

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or AWAKENED INDIA*



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A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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Cover: Temples in Dakshineswar seen from the Ganga; the divine site of the first 'awakening'.

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत ।

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 108

AUGUST 2003

No. 8

Traditional Wisdom

DISCRIMINATION

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥

The path of work and renunciation, right and wrong actions, what is to be feared and what is not, what is bondage and what is freedom—the intellect that knows all this is said to be of sattvika type. (*Bhagavadgita*, 18.30)

Live in the world like an ant. The world contains a mixture of truth and untruth, sugar and sand. Be an ant and take the sugar. Again, the world is a mixture of milk and water, the bliss of God-Consciousness and the pleasure of sense-enjoyment. Be a swan and drink the milk, leaving the water aside. Live in the world like a water-fowl. The water clings to the bird, but the bird shakes it off. Live in the world like a mudfish. The fish lives in the mud, but its skin is always bright and shiny. (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 472)

To be able to use what we call Viveka (discrimination), to learn how in every moment of our lives, in every one of our actions, to discriminate between what is right and wrong, true and false, we shall have to know the test of truth, which is purity, oneness. Everything that makes for oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is hatred that separates man from man. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 2.304)

When a man feels that he is diseased, then he calls for a doctor and follows his advice. If you feel that life in the world is a great bondage, and that the world is an abode of misery, there will come distaste for worldly enjoyments and your love for God will increase. You will then be interested in taking the remedy, which is to think of your Chosen Ideal and repeat His name. (*Swami Premananda*, 65)

∞ This Month ∞

From the Unreal to the Real, this month's editorial, discusses some traits a spiritual aspirant can gainfully cultivate.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features excerpts from the articles 'The Religious Teacher' and 'Religion is Realization', besides a news item on Swami Ramakrishnanandaji's lectures.

Reflections on the Bhagavadgita by Swami Atulanandaji (1870-1966) is the third instalment of the author's commentary on verses 15 to 19 of the seventh chapter of the *Gita*. Why the evil-minded do not worship God, the four kinds of devotees worshipping God, and the superiority of the jnani among them—these themes receive a detailed treatment from the author, who was a respected monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features incidents from the lives of Tukaram, a saint from Maharashtra, and Kalyan, a disciple of Samartha Ramdas.

In the second and final instalment of his illuminating article **The Appeal of the Upanishads Today**, Swami Atmapriyanandaji discusses the 'Atman = Brahman' equation, what is true globalization, the fivefold self and the threefold body of the human personality. In conclusion he throws a new perspective on the all-important question: Who is qualified to study the Upanishads? A monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author is Principal of Ramakrishna Mission Vidya-mandira, Belur.

Most readers know of Swami Chetananandaji's wonderful work, *They Lived with God*, detailing the lives of Sri Ramakrishna's

householder disciples. In the revised edition, now in press, the author has included three more biographies. *Prabuddha Bharata* is happy to publish them before they appear in book form. **Tejachandra Mitra** is the first in the series. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, the author is head of Vedanta Society of St Louis.

In his thought-provoking article *Datta, Dāmyata, Dayadhvam*, Sri R K Dasgupta emphasizes the topicality and urgency of the Upanishadic message of charity, restraint and compassion. Educated in Kolkata and the Oxford, the author has been Vivekananda Professor of Indology at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, since April 1994.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition by Swami Premeshanandaji is based on class notes by Swami Suhitanandaji, who, as a novice of the Ramakrishna Order, was fortunate to be given a special class on the subject by the author. The Bengali notes were serialized in the *Udbodhan* and later published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata, as *Patanjala Yoga-sutra*. We are happy to serialize a translation of the book by Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, former Professor of Statistics, Calcutta University, and for many years a deep student of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. This month features a prologue and an introduction to the exposition. We are grateful to Udbodhan Office, Kolkata, for permitting us to publish this translation.

Kaṭha Rudra Upaniṣad is the fifth instalment of a translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji. The elaborate notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

From the Unreal to the Real

EDITORIAL

We saw in the last editorial that though from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality the world is unreal like a dream, nothing else is more real to us in our everyday experience. The world impinges upon our consciousness and determines our priorities as long as our body and mind are real to us. The challenge is to break the unreal world-dream and wake up to Reality. Mind discipline and spiritual practices help us in this endeavour.

What Makes the World-dream Real to us

According to Vedanta, Brahman is the only reality. It *appears* to us as this manifold world of differences. This appearance is because of *maya*, the power of Brahman. In fact, *maya* is a twofold power: the power of concealment (*āvaraṇa śakti*), concealing from us the basic spiritual Reality, Brahman; and the power of distortion (*vikṣepa śakti*), making Brahman appear to us as the world.

Sankhya philosophy has a name for the ultimate Reality: Purusha. According to it, however, there are infinite Purushas, in contrast with the one-without-a-second Brahman of Vedanta. Vedanta is more rational since it negates multiplicity for the Spirit, which transcends nature (space and time). Our focus here is on Prakriti, Sankhya's equivalent of *maya*. Prakriti is loosely translated as *Nature*. Prakriti is primordial Nature, out of which evolve everything that is not-Spirit, not-Purusha, or not-Self—both at the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. Prakriti is inert but is able to evolve as the subtle and physical worlds and go about its activities by mere proximity to the conscious Purusha. The goal of life is for the Purusha (the individual soul) to free himself from the hold of Prakriti, realize his spiri-

tual nature and thus free himself from the threefold misery of the world arising from (1) his own body and mind, (2) those of others and (3) nature's fury like flood, famine, cyclone and earthquake.

A Brief Survey of the Three Gunas

Prakriti is composed of three gunas, called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.¹ They are respectively translated as calmness (or poise), activity and inertia. These gunas constitute Prakriti even as three strands a rope. Minus the strands, the rope vanishes. Even so, minus the gunas, Prakriti vanishes and the spiritual Reality stands revealed in its true glory. All that we perceive with our sense organs, think with our mind, and our own body and mind—all have evolved from Prakriti and hence composed of the three gunas. Our identification with our body and mind and consequent running after the fleeting objects of the world are the result of our apparently inextricable association with the gunas. All the three gunas are present in an individual, but one of them predominates over the other two. Deluded by the three gunas, the world does not know the spiritual Reality behind it.² Sri Ramakrishna describes the three gunas as three robbers who rob man of the knowledge of his real Self. *Tamas*, the first robber, destroys. The second robber, *rajas*, binds a man to the world and entangles him in a variety of activities. *Sattva* alone shows the way to God. It produces virtues like compassion, righteousness and devotion. One cannot attain the knowledge of Brahman unless one transcends the three gunas.³

A little reflection on how much of inertia (sloth), passionate activity and calmness inheres in us can give us an idea of which guna is

predominant in us. The journey to freedom from the gunas is from tamas (inertia) to rajas (activity) to sattva (calmness) to the ultimate Reality beyond them. Tamas deludes us into believing that we are sattvic, because of the apparent calmness born of sloth. Here is a point that cannot be emphasized more: tamas and sattva are poles apart, though they may be apparently similar in some respects. The journey from tamas to sattva has to pass through rajas; there is no bypass, however unpleasant and uncomfortable that sounds.

The Way to the Real

Traversing from the unreal to the Real thus amounts to freeing oneself from the gunas. Sri Krishna tells us how. Describing His maya as His divine power composed of

Most people lead 'programmed' lives, programmed by their mental impressions (samskaras) and 'executed' by the sense organs and the sense objects. An aspirant on the path to Self-knowledge, on the other hand, refuses to be taken for a ride by the mind and the senses.

the three gunas and difficult to cross, He continues in the *Bhagavadgita*, 'Only those who worship Me tide over this maya.'⁴ Now, a word about 'worship Me'. When a divine Incarnation like Sri Krishna says *Me* it is certainly free from any narrow connotation. Obviously, *Me* refers to the spiritual Reality behind His external form. Sri Krishna's assurance has a much wider significance and applies to all divine forms of all religions. In other words, freedom from maya is possible only when we cease to identify ourselves with the body-mind complex and begin to seek the spiritual Reality behind it.

The Journey More Clearly Defined

Besides the general prescription of taking

refuge in God, or spiritual Reality, are there any practical guidelines for a spiritual aspirant to free himself from the gunas? There sure are. Sri Krishna is a world teacher and does not leave loose ends in the *Gita*. After describing the three gunas in its fourteenth chapter, He details in verses 22 to 25 the characteristics of a person who has transcended the three gunas (*triguṇātīta*), or the traits of one who has known his real divine nature, the Atman. What is the idea behind this catalogue of traits? Sri Shankaracharya has the answer in his commentary on verse 25: 'By special efforts a spiritual aspirant needs to acquire these traits as the means of attaining Self-knowledge. But on Self-realization these virtues become part and parcel of his nature and serve as marks of liberation, which he can perceive for himself.'

Swami Ashokanandaji (1893-1969) was a renowned disciple of Swami Vivekananda and was known for his ground-breaking work in the West. A monastic novice under his care once pressed him to tell him when he might have some 'realization'. Ashokanandaji replied, 'Why don't you live as if you had *already* realized?'⁵ That was an echo of Sri Shankaracharya's remarks. What follows is a discussion on these traits a prospective *triguṇātīta* needs to cultivate (*Gita* verses 14.22-5).

Abidance in the Self

The most important trait is abidance in the Self. The man of realization is a man of wisdom. An aspirant begins with cultivating his buddhi, the all-important discriminating faculty in him. He tries to identify himself more and more with something in him that is different from his body and his non-cooperating mind. He understands the *Gita* teaching that only a controlled mind can act as his friend, and monitors his thoughts and actions as their

witness. He does a quality audit of whatever enters his system through his sense organs and is ever alert about any unwholesome or weakening thought crossing his mind. He tries to think more and more of his real nature, the Atman, and makes serious scriptural studies and deep thinking about his higher Self a part of his life. He does not demean himself by weakening thoughts, knowing that the remedy for weakness is strength, not brooding over weakness. As a devotee, he learns to derive strength from the thought of his Chosen Deity. Swamiji's inspiring words beckon him to have faith in his higher Self:

Bring in the light and the evil goes in a moment. Build up your character, and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure, and call It up in everyone that you see. I wish that every one of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, 'Rise thou effulgent one, rise thou who art always pure, rise thou birthless and deathless, rise almighty, and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee.' This is the highest prayer that the Advaita teaches. This is the one prayer, to remember our true nature, the God who is always within us, thinking of it always as infinite, almighty, ever-good, ever-beneficent, selfless, bereft of all limitations.⁶

Equipoise: No Hatred, No Craving

As long as the mind does not undergo training and discipline, it runs behind the sense organs, which are ever eager to come in contact with their respective sense objects. Most people lead 'programmed' lives, programmed by their mental impressions (samskaras) and 'executed' by the sense organs and the sense objects. An aspirant on the path to Self-knowledge, on the other hand, refuses to be taken for a ride by the mind and the senses. He trains his mind to remain detached from the lure of sense objects. The effects of sattva, rajas and tamas are, respectively, light, activity and delusion. When such effects present

themselves before him, an aspirant does not hate them, nor does he long for them when they are absent. His attention is elsewhere: on trying to observe the vagaries of the mind and coaxing it to turn inward towards the indwelling Lord.

Detachment

The man who has transcended the gunas is unconcerned about the happenings around him, knowing that they are the play of the gunas. By unswervingly abiding in his Self he remains unaffected by them. Remaining unconcerned implies that he does not take sides in an issue. This needs some explanation. The lack of concern of a man of realization is different from the apathy of an inert person, who lives up to Newton's first law of motion: he continues to be in a state of rest unless acted upon by an external force. The external forces usually happen to be the blows he receives from the world, as a sequel to his sloth and procrastination. Such a person needs to become active to get rid of tamas. He needs to be wicked if he must, instead of leading a pathetic apathetic life. Swami Vivekananda's words are the right external force to set him in motion:

I once met a man in my country whom I had known before as a very stupid, dull person, who knew nothing and had not the desire to know anything, and was living the life of a brute. He asked me what he should do to know God, how he was to get free. 'Can you tell a lie?' I asked him. 'No,' he replied. 'Then you must learn to do so. It is better to tell a lie than to be a brute, or a log of wood. You are inactive; you have not certainly reached the highest state, which is beyond all actions, calm and serene; you are too dull even to do something wicked.' That was an extreme case, of course, and I was joking with him; but what I meant was that a man must be active in order to pass through activity to perfect calmness.⁷

A spiritual aspirant looks upon work as spiritual practice, as a means to purification of mind. He does all work with devotion, with

his whole being in it, and offers the fruits of action to the indwelling God. He gradually cultivates calmness amid intense activity and remains unconcerned about the outcome of work, certain that if the means are taken care of, the end *must* come.

Attitude towards the Dualities of Life

The world we live in is characterized by pairs of opposites, called *dvandvas*: Pleasure and pain, praise and blame, heat and cold, and so on. People fondly believe that they could have one to the exclusion of the other. It is a package deal: if you seek the one, the other comes in uninvited. Being convinced of the impermanence of the world and the necessity to transcend it, a spiritual aspirant tries to face

The lack of concern of a man of realization is different from the apathy of an inert person, who ... continues to be in a state of rest unless acted upon by an external force. The external forces usually happen to be the blows he receives from the world, as a sequel to his sloth and procrastination.

these *dvandvas* with equipoise. He tries not to be attached to one or hate the other. The fourteenth chapter lists five such pairs an aspirant needs to be careful about.

Agreeable and disagreeable things: These pairs of opposites are really relative: what is agreeable to one is quite disagreeable to another. The human mind keeps craving for agreeable things. Certain basic facilities in life certainly need to be agreeably good. Only then the mind can feel free to call on God. But a spiritual aspirant needs to be careful not to lose his sense of balance or contentment. We really don't appreciate how good our situation is unless it deteriorates. People keep complaining about not having shoes until they meet someone who has no feet. Only then they begin to count their blessings.

Praise and blame: Human mind is so outward directed that people know more about others than about themselves. Rightly it is said that if A talks to you in private about B, you get to know more about A than about B. A spiritual aspirant learns to cultivate a healthy indifference to praise and blame. If the criticism is true, he tries to correct himself; if not, he does not spare a thought for it.

Success and failure: The *Gita* abounds in instructions to remain unaffected by the result of one's actions. The most quoted of them is 'To work alone you have the right, not to its fruits.'⁸ Knowing that an action or thought is certain to bear fruit, an aspirant bends his energy in taking care of the means of work than getting tense about the outcome. It is not that

he does not think about the results. He does that, but *before* taking up the work. He systematically plans for the work, taking into account all factors that influence its outcome. That done, he earnestly goes about doing the work, giving his whole being to it. He does not brood over the results or let the end influence the means. He

knows that even when the means are right there could be extraneous factors influencing the outcome of work. He understands that the saner and healthier way then is not to get tensed about the result of work, provided he has exercised his physical, mental and intellectual faculties to their utmost.

