Such knowledge gives us the wisdom needed to become better human beings and lead better lives. As the *subhāṣita* goes, '*Kim kim na sādhayet kalpalateva vidyā*, Education being a bountiful tree, what cannot be achieved with it.' The goal of education should be to produce such men and women who are courageous and sincere to the backbone. Swami Vivekananda condemned the education that did not produce better human beings. He was for assimilation of ideas as the core of education:

Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. (3.302)

If education is identical with information the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias the Rishis. (3.302)

We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet. (5.342)

Analysing the content of education he said,

What we need, you know, is to study ... different branches of knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science; we need technical education and all else

that will develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day. (5.368-9)

The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. But, instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. (2.15)

Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own leg. The education that you are receiving now in schools and colleges is only making you a race of dyspeptics. You are working like machines merely, and living a jelly-fish existence. (7.147-8)

Thus man making means helping the individual to be self-reliant.

That was Swamiji's brilliant analysis of the importance of moral culture and the usefulness Western science. Primarily centred on man making, or the inner growth of man, his thoughts are so penetrating that any conscientious educationist cannot but adopt his ideas. Indian educationists are no exception. The National Policy of Education (1986) and its later revisions in 1992 and 2000 have again and again stressed 'education of the whole man'. Consequently, the thrust areas of education today are 'Education for All', education of the girl child, universalization of primary education and value-based education. All these thrust areas are based on Swami Vivekananda's thoughts. His vision of education is so complete that every word of his has the power to trigger action. His words are relevant for all times. He said education is the answer to all our ills. The global thinking is precisely the same when it is said that education is a social investment.

Education for Character

Swami Vivekananda clearly spelt out that true education should mean man making and character building. Evidently it is not schooling and information loading that Swamiji looked upon as education. Today we

load our children and youth with information, which hardly helps them grow to their full potential. There is no focus on self-development or value inculcation at any level. Nor is such development considered essential. They are regarded as separate issues in the present-day cyber-prone curriculum, not deserving a place in the educational system. Consequently there is hardly any inner growth of the individual. So self-development is an idea which professors and educators consider more as an ideal than something practical. But Swamiji was of the firm conviction that '*Neither money pays, nor name, nor fame, nor learning; it is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties.*' (7.487) Further, he answers cynics with these words: 'If a man with an ideal makes a thousand mistakes, I am sure that the man without an ideal makes fifty thousand. Therefore, it is better to have an ideal.' (2.152) He was clear about the power of spiritual strength:

The miseries of the world cannot be cured by physical help only. Until man's nature changes, these physical needs will always arise, and miseries will always be felt, and no amount of physical help will cure them completely. The only solution of this problem is to make mankind pure. Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery we see. Let men have light, let them be pure and spiritually strong and educated, then alone will misery cease in the world, not before. (1.53)

Thus he believed in strengthening the self within, helping individuals to face courageously any odds, having immense faith in themselves, and serving mankind.

Education is for the future. What we plan today we achieve tomorrow. Education should help our children and youth get continuous exposure to good thoughts and healthy practices through co-curricular activities in addition to class subjects. That will help them realize their inner strengths, employ them in constructive channels and build a strong character. Character building is not as impractical as some people think. Swamiji

said, 'If you really want to judge of the character of a man, look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of a great man.' (1.29) Constant practice and positive thinking can build a strong character. Swamiji often said that selfless action, serving others without any prejudice, respecting others and bravely facing the odds of the world would build self-confidence and strength of character. He wanted us to teach our children 'that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood.' (2.87) He further underlined the importance of physical and mental strength: 'What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.' (3.190) Such was Swamiji's conviction on the character-building role of education.

In many a school and college, some attempts are made to provide an atmosphere charged with positive thoughts, with the help of Swamiji's powerful ideas. That has always brought success in shaping young minds. It is the integrative approach of blending the spiritual with the realities of life that works wonders and verily shapes individual personality.

Education for Capacity Building

Researches at different levels of education have revealed the inability of teachers as well as students to rise to a level of meaningful

capacity building. Despite a lot of training through coaching and tutorials, the learning process has become so mechanical that it helps the learner just memorize information to score marks and get a certificate. What are at a discount are creativity, originality and confidence of the teacher and the taught. That explains the thinking and planning at the national level to develop competencies among teachers and pupils in areas like communication, perseverance, reflection, thinking, reasoning, decision making and information management. Here again Swamiji's vision of what constitutes learning assumes significance. His passion for cultivating intellectual and spiritual strength is very relevant to capacity building. His down-to-earth ideas lend themselves to practice by both the teacher and

A curriculum can be built on man making and character building Swami Vivekananda's optimistic vision will soon become a reality if we can assimilate even five of his ideas and make them our focus.

the taught. He said, 'To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts. If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the mat-

ter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will.' (6.38-9). He underlined the importance of the power of thought when he said, '... whatever you do think well on it. All your actions will be magnified, transformed, deified, by the very power of the thought. If matter is powerful, thought is omnipotent. Bring this thought to bear upon your life, fill yourselves with the thought of your almightiness, your majesty, and your glory.' (2.302) Swamiji considered three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great: (1) Conviction of the powers of the goodness, (2) Absence of jealousy and suspicion, and (3) Helping all who are trying to be and do good. (8.299)

We find many such powerful hints about

concentration, the benefits of perseverance and control of mind through meditation. These are easily demonstrable, usable and relevant for all times. Is it difficult to inculcate in us, teachers, and in our learners such capacities which can result in greater work satisfaction and bring happiness to others? It is unfortunate that many of our educationists and teachers have not bestowed enough serious thought on these ideas. Swamiji's thoughts on the methods of learning are essentially competency-based. Therefore the need of the hour is studying his thoughts and, based on them, converting education into a tool for self-development.