Friend and foe: A man of realization does not distinguish between friends and foes, since he sees the same spiritual Reality behind all. The distinction is from the onlooker's point of view. An aspirant for Self-knowledge maintains a dignified poise in his interactions with people, neither getting attached to some, nor avoiding some. It is needless to say that he can never afford to be discourteous to anyone. Swami Yatiswaranandaji, a former Vice President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakri-

shna Mission, encouraged spiritual aspirants to become gentlemen before trying to become spiritual. But he did not mince words when it came to warning them about getting attached to others or letting others get attached to them:

We must renounce all our clinging to our own body and mind and to that of others and become truly dispassionate and non-attached in every way. It is not enough if we do this with reference to only certain things and persons while trying to cling to others all the more. It is easier to avoid certain things or people whom we don't like and call it renunciation. True renunciation is a change of attitude towards all. ... We should adopt such an attitude that others do not dare to approach us in the wrong way. I am telling this especially to ladies. The Western concept of chivalry has no place in spiritual life.⁹

A piece of gold and a clod of earth: Money is certainly an important factor in life. But a spiritual aspirant learns to put proper value on it. He does not let its lure quench his still-unripe aspiration for the Divine. From the standpoint of the ultimate Reality, both gold and a clod of earth are equally worthless. Sri Ramakrishna was an embodiment of this prescription of the *Gita*. In him the renunciation of lust and lucre was total. Standing on the bank of the Ganga with a coin in one hand and a piece of earth in the other, he threw them both into the river, considering them equally worthless on the path to God-realization. His pure body and mind so deeply integrated the idea with his personality that from then on he could never bear the touch of a coin or any metal; he felt as if stung by an insect even if he came in contact with them unawares.

Renunciation of All Undertakings

A man who has transcended the three gunas does not initiate any project himself, but lets the gunas act on themselves. Whatever he does is for the good of others. He has nothing to gain by what he does in this world, nor does he stand to lose by leaving anything undone.¹⁰ That explains his disinterestedness in the

world and its proceedings. A spiritual aspirant knows such a state to be the goal and consciously strives to rise above *tamas* (inertia) by cultivating *rajas* (intense work), and learns to perform even that with no desire for its results. By offering the fruits of work to God, he remains uninfluenced by its outcome. He does work as worship, remembering Sri Krishna's words: 'From whom have originated all beings and by whom is everything pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his duty, man attains perfection.'¹¹

* * *

The journey from the unreal to the Real involves a change in attitude towards oneself, towards others and towards the world. The traits of a realized man are for the unenlightened to cultivate with diligence on their way to enlightenment. One needs to know where one stands—*tamas*, *rajas* or *sattva*—and gradually try to rise above the gunas with spiritual disciplines. Only thus can the world-dream break some day, awakening us to Reality. *

References

1. The gunas are discussed in greater detail in 'The Three-stranded Rope', March 2002 editorial.
2. See *Bhagavadgita*, 7.13.
3. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 218-9.
4. *Gita*, 7.14.
5. Swami Yogeshananda, *Six Lighted Windows* (Atlanta: Swami Yogeshananda, 1995), 173.
6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.357.
7. *ibid.*, 1.40-1.
8. *Gita*, 2.47.
9. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Bangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1989), 152-4.
10. *Gita*, 3.18.
11. *ibid.*, 18.46.

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The Religious Teacher

The position of a religious teacher is undoubtedly a great one: great in its responsibilities and great in its possibilities. The number of men fitted for it by character and attainment is comparatively small, for the glowing words of a man convinced of truth, whose heart is aflame with love, can alone penetrate and awaken the souls of others. Yet no class of men is more welcome in our midst when coming thoroughly equipped in mind and body, seeing that in no country is the religious spirit stronger than in that which has been nurtured in the tradition of the ancient Rishis. No one can question the value of that weighty influence which an experienced and sagacious teacher knows how to exercise at the right moment; the influence which a teacher can, and should, exercise, especially in our great cities, inasmuch as among the younger men whose ideas are still of recent growth and whose experiences are necessarily circumscribed, there must be greater opportunities for wise counsels and tactful guidance. To avail himself of these opportunities, the teacher must possess peculiar qualities of temper and judgment, though these merely form the equipment with which he starts out on his mission. To fulfil it, he must be a candid and unprejudiced observer of the men with whom he comes in contact, feeling the kinship of their spirits with all that is eternal, manifesting to them that purity of heart as a true reconciliation of the wants and powers of man with the life of God. Possessing the highest qualities of head and heart, he must have exceptional capacity for bringing into special use the higher faculties of the soul in other men, quickening the inextinguishable fire within. He must unfold to them the gospel of their own inner powers, to be developed through a knowledge of truth, and when this conviction comes to them—of Selfhood, that natural inheritance of man which it is impossible to nullify—he must indicate to them how to build and effectually organize their spiritual life, how to evolve and enrich their inborn endowments by transcending their narrow environments. The cause of misery is ignorance; therefore the teacher should point out that ignorance minimizes the God within, knowledge expands it. ...

The true interpreter of religion must be eminently self-sacrificing, thinking only of his subject, never of himself. This will give a singular impressiveness to everything that he says, revealing that precious gift of seeing the permanent in the impermanent, of discerning the main current in the perplexing drift and whirl of human concerns as they pass. It is furthermore impossible to win the world to truth if he conceives it to be immersed in error, or to persuade people of the wisdom of his philosophy, if he constantly holds them as not in the truth. Rare tact is required to uproot error successfully and establish the truth in its place, and it is the teacher's privilege to point out that man has been living in constant consciousness of the effect, ignoring the cause, which is the fountain-head of eternal life within him; to show that religion must be woven into every fibre of man's heart, dealing with and controlling his daily life. The question now arises: should a teacher follow up the ideals of his predecessors, or take the initiative and show that he is a leader, not a follower? We reply: he should not be satisfied with crystallized beliefs but should show clearly that he intends to be what he means, regardless of whether or not his speech or action may commend itself to others. ...

Expanded intellect and purified understanding are such irresistible forces that they compel attention—they are the powers by which we are led to a new insight, to an enlarged self-hood—and the

success of a teacher will be in a great measure due to his instinctively true utterances, for he must speak from knowledge, not hearsay. ...

—Advaitin

Religion is Realization

Often we read in Puranas descriptions of fighting between Devas and Asuras. Sometimes the Devas get the better, sometimes the Asuras. They may rightly be taken to be the representatives of two opposite forces—spiritual and material. Since time immemorial fight has been going on between these two opposite forces in different planes of Nature. But this struggle is most marked in the human plane. In man sometimes spiritual forces rise supreme and sometimes the material. The first conquest of the spiritual over the material has always been the beginning of religion.

A moment comes in the life of individuals when Nature with her infinite charms loses all attraction, when life with its various enjoyments seems quite dull. Man gets disgusted with the ordinary routine of work and asks himself, 'Am I born to be Nature's bond-slave, to be tossed hither and thither by her freaks, have I taken this birth to lead the life of eternal eating, drinking and talking nonsense and do nothing higher?' Religion commences with such unrest of the mind, with such dissatisfaction about things all around and with a desire to rise higher and get beyond the limitation of the senses.

Perfect mastery of spirit over matter, complete freedom from the bondage of senses—in a word, perfection and nothing short of it—is the goal of religion. The sages are at one as regards the highest aim of religious aspirants; they differ only as to the paths leading to it. Religion does not consist in filling the mind with unhealthy, weak, sensational ideas, or in committing to memory all the philosophies of the world, or in getting some supernatural power, but in bringing the real man out by manifesting the divinity potential in all. ...

The goal is one and the same, but the paths are different. The Indian sages, recognizing the variety of tendency in men, say that they ought to take to different paths according to their different tendency and temperament. A truly religious man should know this fact well and never speak uncharitably of any path. When a man has taken a path, he should stick to it with dogged pertinacity and follow it to the end.

As we cannot do without a practical teacher in any department of knowledge, so in religion we require a spiritual guide. The real spiritual teacher is he who has crossed this ocean of *samsara* and out of love is ever ready to help others to do so. The way to be spiritual is to live with the spiritual. Well has it been said by Sankara in his *Mohamudgara*, 'The contact alone with the good even for a moment becomes like a boat to cross the ocean of *samsara*.'

But it is very difficult to discern good, great and holy men. ... One cannot be too careful in this matter. We generally mistake fools and mystery-mongers for great men. ... The real teacher must be pure, a knower of Truth and have no worldly motive.

—Prakashananda

Swami Ramakrishnananda's Lectures

Under the auspices of the Vedanta Society, Bangalore, the following lectures were delivered by Swami Ramakrishnananda on the 25th, 26th, 29th, and 31st July: 'The message of Sri Ramakrishna to the world'; 'What is Yoga'; 'Vedanta'; and 'The common goal of all religions'. The first lecture was presided over by Sir P N Krishna Murti, KCIE, the Dewan; the second by Dewan Bahadur A Ramachandra Iyer, Esq, Chief judge; the third by V P Madhava Rao, Esq, CIE, Senior Councillor; and the fourth by H V Nanjundayya, Esq, MA, ML, Secretary (General and Revenue Depts) to the Govt of Mysore.

—from 'News and Notes'

Reflections on the *Bhagavadgita*

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Chapter 7 (*continued*)

15. The sinful, deluded, lowest of men, deprived of understanding by maya and following evil ways, (the ways of the asuras) do not take refuge in Me.

All sin is a form of ignorance. When our intelligence is clouded by maya, or ignorance, we then become sinful. We lose sight of the Truth, that in reality all beings are united in God, that in the last analysis we are all one Spirit appearing as different individuals. And we mistake the differentiation for the true state of affairs. In other words, we see separation and lose sight of the underlying oneness. The Upanishad says, 'Where one sees another, where one hears another, that is small. Where one does not see another, where one does not hear another, that is infinite.'¹ Seeing and feeling separation brings selfishness, the source of all evil. As this cloud of ignorance becomes heavier and thicker, the feeling of separateness increases. With it also increases egotism and sinfulness.

Sri Krishna speaks here of the lowest class of human beings possessed of asuric tendencies or evil qualities like cruelty and untruthfulness. Such persons are so entirely enveloped by ignorance that their understanding has become very much clouded. They are atheistic and in their intense egotism they cannot admit of any power superior to their own. They look upon God, eternal Life and a supreme Ruler of the universe as so many

myths. How can they then take refuge in God, whose very existence they deny? They are unable to see or understand Truth. They hear, but understand not; they see, but perceive not. Their evil deeds, committed in the past, prevent them in the form of samskaras (that is in the form of stored-up impressions and tendencies) from accepting Truth, even when presented to them. They scoff. They cannot do otherwise. It is their nature.

The fever patient suffering for a long time loses all healthy appetite. He craves for unhealthy food that will only increase his malady and suffering. His taste has become perverted. So it is with those who suffer the fever of egotism, lust and desire. Their taste has become degenerated. Vulgar, unhealthy tendencies make them crave sinful enjoyments. The holy, unselfish, loving, sacrificing life appears to them most unattractive. They feel at home wallowing in the mire.

But all are not like that. These are only the very lowest class, who care not for God or Truth. Others accept Truth, though in different measures. And Sri Krishna mentions all this in the next verse, where He divides them into four classes of devotees, according to their motives and spiritual capacity.

16. Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna: the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of material prosperity and, O Prince of the Bharata race, the wise.

As a class quite distinct from those men of asuric or evil nature, mentioned in the previous verse, Sri Krishna now deals with men of virtuous tendencies. All

men belonging to this class believe in God and a life eternal. But not all have the same strong and pure faith in God. Nor are they all impelled by the same pure and lofty motive in

seeking God and taking refuge in Him. Sri Krishna, therefore, divides them into four classes, each class characterized by a predominant motive.

First are mentioned the distressed. It is when we are in trouble or pain, in suffering or distress, that we look for help and comfort. We may feel quite strong and independent so long as all goes well. But let misfortune visit us; then we realize that after all it is not easy to stand firm on our feet. Our weakness is then revealed to us, and we cannot but go for help and support where we expect to find it.

The wicked and vicious, when afflicted, commit more sin. They seek support in evil deeds, thus heaping gloom on gloom. A higher class of men are those who go to good friends and wise persons for consolation and advice. But those of higher understanding know that real succour can come from God alone. They turn to Him with their burden, trusting that God's promise has not been made in vain. For have not all the incarnations invited mankind to take refuge in them—Krishna and Buddha and Rama? And has not Jesus called out to all humanity? 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' Trusting in God's promise they fly to Him in their distress. They may be quite indifferent towards God at other times, but *this* at least is their good fortune that in evil times they turn to God. This is their good karma.

It is an indication of good *samskaras* and is the result of previous practices, for it is the past that speaks in the present. Past experience has settled down in the form of tendencies with which we are born in this life. These are called *samskaras*. Whatever experience we gather during *this* life will manifest in a future birth as our character, as our natural tendencies, as our instincts in that life. Living a holy, devotional life now will force us to be virtuous

when we take new birth. Some men cannot do a good deed, and others are not able to commit a crime. Some men are attracted towards God by their nature, as it were, instinctively, while others feel repugnance towards anything connected with a religious life. It is the past that rules *now*, just as the present will guide our future destiny. It behoves us then to be careful and thoughtful in our actions. We are architects. We are building our future dwelling place. Each stone counts in constructing the building. Every act counts, every word, every thought. Let us construct a dwelling worthy of the tenant, for we are building a temple for God to dwell in.

We may be slaves of the past, but let us be masters of the future. Let us plant good seeds that the harvest may be rich. It is just as easy to be good as it is to be wicked if we have once established the habit. If it is true that we are the children of God, let us try to manifest it. And above all let us be pure, for it is Jesus' promise that 'the pure in heart shall see God'.