Education for Nation Building

A national curriculum framework and nationalized textbooks are nowadays discussed on the Web as also in education circles. One wonders whether the comments and ideas generated are from real nation builders. In our haste to defend our actions we appear to have relegated sincerity and honesty to the background. Perhaps, we did not pay attention to cultivating this capacity. Swamiji once said that the national ideals of India are renunciation and service. 'Intensify her in those channels,' he said, 'and the rest will take care of itself.' (5.228)

One can contribute to nation building only if one has tremendous perseverance to brave all odds. Success comes to those who dare and act. Merely talking about nation building will not amount to discharging our responsibilities. Our children need to travel a lot and see for themselves what the nation requires to become stronger. Today's nation builders do not think of the country as a whole. A holistic perception, scientific outlook and transfer of technological help to the poor villages are the mind-mapping ideas our children need to make the nation healthier and stronger. Swamiji had immense faith in the

youth of our country. His words should inspire us to action:

Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours. (3.154)

Let New India arise ... out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains. (7.327)

These thoughts at once speak of his great patriotic fervour and noble vision. India should come out of her slumber and mechanized education and build curricula at all levels to enable the young to develop and build their capacities to the optimum and make India really strong as envisioned by Swamiji. A study of Swamiji's thoughts can rejuvenate us and a reflection on them can help us draw great plans for improving the system. Verily, a curriculum can be built on man making and character building, two important components of education our country is in dire need of today. Swami Vivekananda's optimistic vision will soon become a reality if we can assimilate even five of his ideas and make them our focus. Vivekananda's thoughts on education are like an ocean. The more you ponder, the more you get. Let us endeavour to pursue the path of perseverance with a deep sense of commitment. Let India awake and be a beacon to all other nations. *

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Turiyātīta Avadhūta Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

Synopsis

This Upaniṣad belongs to the *Śukla Yajurveda* and discusses the way of life and state of a *turiyātīta avadhūta*. According to the *Nārada Parivrajaka Upaniṣad*, the hierarchy among the renunciators, or ascetics, is as follows: (1) *kuṭīcaka*, (2) *bahūdaka*, (3) *haṁsa*, (4) *paramahaṁsa*, (5) *turiyātīta* and (6) *avadhūta*. The *avadhūta* belongs to the highest order of ascetic monks, who remain ever absorbed in the highest non-dual Consciousness, with absolutely no care of their body.

Peace Chant

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om. That¹ is infinite. This² [too] is infinite. The infinite proceeds from the infinite. Taking the infinite from the infinite, It remains as the infinite alone. Om Peace, Peace, Peace!³

The conduct of the *turiyātīta avadhūta*, and his steadfast absorption in the highest Knowledge

तुरीयातीतावधूतचर्या, निष्ठा च

अथ तुरीयातीतावधूतानां कोऽयं मार्गस्तेषां का स्थितिरिति सर्वलोकपितामहो भगवन्तं पितरमादिनारायणं परिसमेत्योवाच । तमाह भगवन्नारायणः । योऽयमवधूतमार्गस्थो लोके दुर्लभतरो न तु बाहुल्यो यद्येको भवति स एव नित्यपूतः स एव वैराग्यमूर्तिः स एव ज्ञानाकारः स एव वेदपुरुष इति ज्ञानिनो मन्यन्ते । महापुरुषो यस्तच्चित्तं मध्ये-वावतिष्ठते । अहं च तस्मिन्नेवावस्थितः । सोऽयमादौ तावत्क्रमेण कुटीचको बहूदकत्वं प्राप्य, बहूदको हंसत्वमवलम्ब्य, हंसः परमहंसो भूत्वा, स्वरूपानुसंधानेन सर्वप्रपञ्चं विदित्वा, दण्डकमण्डलुकटिसूत्रकौपीनाच्छादनस्वविध्युक्तक्रिया-दिकं सर्वमप्यु संन्यस्य, दिगम्बरो भूत्वा, विवर्णजीर्णवल्कलाजिनपरिग्रहमपि संन्यज्य, तदूर्ध्वमन्त्रवदाचरन्, क्षौरा-भ्यङ्गस्नानोर्ध्वपुण्ड्रादिकं विहाय, वैदिकलौकिकमप्युपसंहृत्य, सर्वत्र पुण्यापुण्यविवर्जितः, ज्ञानाज्ञानमपि विहाय, शीतोष्णसुखदुःखमानावमानं निर्जित्य, देहादिवासनात्रयपूर्वकं निन्दानिन्दागर्वमत्सरदम्भदर्पेच्छाद्वेषकामक्रोध-लोभमोहहर्षमर्षासूयात्मसंरक्षणादिकं दग्ध्वा, स्ववपुः कुणपाकारमिव पश्यन्, अप्रयत्नेनानियमेन लाभालाभौ समौ कृत्वा, गोवृत्त्या प्राणसंधारणं कुर्वन् यत्प्राप्तं तेनैव निर्लोलुपः, सर्वविद्यापाण्डित्यप्रपञ्चं भस्मीकृत्य, स्वरूपं गोपयित्वा, ज्येष्ठाज्येष्ठत्वापलापकः, सर्वोत्कृष्टत्वसर्वात्मकत्वाद्वैतं कल्पयित्वा मत्तो व्यतिरिक्तः कश्चिन्नान्योऽस्तीति भावनस्य देवगुह्यादिघनमात्मन्युपसंहृत्य, दुःखेन नोद्विग्नः, सुखेन नानुमोदकः, रागे निःस्पृहः, सर्वत्र शुभाशुभयोरनभिस्रेहः, सर्वेन्द्रियोपरमः, स्वपूर्वापन्नाश्रमाचारविद्याधर्मप्राभवमननुस्मरन्, त्यक्तवर्णाश्रमाचारः, सर्वदा दिवानक्त-समत्वेनास्वप्नः, सर्वत्र सर्वदा संचारशीलः, देहमात्रावशिष्टः, जलस्थलकमण्डलुः, सर्वदानुन्मत्तो बालोन्मत्तपिशाच-वदेकाकी संचरन्, असम्भाषणपरस्य स्वरूपध्यानेन निरालम्बनमवलम्ब्य, स्वात्मनिष्ठानुकूल्येन सर्वं विस्मृत्य, तुरीयातीतोऽवधूतवेषेणाद्वैतनिष्ठापरः, प्रणवात्मकत्वेन देहत्यागं करोति यः सोऽवधूतः स कृतकृत्यो भवतीत्यु-पनिषत् ॥

Now, [Brahmā,] the grandfather [of all beings],⁴ respectfully approaching his father, Ādinārāyaṇa (Lord Viṣṇu), said to Him: 'What is the way [of life] of the *turiyātīta avadhūtas*?⁵

What is their standing?' Bhagavān Narāyaṇa said to him [by way of reply]: 'Wise sages consider that one who treads the path of an *avadhūta* is [indeed] rare in this world; they are not many in number. If anyone becomes an *avadhūta*, he is verily ever pure; he is the very embodiment of dispassion; he is verily Knowledge personified; he is indeed Vedas in human form. His mind is established in Me [the Supreme Lord], he being a [truly] great, exalted person (*mahāpuruṣa*).⁶ I too verily dwell in him. In the beginning, he is a *kuṭīcaka*⁷ ascetic. Then, in due order, he attains to the stage of a *bahūdaka*⁸ ascetic. [Thereafter], a *bahūdaka* takes to the *harīṣa*⁹ life and a *harīṣa* becomes a *paramaharīṣa*.¹⁰ [Then,] through [a profound] quest for his own real nature, [such a *paramaharīṣa*], realizes the entire universe [as non-different from his own Self].¹¹ [On attaining this highest realization], he renounces his emblematic staff (*daṇḍa*),¹² water-bowl (*kamaṇḍalu*), waistband (*kaṭi-sūtra*), loincloth (*kaupīna*), [what little of] covering cloth [he has] and all ritualistic duties enjoined on him [in a previous stage of his life] by [throwing all these] into [the holy] waters. [Then,] becoming unclad, [literally, clad only by the various quarters] renouncing even a discoloured, worn-out bark [of a tree] or a [deer] skin [for a garment], he behaves from then on as one unregulated by any *mantras* [formulas], giving up shaving of his hair, bath on smearing his body with oil and applying religious marks on his forehead.¹³ From him all secular and [so-called] religious duties [drop away,] having reached their culmination; he is devoid of [the sense of] righteousness and unrighteousness everywhere; he gives up even knowledge as well as ignorance;¹⁴ he has conquered [the pairs of opposites like] cold and heat, happiness and misery, honour and dishonour; [appearing to be possessed of] threefold *vasanas*¹⁵ like the body, he conceals his own [real nature];¹⁶ [by the fire of his knowledge,] he burns down [the following undesirable elements]: censure, praise, pride, rivalry, snobbery, haughtiness, hatred, passion, anger, greed, delusion, [excessive] gloating [over things], depression, disdainfulness [scornful intolerance], envy, and [desire for] self-preservation.¹⁷ He sees his own body as a corpse, as it were; he remains equanimous in gain or loss, effortlessly and without being regulated [by any set of rules]; he sustains his life following the *go-vṛtti* (proclivity of a cow);¹⁸ being devoid of passion or greed, he is [fully satisfied with] whatever he attains [without asking or seeking]; he burns to ashes the entire realm of [relative] knowledge and scholarship; [by the force of his non-dual knowledge,] he denies (disowns) [any claim for] superiority or inferiority.¹⁹ Having become [firmly] settled in the highest and all-subsuming [state of] non-duality (*advaita*) and [thus cherishing the conviction that] "there is nobody apart from myself",²⁰ he withdraws (absorbs) into his Self the fuel [in the form of thoughts arising due to divine] secrets known only to the gods (*devas*);²¹ he does not feel agitated (depressed in mind) by sorrow, nor does he rejoice (delight) with pleasure; he is free from desire [in the presence of] (indifferent to) [things arousing] passion (affection); he remains unattached to the auspicious or the inauspicious [things] everywhere; all his senses have been stilled (quietened); he does not have any recollection of the superiority (supremacy) of his conduct, learning or righteous deeds (*dharma*) acquired in the previous stages (*āśrama*) of his life;²² he [thus] gives up the conduct [regulated or governed by] *varṇa* (caste) or *āśrama* (stages in life); he is ever awake²³ because for him day and night are both alike;²⁴ ever on the move, [without any worldly possessions], with his body alone remaining [as his only possession]; [not carrying even the barest minimum of possession like his water-pot (*kamaṇḍalu*), he considers any] place with water as his *kamaṇḍalu*; [although] ever alert (fully sensible), he moves (roams) about alone, like a child, a lunatic or a ghost (unclean spirit);²⁵ he remains devoted to silence (speechless) through meditation on his own real nature (Ātman); he has for his prop [only] the propless Brahman;²⁶ consistent with his absorption in his Self (Ātman), he remains oblivious of everything [else other than his Self or spiritual Reality]; [such a

sage,] adorned as a *turiyātita avadhūta*²⁷ remains established in the [highest] non-duality [of the Self or Ātman] and having attained his [inseparable] Identity with the *praṇava* (*Om*), gives up his body.²⁸ Such [a sage, ascetic] is an *avadhūta*. He [verily] becomes fulfilled.²⁹ Thus [ends] the Upaniṣad. *

Notes

1. 'That' here means the Supreme Brahman (*para brahman*).
2. 'This' here means the conditioned Brahman (*apara brahman*).
3. The utterance of the word 'Peace' three times is to ward off the three kinds of miseries (*duḥkha-traya*): (i) *ādhibhautika* (due to beings—wild animals, serpents and cruel humans); (ii) *ādhidaiivika* (due to natural calamities like earthquake, flood, and so on, which are ordinarily beyond human control); (iii) *ādhyātmika* (relating to one's own body and mind; that is, physical and mental illnesses). In order that *vidyā*, or learning, becomes effective, both the teacher and the taught ought to be free from all these three kinds of misery. Hence the word *Śāntiḥ* (Peace) is chanted three times, to ward off the threefold misery.
4. Brahṁā, also known as Prajāpati, is the Creator God and hence considered the oldest. He is therefore called *pitāmaha*, or grandfather.
5. That is, *avadhūta* ascetics, who have reached a state beyond *turiya*, the highest non-dual Consciousness.
6. In his commentary Upaniṣad Brahmayogin states that the *mahāpuruṣatva* or greatness of an *avadhūta* is because his mind, having been firmly established in God, ceaselessly dwells on Him alone. No other thought except that of God arises in his mind.
7. A *kuṭīcaka* ascetic (monk) wears a tuft (*śikhā*) and sacred thread (*sūtra*), carries an emblematic staff (*daṇḍa*); he receives alms (*bhikṣā*) from only one house.
8. A *bahūdaka* ascetic too wears a tuft and sacred thread and carries a *daṇḍa*; he subsists on eight mouthfuls of food collected as alms from different places like a bee (*madhukara-vṛtti*).
9. A *haṁsa* ascetic pays no attention to his hair, which therefore becomes matted. He subsists on alms collected without any predetermination like a bee (*madhukara-vṛtti*).
10. A *paramahaṁsa* ascetic wears no tuft or sacred thread; he subsists on food gathered from five houses like a bee (*madhukara-vṛtti*), his cupped hands serving as alms-bowl; he wears just a loincloth and a single garment; renouncing everything, he moves about without any possessions.
11. As soon as the *paramahaṁsa* realizes that the entire universe is non-different from his own Self and that there is nothing else besides his own Self, he gives up even the signs of a *paramahaṁsa*. Having gone beyond even the *paramahaṁsa* stage, he no longer stands in need of any *mantras*, or formulas, calculated to regulate his bodily and other worldly functions, for he has then no duties or obligations to perform.
12. An ascetic (monk) traditionally carries a staff, called *daṇḍa*, emblematic of having entered the monastic calling. *Daṇḍa* in Sanskrit means 'restraint', 'control'. There are three kinds of *daṇḍas*: *vāgdaṇḍa*, restraint in speech; *kāyadaṇḍa*, control of the body; and *manodaṇḍa*, control of the mind (*Manu Smṛti*, 11.10). That is why some monks carry a threefold staff (*tridaṇḍa* like *triśūla*). The *daṇḍa* carried by an ascetic monk is thus symbolic of total self-control.
13. At this stage of spiritual development, it becomes impossible for him to take any care, howsoever little, of his body; he does not feel able to bring himself to doing the barest minimum (according to worldly standards) like wearing clothes, cooling his nerves by applying oil and bathing regularly, what to speak of displaying marks of religiosity by putting on religious symbols like *ūrdhvapundra* on his forehead.