Sri Krishna says in verse sixteen: Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me: the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of material prosperity and the wise. The men of evil tendencies never turn to God, no matter what happens. When misfortune overtakes them, they turn to sin hoping thereby to forget their misery. But the virtuous worship God. And Sri Krishna has classified them according to the motive which draws them to God. We have seen under what conditions the distressed approach the Lord. Though their motive is not the highest, it is certainly better to turn to God in the hour of need than not to go to Him at all. Devotion to God even under such conditions is a sign of good karma, an indication of good *samskaras*. 'By the tendencies generated during one birth the conduct during the next is regulated. And that in turn strengthens the same tendencies; and thus the wheel rolls on ceaselessly. Like the tree and the seed, tendencies and acts are perpetuated by the regulating power of the Deity, which at-

taches to each man his previously generated tendencies.' This is what is meant by samskaras. Swami Vivekananda explains it very beautifully:

Each action is like the pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left? The Samskaras, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions are left on the mind, they coalesce and become a habit. It is said, 'Habit is second nature', it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man; everything that we are is the result of habit. That gives us consolation, because, if it is only habit, we can make and unmake it at any time. The Samskaras are left by these vibrations passing out of our mind, each one of them leaving its result. Our character is the sum-total of these marks, and according as some particular wave prevails one takes that tone. If good prevails, one becomes good; if wickedness, one becomes wicked; if joyfulness, one becomes happy. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits; all the bad habits that have left their impressions are to be controlled by good habits. Go on doing good, thinking holy thoughts continuously; that is the only way to suppress base impressions. Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character.²

This theory of samskaras forms part of the theory of reincarnation. It explains many phenomena. Whence so much inequality in life? Why is one person born good and strong and clever and in favourable conditions, and another wicked and weak and feeble-minded and surrounded by all that is low and mean? Where is the God of justice while such conditions prevail in His universe? Yes, answers Vedanta, God is just. He gives each one what he deserves, what he is entitled to according to the deeds of his past life.

God regulates karma, dealing out to each one what he has earned. The good will be re-born good; the wicked will be wicked in their next life. This samskara theory also explains how in some cases even during their very

childhood talents appear. Some saints are holy from their infancy. Some musicians are born with the talent for music and so on. *Nothing* is lost in the universe. No effort is in vain. Results may not show at once, but they are kept to our credit.

Great deeds are born through ages. It is the accumulated efforts, the thousands of little attempts, that burst out into the heroic performance. Five hundred times, it is written, Buddha gave his life for others before he made the great renunciation. He who is great in this life has been great before and will be greater in the future. Every deed is a seed. One seed does not show in the field, but when thousands of seeds are planted we get the harvest.

One class of men comes to God when they are in distress. Then there is another class who come to God for Knowledge. They want to be taught the truth regarding God and the soul. They regard God as their Guru, their Master and their Teacher.

The third class wants material prosperity. They pray for the fulfilment of their desires here and hereafter. They want to enjoy life, and when they die, they want to enjoy heaven. And then there is the fourth class called the wise. This is the highest class of devotees, the jnanis. They know the Reality. They have forsaken all desires knowing them to arise from maya. They come to God not to obtain something, but out of pure love. They love God for His own sake—for what He *is*, not for what He can bestow. They do not beg for anything. They are naturally drawn to God. In Him they find true happiness. These devotees are very close to God, and they are very dear to Him.

God is the fulfiller of all desires. He gives us what we want. He is like the mythological Kalpataru. Those who cherish a wish go under the Kalpa tree. Then they pronounce the wish and the desire is fulfilled. As we approach God, so does He satisfy our wishes. It depends on us what we bring away from Him. The afflicted are relieved from their afflictions. The

seekers after wisdom learn the Truth. Those who desire happiness here and hereafter will meet with happy conditions (provided of course they know how to ask). And the wise man will realize his oneness with God. He will transcend maya.

It is possible for every worshipper to

17. Among them the wise man, ever steadfast in his devotion to the One, excels, for I am supremely dear to the wise, and he is dear to Me.

Of those four classes of devotees, the man of wisdom, the jnani, excels. He is ever steadfast and first with devotion for Me alone. Others may turn away when their desires are fulfilled, when their sorrows are allayed. They may forget Me and devote themselves to others, to friend, wife, children or to pleasures and the many attractions of the world; but the jnani, never. He perceives in the whole universe no other object worthy of devotion besides the supreme Spirit. He knows that everything changes; there is no stability, no trusting, no depending on anything or anybody in the world. In this universe of falsity God is the only truth. He is eternal, unchanging. On Him he can depend. God he can trust. The Lord is his greatest, his only treasure, very dear to him. And he is dear to the Lord, because his love is disinterested. He does not want anything. He has no motive, no hidden purpose. He knows God as his very Self, the nearest of the near, and therefore the dearest of the dear. And the Lord, in His great compassion, takes him unto Himself and grants him the realization of Oneness. Jesus said, 'I am in them and Thou in Me, that they may be

cross over this life of illusion; but owing to diversity of motives impelling the worship, the actual result is not the same. All these devotees are dear to the Lord, but the wise man stands first in His favour. Hear what Sri Krishna says regarding him:

made perfect in One. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be One, even as We are One.³ 'And I shall give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'

The jnani lives in God and God in him. They are eternally united. 'When the Beyond-the-darkness is attained, nor day nor night nor being nor non-being then. Blessed, aye, pure is He. That is the Absolute, That the adorable condition of the Lord; from That too has come forth the wisdom old.'⁴

In the *Vivekachudamani* we see the disciple approach the guru to be instructed in the path of highest wisdom. The great teacher was overjoyed. 'Happy art thou,' he told the disciple. 'Thou shalt attain thy end. Thy kin is blessed in thee, for thou seekest to become the Eternal by freeing thyself from the bond of ignorance.'⁵ God and His servants love the sincere seeker of Truth.

But if jnanis are so dear to the Lord, are then the other devotees not dear to Him? Yes, all are dear to Him. Sri Krishna says in the next verse:

18. Noble indeed are all these, but the wise man I regard as My very Self, for with his mind ever steadfast he is established in Me alone as the Supreme Goal.

All are noble. There is no devotee of Mine but is dear to Me. There is, however, this difference: the wise man is the *most* dear to Me. Why so? Because others still have some ignorance which stands between them and Me, and that prevents the perfect manifestation of My love to them. I love all alike in the sense that

My love flows out to all in the same measure. But their imperfection stands between them and my overflowing love. The barrier is in *them*. When you put a shield between yourself and the fire, its full heat cannot reach you. Remove the shield of ignorance and My full love will embrace you.

Yet it is better to worship the Deity for a selfish end than not to worship Him at all; for the selfish worshipper can at any time become a true worshipper by abandoning his selfish tendencies. In time they all can become jnanis. The wise man is My very Self, not different from Me. He has entered the fire of My divine Being and all that separates man from Me is burned up in his case. He has died in My love (as a great saint expressed it) and all self has passed away. Ever steadfast, the jnani is established in Me. He seeks Me alone. His love for Me is so great, so steady, that he forgets himself and is absorbed in Me. He identifies himself with Me. He knows no difference between us; neither do I. Therefore, our love being mutual, all distinction vanishes.

Chaitanya Deva, the greatest of all bhaktas and jnanis, forgot entirely that he was a human being. He identified himself so entirely with the Lord that when he entered a temple and the people were worshipping Lord Krishna, he seated himself on Krishna's throne and received the worship and offering intended for Krishna. And a light emanated from his body lighting up the temple, and the people were awestruck and accepted him as a divine Incarnation. This is the wonderful blessing of pure all-absorbing love: to lose one's personality, the consciousness of the little self, in the object of adoration. The devotee is transformed into the Deity, who is no other than his own divine Self.

Sri Ramakrishna forgot all about his former self when he became transformed into the Divine Mother. He used to point to his body and speak of it as 'this, in which the Mother dwells'. His old personality had disappeared. There remained only the shell or the pillow case (as he sometimes called it) in which the Mother resided. *That* is the supreme goal; that is *mukti* or freedom; that is *nirvana*. 'He who sees that One in this ocean of death, he who sees that one life in this fleeting universe, who realizes that One who never changes, unto him belongs eternal peace, unto none else.'⁶

This is an exalted state, which we cannot comprehend. But we can accept the testimony of the great bhaktas who have reached that state.

It is written of the boy Prahlada that he reached that state. Prahlada did not care for anything but love of God. He always prayed: 'O Lord, that intense love, which the ignorant bear for worldly things, may I have the same for Thee; may I have the same intensity of love for Thee, but only for love's sake.'⁷ Not for wealth, not for prosperity, not for health did Prahlada pray. All these were as nothing to him compared with the pure love for God, love for just love's sake.

That is a wonderful story, the story of Prahlada,⁸ who even in his childhood found the greatest pleasure in worshipping Vishnu, the omnipresent Lord of the universe. And that though he had to meet with the most cruel treatment from the hands of his enraged father, the wicked *daitya* king Hiranyakashipu, who had conquered the devas and who was the supreme ruler of heaven and other spheres. But through all the torture inflicted on the boy, his mind was so intent upon Vishnu that he felt no pain. The more cruelly he was treated, the more intense became the boy's prayer to his beloved Vishnu. 'Salutation to Thee, Lord of the universe, Thou beautiful Vishnu,' he would repeat again and again. 'Thus thinking and meditating on Vishnu, (says Swami Vivekananda) he began to feel that Vishnu was near him, nay, that He was in his own soul, until he began to feel that he was Vishnu, and that he was everything and everywhere.' Prahlada's father was so enraged because the boy insisted on worshipping Vishnu though the king had proclaimed himself the Lord of the universe and though he had issued orders throughout his domain that he and no other should be worshipped as the only God. The king had caused the boy to be bound with enormous snakes and thus securely tied, to be thrown into the ocean, and his body to be covered by huge mountains, so that he would surely perish. But when Prah-

lada realized his unity with Vishnu, 'all the snake-bonds snapped asunder, the mountains were pulverized, the ocean heaved up and he was gently lifted up above the waves, and safely carried to the shore. Then, as he stood there Prahlada forgot that he had a mortal body; he felt he was the universe and all the powers of the universe emanated from him. There was nothing in nature that could injure him; he himself was the ruler of nature.

Time passed thus in one unbroken ecstasy of bliss, until gradually Prahlada began to remember that he had a body and that he was Prahlada. As soon as he became once more conscious of the body, he said that God was within and without, and everything appeared to him as Vishnu.

I have quoted this story because in the first place it illustrates what we discussed in a previous lesson: bhakti and jnana in the higher stages come closer and closer together until at last they are no longer different. The two paths merge into one. And it further illustrates in the verse under discussion how the Lord regards the man of wisdom as His very Self, and removing all distinction, grants him unlimited power and vision and total identification with Himself.

But such love is very rare. Most devotees are of a much lower order. They are not satisfied with the Lord alone. They want many other things besides Him. They do not thirst for God yet to *the exclusion of all else*. But all will have to enter the Ocean of Nectar sooner or later if they want to become immortal. There are many ways of entering that ocean of bliss, and it matters not how one enters, be it through distress, through curiosity or through love. Whether we enter willingly or whether we are pushed, as long as we enter at all, our sins will be washed off and we will be made perfect children of God.

We are now trying to enter that ocean. But we are still afraid. We put out one foot and then we draw back again. That is not the right way. But it is so hard to make the plunge. And

the more we hesitate, the more difficult it becomes. We love the body too much. Shankaracharya says, 'He who wants to gratify the body and still see Atman, is like the man who takes hold of a crocodile to cross the river, thinking it to be a log (and is destroyed).'⁹ Non-attachment is the way to peace and blessedness. If you throw your anchor into the water, you may pull your boat, but it will not move, and you merely waste your energy. So if you anchor yourself by attachment to the body and external things, no matter how hard you try, you cannot advance spiritually. Yet association with worldly life may help us by showing us more clearly the value of the spiritual. Everything depends on our attitude and motives; and when they are right and unselfish, we are perfectly safe.

The highest realization, the realization of identity with God, is the result of spiritual endeavour carried and increased through many lives. Spiritual progress is gradual, a long and steady process, but it can be hastened by intensity of purpose. All power, all knowledge, is already deposited with us. It is only a question of bringing it out. As the water of an irrigation canal is already stored up awaiting the removal of the sluice to spread over the field, so omniscience and omnipotence is ready to flow into our consciousness the moment the barrier of ignorance is lifted. The usual process is slow, but the yogi knows how to hasten it. It is a question of practice. 'An increase of speed, an increase of struggle, is able to bridge the gulf of time.' That which naturally takes a long time to accomplish can be shortened by intensity of action. ...¹⁰ With sufficient effort, says Swamiji, perfection can be attained in this very life.¹¹

But usually when the devotee has set out on the spiritual path, knowing God is the only end and purpose of his life. He gathers experience and knowledge through different incarnations, until the accumulated stored-up experience bursts forth in one great illumination in the highest samadhi. Then, comes the

universal Vision. God is seen *in* and *through* | and *as* all. Sri Krishna says in the next verse:

19. At the end of numerous births the man of wisdom takes refuge with Me, realizing that all this is Vasudeva (the universal Spirit). Such a great soul is very seldom to be found.

To reach that highest knowledge, the supreme realization that God is the soul of all beings, requires many lives of preparation. It is the crown of success, that comes only to the jnani of mature wisdom. He could not possibly escape Him. Where could he go where God is not? He is omnipresent in the external universe. He is also internal, the soul, the substance, of things. Such a jnani is very difficult to find. His spiritual eye is opened. He is de-hypnotized. He is the true mahatma, the great soul. None is equal or superior to him. Therefore such souls are very rare. 'Among thousands who strive for perfection scarcely one knows Me in Truth,' said Sri Krishna.¹² He is free; that realization has made him free. For him there is no more birth, no more delusion, no more ignorance. The Truth has made him free.

This is the fulfilment of Sri Krishna's promise made in the beginning of this chapter. 'I will declare to thee this knowledge with realization, which being known naught else remains to be known.'¹³ This chapter deals with Vijnana Yoga. A vijnani is one who possesses an intimate knowledge of God. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'A vijnani is he who has realized God in samadhi, both as Personal and Impersonal. He has talked to God. He has ministered unto Him, as his Father, or Mother, Wife or Brother. According to the testimony of

these perfect men, the world is the manifestation of the Personal God. From Him the human soul and all created things have been evolved. The Lord reveals Himself unto the Rishis from time to time for the salvation of mankind, as well as for the joy of His devotees.' Sri Krishna has said that such men are very few. In the following verses He tells us why others do not see God as the soul of all.

(to be continued)

References

1. *Chandogya Upanishad*, 7.24.1.
2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.207-8.
3. *John*, 17.23.
4. *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 4.18.
5. *Vivekachudamani*, 50.
6. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.2.13. Free translation by Swami Vivekananda, CW, 3.24.
7. *Yā prītravivekānām viṣayeṣvanapayini; Tvām-anusmarataḥ sā me hṛdayān-mā'pasarpatu.*
—*Vishnu Purana*, 1.20.17.
8. Adapted from CW, 4.115-9.
9. *Vivekachudamani*, 84.
10. CW, 1.156.
11. *ibid.*, 1.157.
12. *Bhagavadgita*, 7.3.
13. *ibid.*, 7.2.