14. Righteousness-unrighteousness (*dharma-adharma*), knowledge-ignorance (*jñāna-ajñāna*) are all pairs of opposites and therefore within the realm of relativity or duality. An ascetic of the type described here has gone beyond relativity or duality, so that he is unaffected by the pairs of opposites.
15. The three *vāsanās* are (i) *deha-vāsanā* (attraction or attachment to the body); (ii) *loka-vāsanā* (desire to attain various *lokas*, or celestial spheres; or, craving for fame and worldly adulation, a following, and so on); (iii) *śāstra-vāsanā* (hankering for intellectualism in studying scriptures disproportionate to and inconsistent with one's spiritual goal, craving for the acquirement of scholarship unrelated to one's spiritual goal orientation). See Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 271-3.
16. To the outside world, he thus appears to be an ordinary person. This enables him to conceal and therefore carefully protect his own real nature, pure and desireless.
17. That is, passionately clinging to one's own empirical personality—the body-mind complex.
18. Just like a cow, which normally remains content with the food placed in its mouth, an ascetic of the type described above lives absolutely satisfied with whatever he gets to eat. The idea is that he does not feel inclined to make any effort of his own to sustain his life, all his mental volition having been destroyed by the burning fire of non-dual Knowledge.
19. He comes to be endowed with *sama-darśitva* or same-sightedness, looking upon everybody as non-different from his own Self.
20. That is, he sees everyone as non-different from his own Self.
21. The construction here is rather elliptical. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin comments on this passage as follows: The fuel referred to here is the thought process set in motion on account of the divine secrets; only the fire of Brahman is capable of burning out this fuel. Even the *brahmākāra-vṛtti* (the very ultimate thought that pervades the entire mind, making the latter take the form of Brahman, as it were) is to be regarded as the fuel that needs to be burnt up by the supreme Knowledge of the non-dual Ātman. This is described as withdrawal (or absorption) into the Self. The idea seems to be that an *avadhūta's* non-dual knowledge of the Ātman totally destroys his mind (*mano-nāśa*) with all its thought processes, including the so-called divine thoughts; for the non-dual Consciousness is beyond the mind.
22. He is completely free from his past *saṁskāras* (latent impressions), acquired before he turned an ascetic or monk, in his previous stages of life (*āśrama*).
23. The actual Sanskrit word in the original is *asvapna*, meaning, literally, 'dreamless'. It means therefore that the sage is awake or fully conscious (aware) of his spiritual Essence.
24. That is, he goes beyond time, being immersed in his timeless spiritual Reality.
25. That is, he does not conform to any worldly standard of behaviour.
26. The highest Reality, Brahman, is the support (prop) of everything, Itself remaining Alone (and hence propless).
27. This is the highest stage reached by such a sage, *avadhūta*, reached after the *turiyātita* stage.
28. That is, enters into *videha-mukti* (liberation on getting released from the body), by his own sweet will; he feels no use for the body any more, having attained the highest non-dual Knowledge.
29. Having accomplished his life's purpose, he has nothing more to achieve.

You will always have the benefit of *satsanga*, or holy company. Try to have the company of that *Sat*, or eternal Existence (Brahman), who is within you. And again one needs the association of holy people in external life—God will provide you with that. One should pray deeply and sincerely from one's inmost heart. Always be prayerful.

—Swami Turiyananda

↔ Glimpses of Holy Lives ↔

Realization: Where and When?

The court pundit was reading to King Janaka from a scripture. There was a passage in it to the effect that contemplating on the Self, a rider with one foot in the stirrup could realize the Self before he placed the other foot in the second stirrup. In other words, the passage said that Self-realization could come in an instant. The king stopped the pundit and asked him to prove the statement. Endowed with no spiritual experience to speak of, the pundit expressed his inability. Janaka said that in that case the passage must be either false or exaggerated. The pundit would not agree to this, however, since scriptural passages were born of realizations of wise sages of the past. The king flew into a rage and sent the pundit to prison. From then on the same fate awaited any pundit who quoted scriptures without substantiating them with proof.

Fear of imprisonment made some pundits flee the place. When a couple of them were running through a forest, a young sage by name Ashtavakra crossed their path and learnt of their predicament. Ashtavakra offered to prove to the king the veracity of the passage and have the pundits released from prison.

The pundits took Ashtavakra to the palace, where Janaka received him with due reverence. Ashtavakra ordered the king to release all the pundits. Knowing that such an order could come only from someone who could dispel his doubts, the king released the pundits immediately. Janaka asked the sage whether he could summon the horse. The sage advised him to be patient and suggested that they should retire into solitude. Thereupon they set out to the forest, the king on his horse and the sage in a palanquin.

When they reached the woods, the sage asked the king to send back his retinue. The king did that and placing his one foot in the stirrup, hauled himself up, asking the sage to prove the scriptural text. The sage asked him whether that position indicated a proper teacher-student relationship. Janaka understood and prayed to the sage for grace.

The sage then said, 'Janaka, before being taught the knowledge of Brahman, the disciple has to surrender his all to his teacher.' 'So be it,' said the king. 'So be it,' said Ashtavakra and disappeared into the forest. From that moment Janaka stood transfixed with one foot in the stirrup and the other dangling in the air.

After a couple of days, the people grew anxious and began to search for the king. At last they found him, but in a transfixed state. They called out to him and were alarmed at the lack of response. They brought him back to the city for medical treatment. Nothing helped.

The ministers now began looking for Ashtavakra, the vile man who must have cast a spell on their beloved king. Finding him after a long search, the ministers accused him of casting a spell on the king, but entreated him to revive the king. Ashtavakra ignored their accusation and called the king by name. Janaka immediately responded to his call and bowed to his guru in reverence. Ashtavakra told the king of the accusation that he had brought Janaka to some sad plight. Unhappy at the accusation, the king demanded to know who said that. The ministers were surprised at this and asked to be pardoned.

The sage said that he would now teach Janaka, now that the king had passed the test. That night, Ashtavakra remained with the king and told him: '*Tattvamasi*, That thou art.'

He said that Brahman is not anything apart from oneself and that no particular place and time were needed for its realization.

In the royal assembly next morning, Ashtavakra asked Janaka if he still doubted whether Brahman could be realized as sud-

denly and quickly as mentioned in the scriptures. The king was all humility and said, 'O noble one, my immaturity was responsible for my doubt. I know now that every word of it is true.' *

Golden Renunciation

Lakshmidatt was a pious brahmin who lived in Pandharpur. Loving service to holy men was his religion. His dedication was so great that one day Lord Panduranga Himself came to his house in the guise of a mendicant to accept his service and bless him. As a result of the mendicant's blessing, his wife Rupadevi gave birth to a son. Because of his beggarly appearance the boy came to be called Ranka.

A few years later, a daughter was born to Haridev, a neighbouring brahmin. Even in her girlhood she showed an extreme lack of interest in anything of the world. Her detached attitude struck people as unnatural, and they called her Banka.

When they grew up Ranka and Banka became husband and wife. The couple regarded their poverty as God's gift that kept their minds aloof from worldly botherations, and were quite happy to earn their livelihood by selling firewood that they gathered from a nearby forest. Their minds were absolutely free from even the slightest desire for creature comforts.

Observing their life of extreme hardship, the great saint Namdev one day prayed to Lord Panduranga to remove their penury. The Lord said, 'Namdev, do you think Ranka and Banka cannot get rid of their poverty? They can get out of their present state by a mere wish. But they prefer to be as they are, untouched by the world, so that they can devote themselves entirely to Me. You can see for yourself if you follow them into the forest to-

morrow morning.'

Next morning, from where he was hiding, Namdev witnessed the immensity of the couple's renunciation.

As Ranka walked along the footpath through the jungle, with Banka following him a few steps behind, he suddenly stopped in his tracks as if he had seen a snake lying across. Recovering from the surprise, he quickly bent down to cover up with earth what was in fact a bag full of gold coins. He did not want his wife to see. But Banka had not missed the bag. 'What are you doing?' she asked. 'Well ... I don't think we should let this little bag of gold pull us down into temptation ...' mumbled Ranka. Banka smiled, 'But what is the point of hiding a clod of earth with more earth?' Ranka could say nothing. It occurred to him that while he still regarded gold as gold, to his simple wife it was no more than a clod of earth! He mentally bowed down to her.

'There is still more,' said Lord Panduranga to Namdev. He had caused every bit of dry wood in the forest to disappear.

As ill luck would have it, Ranka and Banka could find not a single dry twig until late in the evening and had to return home empty-handed. 'See?' mused Ranka, 'Just the sight of gold has brought us a day's misery. God knows what makes people treasure such an evil thing. Poor creatures, they don't know what awaits them.'

The moment Ranka uttered those words, Lord Panduranga appeared before the couple. He could not hold Himself back any more. *

A Dilemma and A Decision

DR S DANDAPANI

Everyone born in this world has to make his life meaningful. The Creator has implanted in all of us gifts so that we may be useful to society. Several avenues are open to us in life but deciding which one is meant for us is usually difficult. Unfortunately, very few schools attach importance to developing the decision-making faculty in students. Lost in the crowd, most of us are led away by social currents. We need to cultivate a strong mind like Narendra if we are to develop into a Vivekananda. Within a short life span he could accomplish so much in life! Of course, everyone may not become a great soul like Vivekananda, but in our own humble ways, we can actualize the true Self that now remains dormant in us.

The Nobility of the Teaching Profession

There was a time when very few wished to join the teaching profession. That was mainly because the pay was poor and prospects for promotion were also dim. However, a few dedicated individuals chose to join this profession purely out of intrinsic interest. We call teaching a noble profession mainly because of the self-denial and self-enhancement a teacher's life stands for. Such teachers are permanently etched in our psyche as role models, to be remembered, revered and emulated. Their earnings might have been meagre but their yearning was boundless! They yearned to learn, not just learned to earn.

Monetary Consideration is Not All

Of late the status of the teaching profession has been kept on a par with others in terms of emoluments. No one need grumble nowadays that teachers are poorly paid. But one should not merely look at the pay packet

of a profession. One must rather examine oneself and find out whether one possesses the ability and commitment one's profession demands. This is all the more true of the teaching profession. One might be able to develop one's capabilities by systematic training, but commitment requires something deeper, something sublime, something lofty that one gets only by introspection. Before you choose to become a teacher, ask yourself frankly whether you have taken the right decision—because on your conduct and character depend the lives of several thousand youngsters! You would be under scrutiny by many pairs of eyes in the community as well as in the class. You are responsible not only for your life but also of others.

Monetary considerations alone should not be the criterion to choose the teaching profession. But such an attitude is possible only if one learns not to live beyond one's means; for that would not be a meaningful life but a mean life! If you look at the pictures of teachers of the pre-Independence era, you will notice one thing: invariably they all wore turbans. Why? Perhaps turbans added dignity to their personality. They never bent their heads because the turbans would then fall. They never stooped to conquer! They stood majestically erect and let their erudition and dedication command respect. Did not Dr Radhakrishnan bring dignity to the teaching profession? It was not for nothing that he was elevated to the Presidency. He distanced himself from politics and led a spartan life.