A Correction

In the second part of Swami Smaranananda's 'In South America: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay' (June 2003), two photographs got wrongly placed: the one on page 305 should have appeared on page 307 with the caption 'A view of Sao Bento Sapukai' and the other on page 307, on page 305 with the caption 'On the way to Tigre River'. The error is regretted.

—Editor

◀ Glimpses of Holy Lives ▶

If God be for us ...

Jijabai was cross with her husband Tukaram. Bhakti seemed to be his only occupation. He never stuck to any job but spent his time in singing songs in praise of Lord Panduranga. Their family continued to be poor as ever. While others admired his devotional songs, Jijabai was concerned not knowing where their next meal would come from. She chided Tukaram: 'Our children are hungry. Your Vitthala is the cause of all our hardship. It beats me how instead of blaming Him, you are singing His praises?'

Tukaram was born in Dehu (Maharashtra) in a Varkari family, devoted to Lord Panduranga for generations. But his ancestors had not neglected their family and ran a grocery business. Tukaram's mind did not settle on anything other than singing praises of the Lord. But that did not prove 'resourceful' in any way. Jijabai was sick of admonishing her husband for his callousness. A friendly grain merchant happened to just visit them. He told Jijabai, 'Don't be angry with your husband. I have a proposal: He need not move about doing work. Let him sit on a mound in my paddy field and keep singing, now and then just shooing away birds with a stick. I shall give your family enough paddy in return.' Jijabai considered the proposal a godsend and urged Tukaram to accept it. 'Panduranga, may Your will be done,' exclaimed Tukaram and set about his new job.

The vast paddy field was almost ready for harvest. Its ripe grains, the vast blue sky for background and a flight of parrots flying towards the field—nothing more was needed to kindle the divine in Tukaram. Crows, sparrows and other birds followed suit and had a feast of the grains. Deeply engrossed in singing, Tukaram was all joy watching the birds

happily feast. He forgot that he was there precisely to prevent that. The field too appeared to him to be the Lord's playfield and the birds, His creation enjoying a feast. Not satisfied with what he saw, Tukaram took some grains from a nearby heap and strew them around as a bonus for the birds. Sated with a rich repast, the birds approached Tukaram and surrounded him. They even started repeating the songs after him.

In the meanwhile the merchant's farmhands arrived for work. Tukaram's devotional songs and the flock of birds impressed them too, but not for long. When they saw a major portion of the field already 'harvested', they reported the matter to the merchant.

Incensed at this, the merchant rushed to his field. The birds flew away immediately. 'What, my dear sir,' he told Tukaram. 'I wanted to feed your family, but you have instead ruined my prospects.' Never liking Tukaram, a farmhand suggested to the merchant that Tukaram be tied to a post and thrashed. The merchant had the good sense not to do that, but Tukaram stood before him a culprit. Tukaram said, 'Let the harvest take place. If there is a shortfall in the usual produce, I shall make good of it.' However, he did not have a solution, but depended on Lord Panduranga to bail him out.

Learning of the event, Jijabai arrived at the scene. Her disappointment gave way to a spontaneous outburst at her husband: 'All these days your bhakti stood in the way of our family's survival. Today it has crossed all its limits. Don't you know that devotion to one's duty is real devotion? Your bhakti has proved such a great loss to the merchant. Will you at least now give up your Vitthala? Will you not take that ungrateful wretch to task?'

Tukaram smiled and said, 'He who grew the produce in this field came again as birds and ate them. It is He who inspires you to extol the virtues of karma in preference to bhakti. He is again my transgression and the punishment that is to be meted out to me. Owning Him, disowning Him or taking Him to task? All that is moonshine.'

The farmhands were busy harvesting the produce, the merchant supervising them. 'We shall get mere straw this time,' they remarked as they went about threshing. But surprise was in store for them: Heaps and heaps of paddy were piling up, greatly exceeding the previous year's yield.

The merchant asked Tukaram in amazement: 'How did this become possible?' Tukaram replied, 'If my Krishna dipped His hand in the Yamuna and sprinkled the water, thou-

sands of stars would come into being—what to speak of these paddy grains?' The merchant: 'But you have such a Krishna under your beck and call. What sadhana did you perform to accomplish this?' Tukaram: 'I just sing His names. I never curse anyone—either Him, others or myself. I don't know of anything else.' Jijabai stood with her head bowed down, as if to salute the Lord, whom she had blamed all along for their family's plight.

The merchant not only gave Tukaram the promised quantity of paddy, but also the entire excess produce. Jijabai cooked and cooked and fed the poor in the place. Tukaram's family soon returned to a hand-to-mouth life. But Jijabai did not blame the Lord anymore. Her being too was now filled with the Lord. *

Anything for the Guru

The disciples were very worried about the abscess on their master's calf. In fact, until now they were conspicuously, rather self-consciously, trying to outdo each other in serving their guru. Now Samarth Ramdas said conclusively: 'This is no ordinary abscess. If you want to save me from all this suffering, I am reluctant to say, one of you has to suck the pus out—at the risk of catching the infection himself.' What they heard made the disciples look at each other hesitantly. Except one.

Kalyan knelt down beside his master and started to undo the bandage. But the knot had become too tight because of the swelling. 'No, no!' screamed Ramdasji, withdrawing his leg

as excruciating pain coursed through his veins. 'Roll the edge over gently and then try to draw the pus out.'

Kalyan did as he was told. Then, lowering his head, he put his mouth to the abscess and bit a small hole in it. As he began sucking at the wound, he found, to his great disbelief, that the fluid was *delicious!* 'Stop, stop!' Ramdasji cried out. 'Slow, for God's sake, slow!' Even before he could finish the sentence, Kalyan had sucked the pus out and swallowed it all in one breath. A wave of relief swept over Ramdasji as he lay back on his bed ...

... and out dropped the pulpless mango from the loose bandage! *

A Clarification

We captioned the last instalment of 'Half a Decade in the Enchanting Environs of Along' by Swami Kirtidananda as 'The Curtain Comes Down' (June 2003). The author clarifies that the caption should have remained as 'Curtain-raiser (*continued*)'. He used it in the dictionary sense of 'a short performance that is put on before a more important one'. The change of title could give the impression that everything was over with this preliminary work; people might not know that bigger things have come up thereafter. —Editor

The Appeal of the Upanishads Today

SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

Inner versus Outer: The 'Atman = Brahman' Equation

The Upanishadic rishis asked another question. By turning the senses inward, by going deep into the Core of one's own personality, one realizes that Atman within, in the *chidakasha*, the supreme Space within one's heart. What relation does this individual Consciousness Principle, Atman, bear to the cosmic Consciousness Principle, Brahman, which is, as it were, without? Sri Ramakrishna asked the question in his own simple, inimitable style: 'Can you see God only when you close your eyes? Can you not see Him with open eyes as well?' There comes a point of time in the life of a sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) when he longs to know how he is related to the universe; how his individual Self (the Atman) is related to the universal Self (the Brahman). This question takes him much farther—beyond his individual search within—until he realizes his cosmic Identity. From the analysis of the Atman as manifesting in the five layers—*annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*—the question may be reframed as follows: How is the individual (microcosmic) *annamaya* related to the Universal (Macrocosmic) *annamaya*, the individual *prāṇamaya* to the Universal *prāṇamaya*, the individual *manomaya* to the Universal *manomaya*, and the individual *vijñānamaya* to the Universal *vijñānamaya*? [*Ānandamaya* is always Universal (Macrocosmic) and does not have a microcosmic counterpart]. Actually, there is no outside or inside in Consciousness, but as long as we feel that we are conditioned by the *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya* and so on, we need to ask how this individual *annamaya*, in-

dividual *prāṇamaya*, individual *manomaya* and the rest are related to their Cosmic counterparts. When we realize ourselves as Conscious entities, conditioned though by the individual layers like *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya*, in great wonder we ask how this Consciousness is related to the cosmic Consciousness. My individual eye, which sees; my individual ear, which hears; my individual mind, which thinks—all these are impelled by a consciousness Principle, which moves and animates me, the individual. In great wonder, the rishi of the *Kena Upanishad* exclaims: 'What is that Power impelled by which the mind is able to perceive; which is that Power that animates the prana, the life-force; what is that Force which impels speech; and who is that Shining One (*deva*) who activates the eyes and the ears to do their respective functions?'¹

In asking these questions, the rishi is trying to investigate into the source of that Power, that Energy, that supreme Consciousness, which activates, animates and impels his own individual consciousness, and to realize the relationship between the two. At the end of the investigation, the rishi would realize that there is only one indivisible Consciousness, unbroken Awareness, which cannot be divided or broken up into the individual and the cosmic. But he begins his investigation with what he actually sees and knows and feels: his individual consciousness. This investigation, this process of enquiry, is of great current appeal, for today you cannot talk of the micro except in terms of the macro. There are two fundamental manifestations in nature: one is the

microcosm and the other is the macrocosm. Swami Vivekananda speaks about these two manifestations in his famous lectures 'The Universe: the Microcosm' and 'The Universe: the Macrocosm'. Thus for every level of consciousness like *annamaya* and *prāṇamaya* there should be two corresponding manifestations, the micro and the macro. Strictly speaking, it would be incorrect to say that these two are related; rather, they are one and same, manifesting as two. The Advaitic (non-dualistic) school will say that the two are absolutely identical and non-dual; the Vishishtadvaitic (qualified non-dualistic) school will assert that the micro is a part of the macro; and the Dvaitic (dualistic) school will claim that the micro is different from the macro, but eternal and absolutely dependent on and subordinate to it. These are philosophical wranglings into which we need not enter for the present. That the microcosm and the macrocosm are two manifestations of one and the same Reality and therefore are built on the same plan, was revealed to Swami Vivekananda in a famous vision he had while meditating under a peepul tree in Almora. He later told Swami Akhandananda, his dear brother disciple, 'Gangadhar, today I have solved one of my greatest problems in life; I have realized the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm.' He recorded thus the substance of his vision in a notebook:

In the beginning was the Word etc.

The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the universal Soul in the Living Prakriti [Nature]—the objective universe. Shiva [i.e. Kali] is embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy. This covering of the one [Soul] by the other [Nature] is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same; and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, in the beginning was the Word etc.

This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is

eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless.²

Swami Vivekananda also spoke of having seen the 'whole universe in an atom'. It is interesting to note that Rutherford had a similar perception when he invented the now-famous Rutherford Atomic Model. In this model the electrons were thought of as revolving round the nucleus just like the planets round the sun. It was this vision of microcosm-macrocosm unity that prompted Rutherford to assert that the atom is built on the same plan as the universe. Much later, when Einstein was struggling with his General Theory of Relativity, he drew inspiration from a famous principle called Mach's Principle, according to which there is an unbroken continuum of matter. This gave rise to the idea that matter at the microcosmic level and matter at the macrocosmic level are just different manifestations of one 'ocean' of matter, as it were, and related to each other as a bubble or a wavelet to a huge wave. By the laws of unity of nature and uniformity of nature, this idea could be extrapolated and applied to the realm of the Spirit, and Advaita (non-duality) could be established. In one of his great Advaitic moods, Swami Vivekananda exclaimed: 'Never forget the glory of human nature. We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Buddhas and Christs are but waves of the boundless ocean which *I am*.'³ The 'I' he was speaking about was, of course, the 'Cosmic I', the 'Universal I', the '*virāṭ aham*'. He was speaking from the standpoint of the realization of his cosmic Identity. In such moods, he would also say that the ant and the worm, apparently small and insignificant in their manifestations, are non-different from Nazarene, the Prophet of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ, a Divine Manifestation of cosmic dimension.

The macrocosmic counterpart of the individual Atman Consciousness (microcosm) is called Brahman. Since the microcosm and the macrocosm are one and the same, it follows

that Atman = Brahman, the famous Vedantic equation. Advaita will say that Atman = Brahman, that is, Atman is identically equal to Brahman, while Vishishtadvaita or Dvaita will say that it is not identically equal to, but slightly equal to and so on. These are but philosophical wranglings; but the truth of the equation is clear: microcosm = macrocosm. At that level of intuitive awareness, one cannot even assert 'I am Brahman', 'I' meaning the microcosm and 'Brahman' the macrocosm; for 'I' is but a tiny bubble in the infinite ocean of Brahman, as it were. The famous *mahāvākyas* of Vedanta, the Great Statements of Identity, namely, *Tattovamasi* (That thou Art)⁴ and *Aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman),⁵ also fall far below in comparison with this actual awareness of Identity. There is no 'Thou' or 'I' to say 'That thou art' or 'I am Brahman'; there is only one infinite, unbroken continuum of Consciousness in which the concepts of 'Thou' or 'I' become irrelevant and meaningless. In his own inimitable and homely fashion, Sri Ramakrishna gave a beautiful illustration: A salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean; now, who would be there to come back and give any information about the ocean? Similarly, when the 'I', the individual consciousness, seeks to fathom the fathomless infinity of the ocean of cosmic Consciousness, it simply melts away and becomes one with the Ocean: '*Brahmaveda brahmaiva bhavati*, A knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman,' as the *Mundaka Upanishad* would say.⁶ This means there is no question of knowing Brahman as an object; you can only know It by actually becoming It.

Globalization concept related to microcosm-macrocosm oneness: Upanishadic method of Absolute Negation—'Neti neti'—leads to Absolute Affirmation

This realization of the Upanishadic rishis of the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm at all levels—namely, *annamaya*, *prā-*

ṇamaya, *manomaya* and *vijñānamaya*—culminated in the 'Atman = Brahman' equation. The appeal of the Upanishads today is here: in today's world nobody can talk of the microcosm except as a part of, or as subsumed by, or as identical with, the macrocosm. The buzzword today is 'globalization', whose essence is the unity of everything: seeking and finding the uni-verse in this apparent multi-verse. The appeal of the Upanishads today is that they contain the only philosophy by which the whole universe can be united, globalized. In fact, Vedanta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, says that one cannot even talk of globalization, for it would mean that we are trying make global something which was not global already. In 'globalize', we have the suffix 'ize', the *abhūta-tadbhāva*, '*chovi*' *pratyaya* of Sanskrit grammar, which means that something was not global earlier, and we are now making it so. No; Vedanta says that the universe has been global and will be global all the time—only our ignorance, *ajñāna* or *avidyā*, makes it appear non-global. The so-called globalization means the removal of *ajñāna* or ignorance so that the immediate realization of globalization that already was, gets revealed to consciousness.

Now, globalization can take place at all levels of consciousness: globalization at the physical level, *annamaya*, is being attempted by the physical sciences; globalization at the life-force level, *prāṇamaya*, is being attempted by the life sciences, biotechnology and the like; globalization at the mental level, *manomaya*, is in the realm of psychology; globalization at the intelligence level, *vijñānamaya*, is being attempted by information technology, communications engineering and artificial intelligence people. The bliss level, *ānandamaya*, the Upanishads say, is always global: there is no individual, microcosmic *ānandamaya-ātman*. Thus, the Upanishadic philosophy alone is capable of uniting the world—again, you do not unite the world: you only perceive the Unity that exists already and always; and in this state

of perception, all differences cease. The moment one sees differences, says the Upanishad, one goes round and round the cycle of birth and death.⁷ There is no manifoldness, there is no difference, *nānā*, anywhere, and this perception of the many, *nānātva*, is due to ignorance, *ajñāna*. In reality, there is only one. When we say there is only one, it is not that there is one as against two, three or four, but it is that there is just only one, without any possibility or conception of two, three or four. The Vedantic terminology, therefore, is One-without-a-second, *ekameva-advitīyam*. This is the only language in which we can express it. The moment we talk of two, three or four, that is manifoldness, we are in the realm of objects, things which we perceive by our senses—our consciousness, *prajñā*, is then outward-focused: *bahih prajñā*. On the other hand, if we talk of one inner reality, as against and as juxtaposed with two, three or four (the manifoldness), then our consciousness would be inward-focused: *antaḥ prajñā*. A third possibility would be that our consciousness has no focus at all; it simply remains as an unfocused, amorphous mass, as in the case of deep, dreamless sleep. In that case, our state of consciousness is *prajñāna-ghana*. The Upanishads reject all these possibilities, deny all these states of consciousness and assert that the ultimate Reality

is none of these, because all these states are relative, while the Reality is Absolute. The famous statement in the *Mandukya Upanishad* asserts: The absolute Consciousness, the Atman, is not outward-focused (as in the waking state), nor is it inward-focused (as in dream), nor is it a combination of both of these, nor is it an unfocused, amorphous mass of consciousness (as in deep, dreamless sleep). The Absolute Consciousness, is unseen, untransactable, ungraspable, unrecognizable through any signs, unthinkable, unbroken, homogeneous, the death of all relativity, tranquil, supremely auspicious, non-dual, called *turiya-caitanya*.

In this language of *neti, neti*—not this, not this—you negate all that you see and perceive. Go on and on till you reach the end of all negation. At the end of this absolute negation is the affirmation, because affirmation is only a language to which you come when you negate everything. Absolute Negation and absolute Affirmation are one and the same thing. Buddha absolutely negated everything and asserted that the Reality is *śūnya*, meaning absolute Negation, while the Upanishads assert that the Reality is *pūrṇa*, meaning absolute Affirmation. We do not negate absolutely and therefore we see negation and affirmation as two different things.

The three bodies (*śarīra-traya*) and the three states (*avasthā-traya*) related to the five layers of the Atman: Upanishadic philosophy is derived naturally from our daily life and experience by the Principle of Projection—hence its eternal appeal

In the Upanishadic paradigm, the five layers of the Atman—*annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya*—are further reduced to three bodies (*śarīra-traya*): the *annamaya* is the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*); *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya* and *vijñānamaya* together constitute the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*); *ānandamaya* constitutes the causal body

(*kāraṇa-śarīra*). Each of these three bodies has a microcosmic aspect and a corresponding macrocosmic aspect: *vyāṣṭi* and *samaṣṭi* respectively. In their micro-aspects these three bodies operate through our individual consciousness every day: consciousness steering the microcosmic gross body, called in Vedanta *vaiśvānara* or *viśva*, is operative in the waking

state of consciousness; consciousness piloting the microcosmic subtle body, called in Vedānta *taijasa*, is operative in the dream state of consciousness; and consciousness associated with the microcosmic causal body, called in Vedānta *prāñña*, is operative in the deep, dreamless state of consciousness. The macrocosmic counterparts of these three are, respectively, *virāt*, *hiranyaḡarbha* and *īśvara*.

Thus, when we talk about our body, Vedānta would ask: Which body do you mean? Is it the gross body, the subtle body or the causal body? When we dream, see buildings and people and all kinds of things in it, what is the light by which we see them? There is an inner light, *antarjyoti*, by which we are able to see objects and persons in dreams. That light cannot be of any external origin, because there is no externalized consciousness in dream, consciousness being inward-focused in that state: *antaḡ-prāñña*. The gross body, the *sthūla śarīra*, is not operating in that state; all the activities are of the subtle body, or *sūkṣma śarīra*. Our consciousness throws this light up, throws up all the objects and persons and sees all these things in that strange inner light. When you go still farther and deeper, when you lapse into deep, dreamless sleep, you do not see anything, perceive anything. From this state of deep sleep (*suṣṡpti*), you spring back to the dream state (*svapna*) and from there to the waking state (*jāgrat*). These are our daily experiences, and not some imaginary, philosophical speculations.

This is one tremendous appeal of the Upanishads today: Vedānta as a philosophy is not cut off from our day-to-day, actual experiences. Rather, it is these very experiences that form the basis of this philosophy. Vedānta is not speculative or other-worldly, but rooted in this very world of the daily experiences of you and me. This philosophy is therefore of immense appeal and value to men, women and children in all walks of life, in all places, in all situations all over the world. Vedānta has thus a universal appeal, for it deals with our daily

life and experiences. Everybody in the world, wherever, whoever or whatever he may be, passes through these three states of waking, dream and dreamless (deep) sleep. Only, we do not care to investigate into them or ask deeper questions about their fundamental root or source. In India philosophy is called *darśana*, which means seeing, perceiving. Every Indian is, therefore, a philosopher, if he tries to see through his daily experiences, analyse them, investigate into them and find out the deeper source from which they spring and on which they rest. According to Vedānta, therefore, philosophizing does not mean polemics, speculating or theorizing. It is actually seeing Reality, having a vision of Truth. You look at your daily life, ask profound questions about your daily experiences, investigate deeply into them and on the basis of this inquiry, this search as a rational scientist, form your world view, your Weltanschauung. This is of great appeal today, when dogmas and theories and speculations are being subjected to the test of reason and investigation; the baseless ones among them were 'crumbling away like masses of porcelain under the tremendous sledge-hammer blows of scientific research' in the words of Swami Vivekananda.⁸ He therefore exhorted us to go back to the Upanishads, which propound the wonderful, scientific, rational philosophical system of Vedānta, discovered by investigation into our own daily life and experiences.

I know that I eat and drink and talk and move about while I am awake (*jāgrat avasthā*); I know that I see various kinds of objects and persons which I project out of my own consciousness while I am dreaming (*svapna avasthā*); I know that I lapse into a blank—no objects, no persons, no motion, no seeing and so on—while I am deeply asleep (*suṣṡpti avasthā*). These three *avasthās* are not speculative, but part and parcel of my daily experience. By investigating into these *avasthās*, I can easily see how they are self-contradictory: the waking state experience is contradicted by dream

state experience and both are contradicted by deep sleep experience. So I reject all of them as unreal, being mutually contradictory; I realize that the contradictions arise because I identify myself with these states and participate in these experiences. Therefore I see that if I dissociate myself from these states and the experiences, then the contradictions would cease to exist and would have no relevance for me. With this understanding comes the direct and immediate (*sākṣāt, aparokṣāt*) realization (*anubhūti*) that I am in reality the non-participating Witness of these three states (*avasthā-traya-sākṣin*) and my real Self (Atman) is absolutely dissociated from the three bodies and the five layers of consciousness, with which I was ignorantly associating myself (*sarira-traya-vilakṣaṇa, pañca-kośa-vilakṣaṇa*).

My real Self is eternally Pure, of the nature of absolute Awareness and ever free (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta*); I am, in reality, Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute (*sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*). I permit all the three states to play on Myself, just like the cinema screen permits all the various scenes to have their full play on it, itself remaining absolutely unaffected by the changes taking place over it. When there is a scene of flood on the screen, the screen does not get wet; not does the screen get burnt out when there is a raging fire playing on it. When all these plays cease, the screen remains in its own true nature: the pure white. Likewise, when the Self is no longer caught in the play of the *avasthās* anymore, then it remains established in Its own true glory: *sve mahimni pratiṣṭāh*.

The Upanishadic investigation into the profound truths about our own selves, into the nature of Reality, is made with the help of very common examples from daily life. Philosophy thus grows out of everyday perception and experience. It is therefore meant for everybody who is anywhere, and in whatever state or station in life. This is the special appeal of the Upanishads today.

An Example from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*

The following interesting anecdote, the simple investigation into reality, by asking simple questions about our daily life and experience, is a case in point. It is from one of the greatest of the Upanishads, the *Brihadaranyaka*. Yajnavalkya, the great sage of this Upanishad and its hero, goes to King Janaka, with the desire of discussing Brahman. Janaka asks him some simple questions. Yajnavalkya's replies to them constitute the theme of this section in the Upanishad called 'Jyotirbrāhmaṇa':

Janaka: What is the light by which we see, move around and perform our daily activities?

Yajnavalkya: By the light of the sun, O king.

Janaka: When the sun has set, what is the light by which we see, move around and perform our daily activities?

Yajnavalkya: By the light of the moon, O king.

Janaka: When the sun has set and the moon has also set, what is the light by which we see, move around and perform our daily activities?

Yajnavalkya: By the light of fire, O king.

Janaka: When the sun has set, the moon has also set, and the fire is extinguished, what is the light by which we see, move around and perform our daily activities?

Yajnavalkya: By the 'light' of speech, O king. For, when it is pitch dark, so dark that we cannot even see our own hand, it is speech by which we identify people, move around and do our daily activities.

Janaka: When the sun has set, the moon has also set, the fire has been extinguished and speech has been hushed, what is the light by which we see, move around and perform our daily activities?

Yajnavalkya: By the light of the Self (Atman).

Janaka: What is this Self?

Yajnavalkya: This is of the nature of Consciousness, the inner Light, which lights up the hearts of all living beings; it is as if It meditates, It vibrates and so on.

(But in actuality, It is the non-participating Witness of all activities of body, mind and senses). From here on, the Upanishad analyses

the states of dream and waking states, pointing out that it is this inner Light by which we see dreams and so on.

An understanding into the cosmic mysteries like creation and the origin of the universe is sought through an understanding of the microcosm, by the principle of projection. This is the modern appeal of the Upanishads. We project from the microcosm, which we know, onto the macrocosm and try to understand the mysteries of the macrocosm. This is exactly the process by which science has progressed all along. How did Rutherford discover his atomic model? We have already seen how, having discovered the central positive core in the atom called the nucleus, Rutherford was unable to understand the arrangement of electrons in an atom. He then projected the macrocosmic scheme of the planets going round the sun into his micro-world of the atom and suggested that the electrons are moving round the nucleus like planets round the sun. In fact, he called his peripheral electrons moving round the nucleus as 'planetary electrons'.

When I dream, I create my own dream objects, which are nothing but my own consciousness; this shows that my individual consciousness has the capacity to divide itself into

the subject and the object. Make a projection from here to the macrocosm. The macrocosmic Consciousness, in a state similar to my micro-dream—may we call it the macro-dream!—creates Its own dream objects, which are we, the created beings! You, I, all the beings, plants, animals and objects—in fact, everything we see in this created universe—may be conceived of as dream objects of the universal Consciousness, the supreme Purusha, who is in a state of macro-dream. Since this Purusha is Universal, we call Him Purushottama; the Puranas would call Him Mahavishnu, who is imagined to be always in a dreaming posture, *anantaśayana*, His dream resulting in creation. Just as the dream objects of my micro-dream do not know me as the dreamer, we, the dream objects of the macro-dream of the Supreme Purusha, do not know Him as the Dreamer! Thus is explained our ignorance of the Creator God, as long as we are identified with the creation, taking it to be real! The dream of the Purusha is called *yoga-nidrā*, because He is not helpless in His dream as we are in our micro-dream. His dream is supreme Yoga, and He shows us the power and glory of his Yoga through his creation: *Paśya me yogam aīsvaram*.⁹

The most profound appeal of the Upanishads is that they deal with a subject that is of universal and timeless interest to everybody everywhere: 'I'

Lastly, the profound appeal of the Upanishads today is because it deals with a subject that is of universal interest and appeal. The subject matter of the Upanishads is *ātma-vidyā*, which is knowledge of the 'I', myself. The Upanishads investigate into the real nature of the 'I' consciousness, which each one of us possesses. Since this subject is universal, time- and space-independent, all peoples all over the globe, irrespective of nationality, creed, religion, gender, time and space, can draw inspiration from the Upanishads.

Therefore, it is only the Upanishads, the Vedānta philosophy based on the Upanishadic wisdom, that can bring about a real 'global village', a theme of great contemporary relevance and importance.

The eligibility of the student, *adhikārin*, is an important question discussed in the study of Vedānta. Who is eligible to study the Upanishads? Leaving aside the classical concept in this connection, we may put it very simply in today's context: to study any subject, the first criterion of eligibility is the aptitude of the stu-

dent; that is, how the subject matter of the study interests the student—is it relevant for him? Since the Upanishads deal with the subject ‘I’, that is, ‘myself’, it cannot but interest everybody. Anyone who feels the ‘I’ consciousness is therefore an eligible student for the study of the Upanishad. Once upon a time, Upanishadic knowledge was considered esoteric knowledge (*rahasya-vidyā*), not meant for anybody and everybody. This sense of secrecy gave rise to an unhealthy tradition of monopoly of knowledge, clannish authority and privilege. This was one reason why it remained confined to caves and forests, mystified intentionally by its self-styled custodians, making it inaccessible to the common man. Swami Vivekananda, the prophet of this age, came to break down barriers and stretch the frontiers of knowledge to infinity. He exhorted everybody to ‘go back to the Upanishads’ and quench their thirst in its immortal springs. Exclusiveness and privilege will go when we realize that the subject matter of the Upanishads, which is the ‘I’ and its real nature, is within everybody’s claim. Anyone with the ‘I’ sense is, therefore, eligible to be enlightened by the Upanishadic wisdom, which is the *ātma-vidyā*.