Transparency, the Essential Trait

The essential trait of a teacher is total transparency in thought, word and deed. The teacher is always in public gaze. He teaches

through precept and practice. He is punctual to his class. He is not only well prepared but also prepared to listen to students and even learn from them. We may call it humility. Imagine a Srinivasa Ramanujan or a C V Raman sitting in your class. At times students scale greater heights than their teachers. However, that should not make them conceited and arrogant. Are not teachers the ladders which students climb to reach greater heights? No less a person than Newton once said that if at all he had achieved something in life, it was because he had stood upon the shoulders of his predecessors. What humility! President Abdul Kalam expressed similar sentiments when Doordarshan interviewed him soon after he was nominated for the Bharat Ratna. The renowned scientist remembered with nostalgia his third standard teacher Sivasubramania Iyer, who had fostered in him the scientific temper.

Sympathy for the Student

Most teachers will be happy to work with students who can grasp things quickly, for that would make their job easy. But what about students who are not blessed with such ability? Do we write them off for no fault of theirs? Is it not better to light a candle than curse the darkness? How do we treat our less fortunate fellow men? Most of us pity them, some sympathize with them, a few may extend a helping hand, but most of us usually mind our own business.

When Anne Sullivan first met her pupil Helen Keller, she found the six-year-old blind and deaf child as uncontrollable as a wild animal. The girl tyrannized her family if she was not allowed to get her own way with everything. What was Anne Sullivan's attitude towards her ward? Was she condescending? Far from it. She was deeply concerned for the young girl. She cared for her, not realizing that the world would one day be amazed at the girl's indomitable will. Each time the little girl pinched her, she gave her a mild slap. Cruelty?

No! Attention? Yes, attention backed by affection, motivated by concern. Later when Helen Keller wrote her memoirs, the slaps were forgotten as she recalled the day when she met her beloved teacher for the first time: 'I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand, I supposed, to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of one who had come to reveal all things to me and, more than that, to love me.'

A Case in Point

Let me share with you a memorable experience I had in New York. In the winter of 1961 I was attending a course in education at Columbia University. One evening I heard a knock at my door and there stood before me a tall, lean, bespectacled American in his early thirties. He introduced himself as Jim Velarius, a young science graduate and native of Chicago. He was a bachelor.

Jim had held an executive position with Woolworth, a leading department store with branches from coast to coast in the USA. Once while in Detroit on business, he checked into a hotel and engaged a cab to reach a leading store for inspection. Just as he alighted from the cab he noticed a yellow bus across the street from which several nine- or ten-year kids got off, accompanied by a middle-aged lady. Jim noticed something odd about the kids' behaviour as they entered the Ford Museum to see car models. Jim approached the lady and enquired about the children. She told him that they were all mentally challenged and that she was their class teacher.

That was a turning point in Jim's life. Soon after he finished his business, he rushed to the university campus and surveyed the catalogues of universities that offered courses in teaching the mentally challenged. He chose Teacher's College, Columbia University, resigned his well-paid job with Woolworth and enrolled himself for the course. He had no regrets relinquishing a well-paid job, changing tracks in life. On completion of the course, Jim

accepted a teaching position in a school for the mildly retarded, about a hundred miles from New York, for about a fourth of the salary he grossed at Woolworth. But his fulfilment was perhaps fourfold! We need teachers like Jim to adorn the teaching profession.

Trust Begets Trust

Next summer, I enrolled for a course in teaching gifted children, conducted by a Canadian professor at the University of Hawaii. I missed a test due to ill health. Though I had done well in the earlier tests and was confident of getting an A, I did not want to lose credit for the missed test. I approached my professor the following day, explained the reason for my absence and requested him to hold a test for me. Believe it or not, the learned professor typed out a test paper in my presence, put it in a cover and told me to take it to my dormitory room and answer it within the one-hour time limit and hand him back the an-

swer sheet. I was stunned, almost speechless! Never in my life had my teachers trusted me so much. But this professor had absolute trust in me. Was he teaching me that trust begets trust?

Another professor who taught me anthropology conducted a test as part of the course. He distributed the question paper and answer books to a class of foreign students from Southeast Asia and retired to his office. There was none to supervise. The following lines were printed on the answer book: 'Those attending the University of Hawaii will conduct themselves honourably at all times. To give, to receive or to use aid of any kind during a test injures the conscience of the student and brings bad name to the University.'

In sum, everyone can be a good, honest and trustworthy teacher. These qualities are far more important than just intelligence. Resolve for yourself the dilemma of what you want to become in life. *

Working on Minds

If we work on marble
 It will perish.
 If we work on brass
 Time will deface it.
 If we rear temples
 They will crumble to dust.
 But if we work on immortal minds;
 If we imbue them with principles;
 With just fear of God;
 And love of our fellow men,
 We engrave on these tablets
 Something which
 Brightens to all eternity

—Daniel Webster



Reviews



For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.

Healing Mind, Body and Soul. Alan Bryson. New Dawn/Sterling Publishers, A-59 Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 2, New Delhi 110 020. 1999. 244 pp. Rs 175.

This book is a timely reminder on the close relationship between spiritual and physical health. Divided into fourteen chapters characterized by brevity and precision, the book deals with the complex mechanism of the human and spiritual self. The book abounds in relevant quotes from Bahauallah, Buddha and Krishna. Alan Bryson emphasizes that stress and depression can adversely affect the physical well-being of an individual. Studies have revealed that many illnesses of unknown origin often stem from 'psycho-social factors'. Bryson firmly believes that besides the care of a trusted physician during a serious illness, one must 'have faith in God, belief in the body's inherent ability to heal itself, and a determination to meet the challenge mentally, spiritually and physically'. (64)

The merit of the book lies in the lucid manner in which it advocates spiritual and physical healing through prayer and meditation. The latter half of the book deals systematically with the importance of a balanced nutrition in laying the foundation of good health. There are thought-provoking chapters on food strategies, vegetarianism, fitness and weight, and alternative therapies. However, the most important mantra for good health seems to be 'staying positive'.

This book provides invaluable information on how to cope with a stress-filled, pessimistic world view. It reiterates the importance of faith, and at the same time emphasizes that the well-being of the spirit cannot be divorced from the well-being of the body. The author presents well-documented examples of tests carried on at hospitals on patients across the world. All in all, this is an extremely readable and enjoyable book.

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Saiva Rituals and Philosophy. Seminar Proceedings. Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, B-4 TVK Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2001. xxxvi + 180 pp. Rs 200.

The book under review contains all the ten papers presented at the seminar on 'Shaiva Rituals and Philosophy' conducted by the publisher from 24 to 26 July 1992. Dr S S Janaki spearheaded the seminar, but could not outlive the publication of this book. The book is dedicated to her memory.