There was a study made in USA on which single English word people most often use. The study revealed that the word used most often was ‘I’, the first person singular pronoun. Everywhere, everybody says, ‘I’, ‘I’, ‘I’. But nobody actually knows what this ‘I’ is, what its real nature is. It is this subject, the real nature of the ‘I’, that the Upanishads deal with. In fact, the Upanishads say that *aham* (‘I’) is the name of the Atman. When somebody knocks at your door, and you ask from inside ‘Hey, who’s that?’ the answer you would invariably get is ‘It’s me’. The caller will not announce himself by telling his name; he has so identified himself with his ‘I’ consciousness, that the name he would use to identify himself is ‘I’, *aham*, which is the name of the Atman. Just as Om is the name of Brahman, the

macrocosmic counterpart of Atman, *aham* is the name of Atman. We do not, however, care to enquire: What is this ‘I’? Who am ‘I’? This was the path that was highlighted and propagated in recent times by Sri Ramana Maharshi, the sage of Arunachala. Interestingly, the compilation of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, who is conventionally taken to be overwhelmingly given to *bhakti*, by his beloved chosen disciple and spiritual son, Swami Brahmananda, opens by asking this profound question ‘What is this “I”?’ ‘Is it my hand or foot or any other part of my body? Reflect well and you will know that there is no such thing as “I”’. The more you peel off the skin of an onion, the more skin only appears—you cannot get any kernel; so when you analyse the ego, it vanishes away into nothingness. What is ultimately left behind is the Atman (soul).¹⁰ This being the most interesting subject for anybody, the Upanishads invite everyone to perform this profound investigation in the depths of his being. Who will not be interested in studying himself? All that I now study—science and technology, arts and crafts and the like—is being studied by me, for myself. It is me in whom I am most interested. It is you in whom you are most interested. It is oneself (Vedanta would say, one’s Self), in which one would be most interested. The sage Jaynavalkya tells his wife Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is beloved (of the wife); but because of the Self that the husband is beloved. It is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is beloved (of the husband), but because of the Self that the wife is beloved. ... It is not for the sake of everything that everything appears beloved, but for the sake of the Self that everything appears beloved. This Self should be seen (realized)—should be heard of, should be reflected upon, should be deeply meditated upon. For, on realization of this Self—on hearing of It, reflecting upon It and deeply meditating upon It—everything else becomes known.¹¹

If you use the small ‘s’ it is the ego, and if

you use the capital 'S', it is the Self, or the Atman. When we investigate into the truth of the self, we realize that there is only one Self, the Atman, and the ego is only an unreal myth, a shadow of the Self. Thus, there are not two selves. There is no small 's' and capital 'S'.

The question asked by the great householder, Shaunaka, to the sage Angiras, in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, 'Sir, what is that by knowing which everything else becomes known?', is answered here, as in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, by saying that it is the knowledge of the Self, *ātma-vidyā* (which is the same as *brahma-vidyā*) that would confer on the realizer a knowledge of everything else. The Theory of Everything (ToE), which physicists all over the world are seeking today, is here: Self-knowledge, *ātma-vidyā*. The appeal of the Upanishads is therefore eternal, for they deal with Self-knowledge, which is the key to the knowledge of All. When we realize the true 'I', the real 'I', as the Infinite and the Absolute, shining always as the Light of pure Awareness, vibrating as Life and Consciousness, saturating and percolating all living and non-living beings everywhere—it is only then that our lives become meaningful; there comes to us everlasting fulfilment and blessedness. Without this realization, our lives have no meaning or purpose—'great is the loss', in the language of the *Kena Upanishad*.¹² The Upanishads invite us to this Kingdom of God that is within every one of us. This is the appeal of the Upanishads today, when human beings are caught up in a mad rush to acquire more and more and more, with their minds outward-focused, consumed in an insatiable fire of sensory passion and desire. Such human beings can only engender an

acquisitive, consumerist and possessive society, with more violence, corruption and mutual suspicion. The saving message of the Upanishads comes like a shower of nectar amidst this 'scorching sun of the mid-day summer' of worldliness and sensuality and acquisitiveness that is fast roasting the innermost soul of humankind in its sweltering heat. The Upanishadic wisdom, which is the science of the Self (*ātma-vidyā*), is the only message that can quench this heat and redeem the 'modern man in search of his soul' (Jung) and save him from the great fear of destruction that is looming large on today's horizon.¹³ This is the appeal of the Upanishads today to which we need to respond most urgently, if we are eager to save humankind from annihilation.

*

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Doing Good

Try to do good to others to the best of your ability. Seeing your example, others will learn to do the same. Do not harbour any desire in the mind, except to serve God in human beings.

—Swami Turiyananda

Tejachandra Mitra

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Blessed are they who are simple, for they easily communicate with God. One cannot feign simplicity. It is an innate quality, the result of austerities performed throughout many past lives. 'Purity and simplicity,' said Thomas a Kempis, 'are the two wings with which man soars above earth and all temporary nature. Simplicity is in the intention; purity in the affection: simplicity turns to God; purity unites with and enjoys Him.'

Sri Ramakrishna always sought to recruit his disciples from among young men who were as pure as flowers that have never been smelled and as simple as innocent children. On 25 February 1885, the Master said to M, 'Why do I attract these boys to me so much? They are pure vessels untouched by worldliness. A man cannot assimilate instruction if his mind is stained with worldliness. Milk can be safely kept in a new pot; but it turns sour if kept in a pot in which curd has been made. You may wash a thousand times a cup that has held a solution of garlic, but still you cannot remove the smell.'¹

Tejachandra Mitra was born in 1863 at Bosepara Lane in the Baghbazar district in Calcutta. His father, Bhagavati Charan Mitra, was an extremely religious and generous man. Tejachandra was the eldest of five brothers. His father allowed his young son to build a small gymnasium in the front of the house. As a result, Tejachandra became a gymnast and wrestler. He commanded the love and respect of his community and settled disputes when they arose. He always helped the poor and needy and he was always courteous and respectful.

Tejachandra had a tremendous love for

his father and obeyed him implicitly. When he was still in school, his father arranged his marriage. Tejachandra fulfilled his father's wish without protest, and then passed the Entrance examination after his wedding. Tejachandra was devoted to gods and goddesses, so every day he visited the Kali temple of Baghbazar, and every year he assisted in the nightlong worship of Mother Kali.

Tejachandra first met Sri Ramakrishna one Sunday in the summer of 1883 when he accompanied his neighbour Hari (later, Swami Turiyananda) to Dakshineswar. Balaram Basu and M were present. On that day the Master asked Tejachandra, 'Are you married?' 'Yes, sir,' replied Tejachandra. The Master responded, 'All right, all right.' Another day, the Master asked to meet Tejachandra's wife to determine whether she would hinder Tejachandra's spiritual life; but this visit did not materialize. Hari later told the Master that her signs were good; she was a *vidyashakti* who would help her husband to realize God. Knowing Tejachandra's spiritual inclination, the Master told him, 'Please visit this place frequently. Try to come alone, especially on Tuesdays and Saturdays.'

Tejachandra described his second visit to the Master thus:

I did not find Hari at his house, so I went alone to Dakshineswar. The Master was pleased to see me. I don't remember who was present there that day. It was Saturday. The Master took me to the southern veranda and put his finger on my chest and tongue.

Master: 'Whom do you like as your Chosen Deity?'

I did not respond.

Master: 'Oh, you don't like to mention it. All

right. (*He pointed to Kali.*) You like this deity. Isn't that true?'

I nodded my head and the Master gave me the mantra. Later I said to the Master, 'Sir, you have initiated me. But if my family guru is upset, will it not be harmful to me?'

Master: 'Why? Take a mantra from him also. Or if you don't want to take a mantra from him, then give him his usual fee.'

The Master fed me well, and I returned home after spending the whole day at Dakshineswar.²

Tejachandra recalled another visit of his:

It was the Phalaharini Kali Puja day of 1884. Either Hari or Narayan was with me. When we reached Dakshineswar, the Master asked me to spend the night there. I was in a fix because on the one hand there was the Master's invitation, and on the other I had never stayed out overnight. I said to the Master, 'Sir, I can stay, but where shall I eat?' Master: 'You will not have to think about that. I shall feed you.' So I stayed and sent a message home through either Hari or Narayan. At midnight the Master took me to the Kali temple and then fed me at one o'clock in the morning.

We returned to his room and he asked me, 'What do you want?' It came to my mind to ask for money, but I kept quiet. The Master said: 'All right, all right. I understand what you want.' The next morning I returned home on foot.³

Sri Ramakrishna always kept track of his young disciples and thought of their welfare. On 9 November 1884 he said to M, 'Please ask him [Tejachandra] what he thinks of me. Does he think of me as a jnani? Or what does he say about me? I understand that he is very reticent. (*To Gopal*) Ask Tejachandra to come here Saturdays and Tuesdays.'⁴

On 25 February 1885 the Master visited Girish Ghosh's house in Baghbazar. He instructed the householder devotees on how to live in this world:

'Is anything impossible for the grace of God? Suppose you bring a light into a room that has been dark a thousand years. Does it remove the darkness little by little? The room is lighted all

at once. ...

'You should practise calling on God every day. It is not possible to succeed in one day; through daily prayer you will come to long for God.

'How can you feel that restlessness if you are immersed in worldliness day and night?' ...

[The Master] asked Tejachandra to sit near him. The boy sat near the Master. Then he whispered to M that he would have to leave soon. (703-4)

Tejachandra, Purna, Paltu, Narayan and some other young boys were students of M, who was the headmaster of Vidyasagar's school. A rumour spread that M brought those boys to the Master and so they would neglect

Pointing to his relatives, he once explained: 'Why should I keep my picture in the house? Seeing my cage of flesh and bone, you will weep and wail throughout your lives. When I die, you will not have to perform a shradha ceremony if you cannot afford it. Just think of the Master; you will achieve everything.'

their studies. The boys' guardians held M responsible. The Master defended M, but he was concerned about M and his young disciples.

At first Tejachandra's father did not like his son's visits to the Master; but he ceased objecting when he later learned that some of the prominent people of Baghbazar—such as Dinanath Basu, an attorney of the Calcutta Supreme Court, Kalinath Basu, a high police officer and Balaram Basu—also visited the Master.

On 13 July 1885, the Master went to attend the Chariot Festival at Balaram's house in Calcutta. Tejachandra went there to see the Master.

Master (to Tejachandra): 'I send for you so often. Why don't you come? If you practise meditation and prayer it will make me happy. I look on you as my own; that is why I send for you.'

Tejachandra: 'Sir, I have to go to the office. I am very busy with my duties.'

M: 'There was a marriage ceremony at his home and he got leave from his office for ten days.'

Master (to Tejachandra): 'Well, well! You say you have no leisure. You told me just now that you were going to renounce the world.'

Narayan: 'M said to us one day that this world is a wilderness.'

Master (to M): 'Please tell them the story of the disciple who became unconscious after taking some medicine. His teacher arrived at the house and said he would revive if someone else swallowed a pill that he would prescribe. The disciple would get back his life, but the man

Seeing the boy's hand in the river, Tejachandra could not stop himself. Shouting 'Victory to Ramakrishna', he jumped with his shoes and clothes on. People thought that Tejachandra must be a close relative of the boy.

who swallowed the pill would die.

'Please tell the other one, too, of the hathayogi who thought that his wife and children were his very own, and who feigned death with his limbs stretched out. It will do them good to hear those stories.' (799)

The Master tried to create hunger for God within the young disciples. He visited Tejachandra's home in Calcutta and even carried prasad from Dakshineswar to him.

Tejachandra was grief-stricken when the Master's passed away in 1886, but the Master was always in his heart. After he met Sri Ramakrishna, he never kept pictures of himself in his house. Pointing to his relatives, he once explained: 'Why should I keep my pic-

ture in the house? Seeing my cage of flesh and bone, you will weep and wail throughout your lives. When I die, you will not have to perform a shraddha ceremony if you cannot afford it. Just think of the Master; you will achieve everything.'

Tejachandra and his wife regularly visited Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi in Udbodhan House, and she was very fond of them. Holy Mother told the following story about Tejachandra:

He who eagerly prays to God will see Him. ... What a sincere soul he [Tejachandra] was! The Master used to frequent his house. Someone had deposited two hundred rupees with Tejachandra. One day he was robbed of that amount by a pickpocket in the tramcar. He discovered the loss after some time and suffered terrible mental agony. He came to the bank of the Ganga and prayed to the Master with tears in his eyes, 'O Lord, what have you done to me?' He was not rich enough to make up that amount from his own pocket. As he was thus weeping he saw the Master appear before him and say: 'Why do you weep so bitterly? The money is there under a brick on the bank of the Ganga.' Tejachandra quickly removed the brick and really found there a bundle of banknotes. He narrated the incident to Sharat [Swami Saradananda]. Sharat said: 'You are lucky to get the vision of the Master even now.'⁵

During festivals, Tejachandra would go to the Ramakrishna monastery in Belur to provide service. Once he and some other devotees took a steamer from the Ahiritola ghat of Calcutta to Belur Math. The boat was overcrowded, and a boy of five or six years old accidentally fell into the Ganga. Everyone was concerned, but no one dared attempt a rescue. Seeing the boy's hand in the river, Tejachandra could not stop himself. Shouting 'Victory to Ramakrishna', he jumped with his shoes and clothes on. People thought that Tejachandra must be a close relative of the boy. He rescued the boy, without losing anything from his pocket, returned home to change his clothes, and again left for Belur Math. He later

told his friends: 'It was the Master who inspired me, so it was possible for me to save that boy.'⁶

Once Tejachandra suffered a bout of asthma that became severe at night, keeping him from sleep. It was so unbearable that he would go up to the roof and pace all night. He consulted many doctors, but none could give him any relief. He prayed to the Master throughout the nights to cure that painful disease. On one such occasion a sadhu came to his door and said to him, 'You are suffering. Please take this medicine and you will be cured.'

Tejachandra accepted the medicine and asked, 'How much shall I have to pay?' 'Nothing,' replied the holy man. Tejachandra thought that the sadhu was scheming to get money from him. 'When shall I see you again?' asked Tejachandra. 'At the right time,' said the sadhu, and left. Tejachandra decided not to use the medicine; he consulted his doctors and they also forbade him to take it. So the medicine remained in his room. After a day or two the Master appeared to him in a dream and asked, 'Still you doubt?' Immediately Tejachandra got up and took the medicine. From that day on, he never again suffered from asthma. (373)

Tejachandra led an ideal householder's life. His son, Manabkrishna Mitra, wrote:

Tejachandra died at 75 Ramkanta Basu Street, Calcutta, on 16 September 1912 at the age of forty-nine. Sometime before his death, he would spend long hours in front of Sri Ramakrishna's picture and practise japa and meditation. He was always joyful. He told us, 'I could not

After a day or two the Master appeared to him in a dream and asked, 'Still you doubt?'

Immediately Tejachandra got up and took the medicine. From that day on, he never again suffered from asthma.

leave a lot of money or property for you, but someone [the Master] will always be behind you.'

Just before his passing away, Holy Mother said to someone in Udbodhan, 'Tejachandra is dying, please carry this *chranamrita* [sanctified water] to him right now.' It was as if he was waiting for that holy water. As soon as he drank it, he passed away. Then Holy Mother said to Swami Saradananda, 'You have tried hard to save Tejachandra. But it is the Master who has taken him away.' (373)

In a drama some take big roles and some small roles, but each part is important. Tejachandra played a small role in the divine drama of Sri Ramakrishna. *

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Forget the goal of life and you ruin yourself. God dwells in all. He is within your heart. Pray to Him, weep before Him, and you will get energy and strength. Your mind will come under control. Evil thoughts are to be driven off by good thoughts.

—Swami Premananda

Datta, Dāmyata, Dayadhvam

R K DASGUPTA

I have very oddly put three unfamiliar Sanskrit words in the title of my article because I desire that my readers learn these words, if they have not learnt them already, utter them and teach them to their people. We have not today great minds in our country to teach us the truths of life. We must then turn to great words that glow in our 3000-year-old spiritual and moral tradition. This is particularly important when that tradition is being traduced by religious organizations receiving furtive political support.

Charity, Self-control and Compassion

The three words in the title occur in the fifth chapter of the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (5.2.1-3), one of our principal Upanishads. They are all verbs in the imperative mood meaning, respectively, give, control yourself and be compassionate. These three virtues of charity, self-control and compassion are conspicuous by their absence in our national life, particularly in some self-appointed teachers and saviours of Hinduism.

Let us concentrate on the three words meaning the three human virtues of charity, self-control and compassion. I think the most important of them is compassion, for he who has compassion will be naturally charitable and will value self-control. Compassion is a divine virtue. In the Holy Koran the opening words are 'In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful'. The Arabic words for the qualities of the Lord are *Rahmanir-Rahim*. Since I have no knowledge of Arabic philology I cannot go deep into the meaning of the two words. I know that while the translator of the Penguin Koran (1956), N J Dawood, uses the words compassionate and merciful, the translator of the Islamic Book Service Koran

(2000), Abdullah Yusuf Ali, uses the words gracious and merciful. Let us not make too fine a distinction between compassionate and gracious when we know that mercy flows from compassion. The *New Testament* Greek word for compassion is *splangchnizesthai*, which also means pity. A Greek scholar of Jadavpur University has helped me to identify the Greek word in the *New Testament*, which was originally written in Greek. I think when in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy', by mercy he means compassion.

The three Upanishadic words which represent the essence of ethics so moved an English poet that he put them in roman in one of his major poems, *The Waste Land* (1922), where they are spoken by the thunder in a different order. Unfortunately the great meaning of the three words seem to be lost in a density of learned references which mar this poem of T S Eliot. In the Upanishad *datta, dāmyata, dayadhvam* are truly thundering words summoning us to a life of charity and restraint. At the centre of the human universe is a tear, a tender heart with a sense of the infinite pity of things. There is the need for compassion, for sympathy, in a world full of suffering. When Wordsworth invokes the spirit of Milton for a moral regeneration of his people, he asks for 'manners, virtue, freedom, power'. There is no mention of the heart, which is the seat of all virtues, the foremost of them being compassion.

Swami Vivekananda missed this compassion in Shankaracharya, whose philosophy of Advaita he embraced as his philosophy. 'Shankara,' Vivekananda said, 'had not the slightest bit of Buddha's wonderful heart.' Vivekananda looked upon mercy as the prime

human virtue and for him it was indistinguishable from compassion. 'Mercy is heaven itself; to be good, we have all to be merciful. Even justice and right should stand on mercy.'

Let us remember that Jayadeva, the great Bengali Vaishnava poet of the twelfth century, gave Buddha the status of an incarnation of God in his *Dashavatara Stotra* because he witnessed the sacrifice of animals with compassion, *sadaya-hṛdaya darśita paśu-ghātam*

For Rabindranath Tagore this compassion was *karuṇā* and in one of his songs he invokes Buddha in these words: '*Karuṇāghana dharaṇītala koro kalaṅkaśūnya.*' The world can be free of sins when compassion enters the soul of its people. The poet thinks that compassion leaves us when our heart is dry. When Mahatma Gandhi broke his fast in Yeravada Jail on 26 September 1932 Tagore was present, and when he was asked to sing a song appropriate for the occasion, the poet sang song 58 of the *Gitanjali* (1910) (song 39 in the English *Gitanjali*, 1912): 'When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.' The word for mercy in the Bengali poem is *karuṇā*, or compassion. The poem exalts the heart as the seat of all virtues and man has none of them when he is selfishly busy with himself. This elevating scene at Yeravada Jail is described in Louis Fischer's biography of Mahatma Gandhi: 'Tagore sang Bengali hymns. Many eyes were wet.'

It is man's pride of work, the unruly urges of his ego, which deprive him of his heart and make him incapable of compassion. In the first song of the Bengali *Gitanjali* the poet says: '*Śakal ahaṅkāra he āmār/ Dṛbāo chokher jole*' (Drown all my pride in tears). A compassionate man is a tearful man. Today our eyes are dry because our hearts are dry. In our politics of desire, our tongue alone is wet and compassion is so rare because our mind is caught in a deadly competition for power. The poet who makes *dayadhvam* a principal human virtue says in a work written more than a decade after *The Waste Land* that 'those who serve the

greater cause may make the cause serve them.'

I say this because today our politicians corrupt our soul more than our criminals, for they assemble and address big crowds in the name of some cause. Our teachers, the academicians, may not acknowledge compassion as a value in their sphere of work. Then who will raise us up and teach us the three Upanishadic virtues? I think we have to teach ourselves to see if our heart can beat fast or even bleed when we see suffering. We cannot have compassion unless we see suffering. Suffering is the only school where we can learn the rudiments of morality. In one of his songs Tagore asks us to expand our heart and look round (*chārīdīke dekho chāhi, hṛdaya prasāri*). I miss this in John Rawls, the greatest authority on ethics in our age. He does not say anything about the role of the heart in our moral life in his magnum opus *A Theory of Justice* (1971).

The Three Values in the *Gīta*

Where in the *Bhagavadgīta* do we have this triple idea of charity, self-control and compassion? The doctrine of non-attachment (*anāsakti yoga*), which is the essence of the *Gīta*, involves these three virtues. But in the thirteenth verse of the twelfth chapter we have '*Adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānām maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca*' (He who has no ill will towards any being, who is friendly and compassionate).

The ethics of the *Gīta* is the quintessence of Hindu and Buddhist ethics and it anticipates the noble ideals of Christianity and Islam. The question today is how to educate our people in these three virtues of *datta*, *dāmyata* and *dayadhvam*. Perhaps they cannot be taught. Our people will learn from examples. We must shed our ego to achieve a society of men and women who will value charity, self-control and compassion in a grand endeavour to create a new humanity. We may spell these three liberating Upanishadic sayings as a mantra in our soul—*datta*, *dāmyata*, *dayadhvam*—and wait to see how it works. *

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

Translated from Bengali by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee

Prologue

An initiated disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj (1884-1967) was a widely respected monk of the Ramakrishna Order. Even after becoming sick and old, with great concentration he regularly listened to readings from the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and scriptural texts like the *Bhagavadgita* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Wherever necessary, he would now and then explain the import of the text.

In February 1962 Premeshanandaji became seriously ill. By turn attendants had to fan his head round the clock, since Sargachhi Ashram (where Premeshanandaji stayed) was then not electrified.

Even in the midst of that illness, he responded to the prayer of his attendant, Brahmachari Sanatan (presently, Swami Suhitanandaji, an Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission), and agreed to give him special lessons on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* in Bengali. Br Sanatan used to preserve in the form of notes whatever Premeshanandaji said by way of explaining the aphorisms and in most cases got the written discussions heard and checked by him.

For a long time these notes remained in circulation within a limited circle. To benefit a wider circle of readers, these notes were published in *Udbodhan*, the well-known Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order. The exposition was serialized from the Chaitra 1407 BS through the Shravan 1409 BS issues (except the Ashvin 1408, Puja number), edited by Swami

Purnatmanandaji, the then editor of *Udbodhan*. The serial has since appeared in book form, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata, with a preface by Purnatmanandaji.

In the present English rendering we have generally used Swami Vivekananda's translation of the *Yoga Sutras* from his 'Raja Yoga' (*Complete Works*, Volume 1), with occasional annotations (within square brackets), mostly culled from his detailed commentary.

In his preface to the Bengali book Purnatmanandaji makes the following significant observation: Authentic Hindu scriptural texts like the *Katha Upanishad* (2.3.11, 18), *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (2.4.5), *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (2.8), *Bhagavadgita* (Chapter 6) and Sri Shankaracharya's commentary on the *Brahma Sutras* (2.1.3), expound the ultimate Vedantic Truth: Brahman, Atman and their identity. Further, Vedanta does not accept the doctrine of plurality of Purushas of the Sankhya philosophy. It is precisely in the light of these Vedantic truths that Premeshanandaji expounds the processes of *āsana* (posture), *dhāraṇā* (holding the mind fixed to a particular point), *dhyāna* (meditation) and so on.

As Purnatmanandaji says, sincere spiritual aspirants are sure to find in this exposition answers to many of their problems in their search of Truth. He rightly suggests that while reading this exposition readers may gainfully compare it with Swami Vivekananda's commentary on the *Yoga Sutras* in his 'Raja Yoga'.

—Editor

Introduction

After hundreds of years of research on self-development, Indian thinkers reached the ultimate limit of the subject and came to 'know That by knowing which nothing further remains to be known'.¹

They made tremendous efforts to employ that knowledge for the benefit of mankind; the outcome of all that is known as 'Vedic culture' or 'Hindu culture'. In common parlance it is called 'religion'. The phenomenon is exactly as we see nowadays in the case of material sciences: as soon as they discover a truth, researchers in these sciences try to put that to the use of all mankind.

Gradual Steps to Meditation

In directing the mind inward, the first step is the cultivation of the body and the mind. Sciences like Ayurveda were discovered precisely for that purpose. Thereafter systems of worship were introduced for the development of the mind. As those systems gradually improved, they took the form of the worship of symbols. To perform worship, one has to exercise one's imaginative faculty. Unless this faculty becomes highly developed, it is impossible for man to conceive of Brahman, the primal cause of this universe. In course of performing worship, when the vision of abodes of peace like heaven, Vaikuntha, and Kailasa becomes vivid and the desire to abide in such places arises in the mind of a person, the mind becomes inclined towards meditation.

Worldly Prosperity versus Inner Life

Absolute Consciousness covered over by maya begins its individual career as a living organism from grass, herbs and the like. Then, after roaming about in search of enjoyment for millions of years, it attains human life. With his five senses well developed, man goes on enjoying the external world composed of the five elements until he is seized with an intense

sense of dissatisfaction. At that time if a man running after worldly prosperity happens to hear about higher realities like Eternal Krishna and Eternal Vrindaban, his mind rushes to attain these. Because of this, persons eager to undertake journey in the inner world can be found in those human societies where there are ample opportunities for achieving worldly success (*abhyudaya*), and, with that, tidings about the scope for success in the inner world are also widely current. In the West now all types of provision for the attainment of well-being in the outer world are available and in India we have news about the attainability of happiness in the inner world. But in neither case are the two aspects of *abhyudaya*, or success, simultaneously present; attentions of people in both cases are confined to only one of the aspects. As such we do not find in people any desire to delve into the inner world. Generally the Westerners seek to employ spiritual knowledge for the sake of material welfare, and in India, aspirants embarking on a quest for the inner world become failures both in this life and hereafter.

It is not possible for anyone to progress by going against the laws of nature. Unless society provides enough opportunities for following these laws, the beast in man cannot be exorcized. It is because of this that while founding Belur Math as a centre for the pursuit of yoga, Swami Vivekananda gave directions for converting it into a technical institute.

Who is Qualified for the Practice of Yoga?

When man reaches the ultimate limit of worldly success, the question 'After this, what?' arises in his mind. At that time religious teachers give him instructions about the performance of sacrificial rites, about the worship of gods. When as a result of such worship a person develops *sattva guna* [the attribute of calmness and balance, broadly meaning here purity of mind] he receives from devotees the

tidings of love and devotion. While feeling attraction towards God, a genuine desire to have Him near himself arises in his mind. At that time he becomes fit for the practice of yoga. When one has done with seeing this transitory world, when doubts about the existence of an eternal abode of God beyond this world have been cleared from one's mind, and when one can no longer endure without attaining the eternal and impeccable God, then does one qualify for the practice of yoga.

Before starting the journey on the path of yoga, one must first develop a distaste for the enjoyment of the fruits of one's actions both here and hereafter² and a strong desire to realize the essence of one's being, which is of the

When one has done with seeing this transitory world, when doubts about the existence of an eternal abode of God beyond this world have been cleared from one's mind, and when one can no longer endure without attaining the eternal and impeccable God, then does one qualify for the practice of yoga.

nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Otherwise, lured by the various riches that abound on both sides of the way, one proceeds along the path of enjoyment abandoning the path of yoga. Due to this, in the past there occurred a dearth of suitably qualified aspirants, and that caused the gradual extinction of the yogic sects founded by Patanjali and other masters. For this very reason, Swamiji showed us a new way by which the human mind in its entirety can be turned inwards and thus the jivatman [individual soul] can be united with Paramatman [supreme Self]. There are many obstacles in the path of the four yogas; those who follow the way shown by Swamiji do not come to harm from any of them. We have to start the practice of raja yoga after a thorough compre-

hension of this fact.

The Importance of Meditation

The faculty of discrimination develops in the mind of an individual in the last stage of his evolution as a human being. Only then does he feel a curiosity to know about the reality of the inner world. By good fortune a few among such souls come to know about the science of Atman of the Vedic religion. As a consequence, their minds can gradually grasp all the mysteries of creation. But although they are able to know and understand all, it does not become possible for them to tear themselves away from this relative world and attain perfection. Usually we find that those

who know everything about the science of Brahman are not yet free from the bondage of the body-mind complex. Only he who through meditation realizes in the essence of his consciousness 'I am eternally of the nature of purity, knowledge and freedom' liberates himself from the clutches of life and death. It is meditation, not discrimination, which directly leads to liberation. Because of

this, unless one develops full awareness of the path of yoga, mere [theoretical] knowledge is not of much avail.