The first paper, by Dr T B Siddhalingaiah, is on *charya* as explained in Siddhiyar and Tirumurais. Each of the Agamas contains four parts: Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana. But Shaiva Siddhanta texts equate them to the four paths of *dasamarga*, *satputramarga*, *sakhamarga* and *sanmarga* respectively. According to the author, this classification is based on the lives of the four masters of Shaivism. The whole paper is based on the concept that *charya* consists in devotional acts of service in the temple and to devotees.

The second paper on 'Shivalingatattva Vimarshanam' (Tamil) is interesting. Those interested in Shaiva philosophy will be keen to know more about the subject. In the absence of translations of the Sanskrit verses quoted profusely, this paper can have only limited appeal.

The third paper on 'The Philosophy of Sadyojyoti' by Dr Pierre S Filliozat of Sorbonne University, Paris, can be understood by anyone with a basic knowledge of Shaivite philosophy. A scholar belonging to the school of Shaiva Siddhanta, Sadyojyoti lived before the ninth century and wrote several authoritative works on Shaiva Siddhanta based on the Agamas in vogue during his lifetime. His works had influenced several scholars in Shaiva Siddhanta from Kashmir to Tamil Nadu.

The fourth paper, by Prof Devasenapathi, deals with 'Rituals and Philosophy as Presented in Fourteen Tamil Works on Shaiva Siddhanta Known as *Meykanda Shastram*'. The author elaborates the concepts of *pati*, *pashu* and *pasham* and the various

paths for obtaining the grace of Shiva. The paths outlined here are almost the same as explained in the first paper on *charya*. This paper deals with the significance of several pathways to reach the ultimate Goal and provides meanings of several basic philosophical terms used in works on Shaiva Sidhanta.

Dr N R Bhatt's well-written paper, fifth in the series, is on 'Shaiva Vratas'. The meaning of *vrata*, details of Shiva puja, and the methods of observance by Shaiva worshippers of the most important *vratas* and pujas throughout the year—the paper deals with all this.

The sixth paper on 'Shivaratri' by Sri T N Ramachandran discusses the significance of *shivaratri vrata*—the *vrata* par-excellence—quoting Puranic texts. The paper also highlights the benefits devotees will get by faithful observance of the monthly Shivaratri and the Maha Shivaratri.

The seventh paper on 'Damanaropana Vidhi' is in Tamil, by Sri R Subramanian. It deals with little-known facts about a special ritual performed in Shiva temples on specific days every month. The Damanaropanam or Damanorchavam is to be performed during the first month of Tamil calendar (Chittirai), immediately after Pavitrorchavam. Vedas address Shiva as Damana. This specific puja is performed with the medicinal and fragrant leaves of a small plant called *marukkozhundu* in Tamil, which grows in abundance in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. This paper has valuable information on this special ritual and its significance.

The eighth paper is on 'Mudras' by Dr S S Janaki. Mudras mean the ritual hand postures in religious functions. While elaborating on the meaning of mudras, the author explains how various mudras are depicted in icons and images of gods and goddesses and also used by priests while performing various rituals including yajnas. This informative paper, however, lacks illustrations depicting the various mudras it refers to.

The last but one paper contains the abstract of a paper by Dennis D Hudson of USA. It deals with Arumuga Navalar's instructions on Shiva worship. Navalar was a Shaiva missionary who lived in Jaffna (Sri Lanka) during 1828-79 AD. His aim was to dissuade the Hindus, especially the Shaivas of Sri Lanka, from embracing Christianity. This paper deals with two of his writings that were widely circulated among the Hindus of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu.

The last paper, in Tamil, by Sri S Arunasundaram is about 'Pavitrotsava Vidhi'. This important ritual is mandatory in all Shiva temples for sanctification after the removal of all deficiencies in the performance of the puja and other rituals.

The appendix briefly deals with a kind of Shaivite ritual called *sandhyahvana*—*sandhya ahvana*—which means invitation to and invocation of the divinities at the nine cardinal points (including Brahma in the centre). A fruit of extensive research, this paper was presented by Dr S S Janaki.

Most papers in this book have extracts from various Sanskrit scriptures. With the exception of Dr Pierre S Filliozat's paper, none of them give the meaning of Sanskrit texts they quote. These papers are thus intelligible only to Sanskrit scholars. Others may not find this satisfactory.

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Spiritual Healing. Dora Kunz. New Age Books, A-44 Naraina Phase 1, New Delhi 110 028. 2000. xvii + 333 pp. Rs 250.

Falling ill today can be a very painful experience, not only because it entails suffering caused by the disease itself, but also because modern methods of treatment can be remarkably dehumanizing. With its impersonal, reductionist, physicalist and compartmentalized approach, modern medicine often looks upon patients as mere machines with problems to be 'fixed', conveniently forgetting the psyche (leave alone the soul), which gets badly battered in the process.

Reversing this powerful trend is a very difficult task as it calls for a profound change in the physician's world view. The healer needs to develop that special skill and sensitivity to apprehend the spiritual aspect of his own personality (besides that of the patient), the diverse ways in which this influences one's own self and others, and the methods by which this power can be brought to bear on the process of healing.

These issues have been discussed in *Spiritual Healing*, divided into six sections: Healing as World View, Unseen (Spiritual) Sources of Healing, New Dimensions in Healing Practices, Broader Perspective on Healing the Psyche, Human Fields and Energies of Healing, and The Pain Process and Strategies for Pain Reduction.

Experienced American physicians, surgeons, nurses, therapists, thinkers and healers like Larry Dossey, Roger Walsh, Bernard Siegel and Dora Kunz have contributed to this book their insights and experiences. Even seemingly esoteric subjects like human energy fields and therapeutic touch have been discussed with a fair amount of objective rationality.

Despite a decidedly Western approach of most of the contributors, the collection provides useful reading.

Swami Satyaswarupananda
Belur Math

Snacks for the Soul. *J P Vaswani.* Sterling Publishers. 2000. 262 pp. Rs150.

More Snacks for the Soul. *J P Vaswani.* Sterling Publishers. 2000. 274 pp. Rs 150.

Dada Vaswani's books hardly need any introduction. Pragmatic and intuitive, Vaswaniji is always scintillating with wit and wisdom. These two volumes together constitute stories one for each day of the year. Sages are always fond of telling stories both to illustrate and inspire. A narrative always localizes a theme and is enacted through characters whom we can easily identify with, leaving an immediate effect. Drawing from major religions as well as contemporary personalities, Vaswaniji gives us a rich harvest of entertainment together with possible enlightenment.

There is a story of a father and son who go to join an all-night prayer. Many of the participants doze off one after another and at last only the father and son are awake. The boy is surprised and tells the father that only they are awake while the others have slept. The father reprimands him by saying that he had better not come to a prayer only to find fault with others.

Similarly, there is the ecological story 'What are You Doing for Me' which tells of a prince who asks a mango tree what it is doing for him. The mango tree replies that when the hot summer arrives its branches are loaded with tasty mangoes. They are gathered and served to the prince and his guests. The prince then asks the same question to the banyan tree. The banyan tree replies that it does not

bear fruit but allows birds to rest and its spreading branches give shelter. Finally the prince asks the vast meadows and grass the same question. Obviously, these give no fruit and shelter none. The grass tells the prince that it gives its life so that the prince's cattle can be nourished.

Such stories abound. Comparable to the famous *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, these two volumes are delightful reading. Perhaps this is reader-friendly spirituality, if not an instant one. The books are, as is to be expected from Sterling Publishers, elegantly produced.

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How to Develop Mind Therapy to Cure Diseases. *P C Ganesan.* Sterling Publishers. 1999. 101 pp. Rs 80.

This book is a significant addition to the increasing number of books dealing with the psychic roots of physical diseases. Within a compass of twenty chapters the author has touched the various aspects of mind therapy. An interesting feature of the book is the case studies he incorporates as a part of the main text. Therefore, the arguments are given, so to say, documentary evidence. Chapters on 'Minding the Mind', 'Humour is the Best Elixir', 'Meditation and Health'—to cite a few—are extremely helpful in developing a clear awareness of the role of the mind in health. However, the author's views on Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi, who die of cancer, and the question of faith should have been handled with care and caution. In their cases disease as a result of karma needs substantiation and more cautious analysis. In such areas the author needs to be balanced and careful. The tendency in the writing of such books is to be too slick and dash off commonplaces. The author has, by and large, avoided such a trap. The author and Sterling Publishers are to be congratulated for a helpful book on an important area of mental health and disease.

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There is no indigestion worse than that which comes from having to eat your own words.

❧ Reports ❧

Laid. Foundation stone for the proposed temple at Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 5 December 2002.

Inaugurated. The new dispensary building at Ramakrishna Mission, Shivanahalli; by Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; on 12 December.

Visited. Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad; on 14 December.

Held. The 93rd Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission; in Belur Math; on 15 December. The meeting was chaired by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Organized. A week-long educational exhibition; by Ramakrishna Mission Sikshanamandira, Belur; from 20 to 25 December. Prof Satyasadhan Chakraborty, Minister for Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, inaugurated the exhibition and Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the inaugural function.

Handed Over. A mobile library van; to Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot; by Sri Vallabhbai Kathiria, Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Government of India; on 21 December. The van is a donation of the Government of India to the Ashrama.

Opened. A new building for eye care and physiotherapy, and a painting exhibition on the life of Sri Ramakrishna; by Srimat Swami

Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot; on 22 December.

Organized. A national integration camp; by Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Gurukula Vidya Mandiram, Thrissur; from 23 to 29 December. About 100 students from different states of the country participated in the camp, which formed a part of the platinum jubilee celebrations of the Math.

Inaugurated. The first floor of the monks' quarters at Vivekananda Ashrama, Ulsoor; by Swami Smarananandaji, on 30 December.

Granted. Honorary mention of the UNESCO 'Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence 2002'; to the Ramakrishna Mission. According to the letter received from UNESCO, 'This honorary mention highlights UNESCO's recognition of Ramakrishna Mission's continuous activities to make peace and happiness prevail among the people, regardless of their caste and religious beliefs.'

Awarded. The Best Voluntary Children's Home Prize; to the Batticaloa boys' home run by Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo; by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Government of Sri Lanka; at a competition conducted in connection with the Universal Children's Day 2002.

Started. A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission; in Chittagong, Bangladesh; under the name *Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Chittagong*. Its address: Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Asker Deghi West, Chittagong, Bangladesh; Phone: 880-31-615409. Swami Shak-

tinathananda has been appointed head of the centre.

Moved. Vedanta Centre of Sydney; to its own premises at 85 Bland Street, Ashfield, NSW 2131, Australia.

Distributed. 689 blankets to flood-affected families of Darbhanga and Samastipur by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna; 1080

blankets to poor people in 21 villages of Puri district by Ramakrishna Math, Puri; 214 blankets to slum-dwellers in Puri and Khurda districts by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri. Besides, 9 tons of milk powder, 180 bales of assorted garments and 5000 blankets were distributed to needy people in various parts of the country by different centres of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission in December 2002.

Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission

The 93rd Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on 15 December 2002. Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, chaired the meeting. Here is a synopsis of the Governing Body's report issued by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Amidst the important developments during the year 2001-02, the starting of a new centre in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, and the inauguration of the International Human Resource Development Centre at Coimbatore to serve disabled people, deserve special mention. The Ramakrishna Mission received a UNESCO award for promotion of tolerance and non-violence in 2002.

Under the Ramakrishna Math, a new centre was opened at Baranagore, Kolkata, at the very site where the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Order was started in 1886. A new temple of Sri Ramakrishna was dedicated at Habiganj, Bangladesh.

During the year the Mission undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation programmes in several parts of the country involving an expenditure of about Rs 11.60 crore, benefiting nearly 5.75 lakh people in nearly 800 villages. The massive rehabilitation programme started in Orissa two years ago was completed after construction of the remaining 24 houses, 2 school-cum-shelter houses, and so on in its last phase. A much bigger rehabilitation programme launched in Gujarat during the previous year was in progress, and construction of 282 houses and 47 primary schools has already been completed.

Welfare work by way of scholarships for poor students, and pecuniary help to old, sick and destitute people amounted to Rs 1.92 crore. Medical service was rendered to more than 60 lakh people through 9 hospitals and 108 dispensaries including mobile ones, and the expenditure incurred was Rs 30.28 crore.

Through our educational institutions—from kindergarten to postgraduate level—nearly 1.37 lakh students were taught, among whom more than 40,000 were girls. A sum of Rs 79.54 crore was spent on educational work. A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken, with a total expenditure of Rs 8.28 crore.