We have seen that in the community of monks even persons of great intelligence and wisdom cannot often exhibit in their dealings the strength of character as evinced by a vijñani. Many lose their head in course of continuous discrimination. But those who direct their mind towards Brahman through meditation or yoga, even if they do not reach full perfection, develop in their lives a wonderful sweetness.

The Path of Devotion

In the *Bhagavadgita* the Lord says that man attains purity of mind after doing merito-

rious work through many lives. As a result, in his last birth an intense desire to realize God is generated in his mind. (*Yeṣāṁ tvantagataṁ pāpam.* — 7.28)

Even if one feels in mind an attraction towards God, one is unable to restrain [all] the tendencies of the body and the mind until one realizes Him. If one sets realization as one's goal but remains absorbed in the charm, sweetness and glory of God, one's mind may not become directed to *pratyak-cetanā* (inner Consciousness). Generally it is found that devotees who remain absorbed in the service and worship of God and in chanting and proclaiming His glory, do not progress very far towards the inner Core. Sometimes out of conceit such a devotee neglects and disregards non-devotees or scorns persons holding different views, and as a result of such aberration his mind gets very much degraded. Innumerable other obstacles in this way hinder a devotee and prevent him from realizing God. As such, unless one is able to get totally engrossed in the thought of God, it is impossible to attain perfection by following the path of devotion. Thus, even in the path of devotion the last step is meditation. It is not possible to attain liberation through the path of devotion without *īśvara-praṇidhāna* [surrendering oneself to God residing in the innermost recess of one's heart].

Meditation Needed in Karma Yoga Too

One can even transform one's daily and occasional duties into aids to yoga. For that, one has to keep the mind drawn towards freedom from work even in the midst of the turmoil of work. If by means of the sharpness of one's intellect one can understand that the only goal of life is freedom and can always keep the mind directed towards that ideal of freedom, then one may maintain an attitude of

gentle meditation in mind even while working. We say 'gentle' because to perform a work well a substantial part of the mind needs to be given to the work; at that time the thought of freedom will occupy only a fraction of the mind.

There is Sri Ramakrishna's famous illustration of karma yoga: 'the maidservant in the house of a rich man'. The maidservant is compelled to serve in a rich man's house because of her inability to make both ends meet at her own house. She knows for certain that she has her own house and near and dear ones and it is for their sake that she is working. No sooner the master feels the least bit of inconvenience than he will dismiss her. Indeed we too have left our own abode and have been forced to

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enter into the 'service' of our body and mind. But we do not know this; and even if we know, do not realize this; and even if we realize, are unable to awaken in our mind the desire to return to our own place.

Therefore for us to assume the role of the maidservant in a rich man's house is nothing but hypocrisy. Suppose through reasoning and discrimination we learn that we are eternally of the nature of purity, knowledge and freedom, and suppose we become fascinated by the charm and sweetness of God. Yet, unless we meditate constantly and for a long time with utmost faith, we cannot progress very far along that path. It is needless to say how difficult it is to proceed along the path to

freedom after dissipating one's mind in activities.

In the *Gita* the Lord says that karma yoga used to be practised by kshatriya kings who had bodies and minds of adamant strength. Therefore karma yoga is an extremely difficult spiritual path. (4.2)

However, it is utterly impossible to give up all on a sudden the habit of work acquired through innumerable lives. Because of this, while embarking on any form of yogic discipline it is essential that one performs some work to cultivate the attitude of desirelessness [unselfishness]. It is for this reason that Swamiji urged ineligible persons like us so much to take up work. But if one wants to do unselfish work, there is no way but to remain con-

Suppose through reasoning and discrimination we learn that we are eternally of the nature of purity, knowledge and freedom, and suppose we become fascinated by the charm and sweetness of God. Yet, unless we meditate constantly and for a long time with utmost faith, we cannot progress very far along that path.

stantly aware about fixing the mind on freedom, which is the goal of work. Not only should the mind remain attracted towards that at the time of work, but also as soon as one gets a little respite, one must pull the mind up and engage it in meditation. This is just being like the maidservant: she goes home as soon as she gets leave. Thus the last step of karma yoga too is meditation.

The Need to Rise above Body-Mind

Exceptionally intelligent, imaginative and unselfish persons may attain freedom by means of knowledge, devotion or work. But very few persons under the sun are found to be so qualified. For ordinary people like us,

these means often do not yield much result. Wrestlers get great delight from gymnastics. Even so, intellectual people derive great joy from ratiocinating on subtle questions and by exercising their intellect. There have been so many learned philosophers in India as well as in other countries; their lines of thinking are so very interesting. Intellectual gymnasts get the same delight by reading such discourses as we get by reading novels. Admittedly, by following the process of reasoning prescribed in the Vedanta, the mind soars very high. But unless one succeeds in making the mind totally absorbed in one's true Self, there is no chance of attaining freedom.

The love that is depicted in devotional scriptures is really an exalted version of the human love described in novels, with its attraction, separation and union. Out of love for a beautiful image, one laughs, cries, dances and sings and thus derives immense joy. In many cases, in course of chanting the beauty and charm of God, devotees are seen to enter into a trance (*bhāva-samādhi*). This also is a kind of mental gymnastics.

However, it is impossible to attain freedom unless one is able to get rid of one's sense of identity with the body [gross as well as subtle] by practising prescribed spiritual disciplines. Bhavanath, the younger Naren, and many other devotees had taken refuge at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, the incarnation of the present age and the manifestation of absolute Brahman. They used to have trances, yet they led lives of ordinary householders later.

The bottom line is this: the desire for sense enjoyment cannot be rooted out unless one practises yoga according to prescribed methods and raises the mind step by step to the level of absolute Consciousness. In the *Gita*, this has been clearly stated in the two

verses beginning with '*Indriyāṇi parāṅyāhuḥ*'. (3.42-3) Here is the gist of these verses: so long as one is unable to realize one's Self by raising the consciousness above the body-mind complex, it is impossible to reach the state of Blessedness. Through reasoning one comprehends the nature of Freedom; through devotion one gets a taste for the contemplation of God, who is identical with Freedom; unselfish work refines the intellect; but it is the yoga of meditation that can ultimately unite the jivatman with the Paramatman. Unless one takes the help of the yoga of meditation, success in the pursuit of the former three yogas [generally] remains beyond reach. All the yogas have but one single theme: to unite the individual soul with God. Therefore one who wants to attain Freedom should practise meditation right from the beginning.

Training in Meditation: The Earlier the Better

Hindus had a custom that every person must meditate on the luminous Sun three times every day: in the morning, at noon and in the evening. People used to be taught this from the age of seven or eight years. Nowadays even among the brahmins rarely does anyone do the Gayatri japa every day; among the performers of such japa rarely does anyone meditate a little. Hindus knew that meditation is the principal means of attaining both *abhyudaya* (worldly prosperity) and *niḥśreyasa* (final beatitude). Unless one has practised concentration, one is not able to perform well even the ordinary duties of this world. All great deeds demand special concentration on the part of the doer.

After the practice of meditation went out of vogue, japa or repetition of the name of the Lord was introduced; that too is a lower form of meditation. One can attain perfection through japa as well.³

Sometime back there was a movement by a group of persons who had received so-called modern education, to introduce the practice of

keeping still for some time before starting any work. Maybe, unknown to them, what they were trying to usher in was nothing but a faint reflection of yoga.

Because the practice of yoga has disappeared, Hindus have suffered all-round degradation. Let a person possess the ability to restrain and hold the mind above the fleeting world for even three times a day; howsoever little, it would be natural for a bit of the infinite glory of the Atman to become manifest in his life. There is no way there can be upward movement in one's life unless one has some faith and awareness about the presence of an infinite Power behind oneself.

Even if one could acquire [intellectual] knowledge of all the mysteries of the world and all the truths about Brahman, one would not get liberated from the hold of the body and the mind. That is why Hindus taught persons right from their childhood the only means for uplift: meditation.

'Cleanse Your Body and Mind'

Suppose through the performance of selfless work we attain dispassion towards this relative world. Suppose through discrimination we come to realize that only my 'Self' devoid of all attributes is true and the two forms, the knowable and the knower, are both illusory. Suppose we become attracted and fascinated by the infinite grace and charm of Brahman. But the perfect bliss that comes from freeing oneself from the slavery of the body and the mind would still remain beyond our reach. It is at this stage that Maharshi [the Great Sage] Patanjali shows us a wonderfully simple straight road—a road proceeding along which we are certain to attain perfect bliss. He says, 'Cleanse your body and mind by washing and scrubbing these with *yama* and *niyama*; after that, stop all external activities and be seated in a posture. While sitting, make your mind inactive by means of the force of prana. Thereafter stay put, remaining aware only of the sattva guna, which inheres

in the intellect. As you remain in that state, all the mysteries of creation will unfold before you. When in that state you become totally indifferent to the beauties, charms and glories of creation [the relative world], you will be able to attain perfection by realizing "Consciousness", which is bereft of all attributes and which exists transcending the creation.'

This is the last step in the attainment of spiritual knowledge. If we sit down with a firm resolve for this end, it is absolutely certain that we will attain bliss; the life of Buddha is a blazing example of this.

Conclusion

As regards the obstacles in the path of meditation, many incidents are mentioned in the lives of Buddha, Jesus and other great personalities. We see in this world that the more enlightened a person is, the more is his awareness about higher enjoyments. A man doing manual labour eats plain rice and dal with great relish, but an educated gentleman is not satisfied unless he is served a variety of courses. Likewise, while spiritual practice whets a man's tastes, there also arise feelings [of dissatisfaction] that are commensurate with such stimulated tastes. Those aspirants who do selfless work find that work never ends; those who worship God find that unless they have intense love for God they do not always feel a strong urge to tear the mind from the world and direct it upward; those who follow the path of knowledge through discrimination find that even though they come to know the truth about everything in the universe they do not get peace at heart; and those practising meditation find that in the absence of sincerity concentration proves elusive. Yet genuine aspirants are not deterred in their spiritual quest, whatever the obstacles. Joyfully ascending higher and still higher steps,

they finally attain perfection and bliss.

In Maharshi Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* we get not only a description of the obstacles but also directions about how to overcome them. To grasp the essential points of the *Yoga* scripture is not very difficult. If one studies them for some time, they become clear. But the subtle matters observed and argued in the aphorisms require for their comprehension deep reflection over many days. Those subtle discussions do not hold much interest for common people like us. Especially, beginners have trouble understanding the aphorisms, composed as they are in archaic style.

The aphorisms have many commentaries and glosses but it is difficult for us to grasp their import. The extremely lucid exposition of Swami Vivekananda seems to us to be quite extensive and delightful.

It is helpful for a beginner to get an exposure to an abstract of all the topics beforehand. Just as a selection of poems and literary writings aims at creating a taste in the beginner, even so, the present comments and expositions intend to arouse interest in those who are new to the *Yoga Sutras*.

In this commentary only the gist has been given for the intricate aphorisms. For various reasons somewhat novel explanations have been provided at certain places. Throughout this exposition, our effort has been to attract the interest of the beginner to the essence of yoga.

(to be continued)

References

1. *Bhagavadgīta*, 7.2.
2. *Ihāmūtra-phalabhoga-virāgaḥ*. —*Vedānta-sāra*, 17.
3. *Svādhyāyād-iṣṭadevatā-samprayogaḥ*. —*Yoga Sutras*, 2.44.

The more a person conceals his devotional practices from others, the better for him.

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

Kaṭha Rudra Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

The fruit of the knowledge of Brahman (*continued*)

ततो मनोमयो ह्यात्मा पूर्णो ज्ञानमयेन तु ।
आनन्देन सदा पूर्णः सदा ज्ञानमयः सुखी ॥२५॥

25. Further, the mental self is permeated by the knowledge self; [this] ever joyful knowledge [self] is always suffused by bliss.

तथानन्दमयश्चापि ब्रह्मणान्येन साक्षिणा ।
सर्वान्तरेण पूर्णश्च ब्रह्म नान्येन केनचित् ॥२६॥

26. And in the same way, the blissful [self] is again pervaded [or interpenetrated] by Brahman, which is different [from] and the witness [of everything] and the innermost of all. [But] Brahman is not [pervaded] by anything else.

यदिदं ब्रह्मपुच्छाख्यं सत्यज्ञानाद्वयात्मकम् ।
सारमेव रसं लब्ध्वा साक्षाद्देही सनातनम् ॥२७॥
सुखी भवति सर्वत्र अन्यथा सुखिता कुतः ।

27-8. The embodied being becomes joyful attaining [realizing] everywhere this Brahman, which is named the 'tail' [the support] [which is] of the nature of Truth, Knowledge, non-duality, verily the Essence, the Source of Joy, the Eternal. [For] wherefrom otherwise can there be happiness?

असत्यस्मिन् परानन्दे स्वात्मभूतेऽखिलात्मनाम् ॥२८॥
को जीवति नरो जातु को वा नित्यं विचेष्टते ।

28-9. If this supreme Bliss, which is the very Self of all beings, were not existent, which human being can indeed be alive? Or who can [remain] active?

तस्मात् सर्वात्मना चित्ते भासमानो ह्यसौ नरः ॥२९॥
आनन्दयति दुःखाढ्यं जीवात्मानं सदा जनः ।

29-30. It is this Person shining in the mind stuff [the field of Consciousness] as the universal Self eternally imparts Joy to the individual self, which is [otherwise] full of sorrow.

यदा ह्येवैष एतस्मिन्नदृश्यत्वादिलक्षणे ॥३०॥
निर्भेदं परमाद्वैतं विन्दते च महायतिः ।
तदेवाभयमित्यन्तं कल्याणं परमामृतम् ॥३१॥
सद्रूपं परमं ब्रह्म त्रिपरिच्छेदवर्जितम् ।

30-2. It is only when the great sage verily attains (realizes) [absolute] non-difference with

this supreme non-duality, auspiciousness, supreme immortality, absolute existence devoid of the threefold division [of time], which is [the supreme (transcended) Brahman]—it is only then that he attains absolute fearlessness.

यदा ह्येवैष एतस्मिन्नल्पमप्यन्तरं नरः ॥३२॥
विजानाति तदा तस्य भयं स्यान्नात्र संशयः ।

32-3. When an individual [human being] experiences even a slight difference in this [identity with Brahman] he will be possessed of fear; there is no doubt in this.

अस्यैवानन्दकोशेन स्तम्बान्ता विष्णुपूर्वकाः ॥३३॥
भवन्ति सुखिनो नित्यं तारतम्यक्रमेण तु ।

33-4. It is by the sheath of bliss that [all beings], from [Lord] Vishnu to a clump of grass always experience happiness, though in varying degrees.

तत्तत्पदविरक्तस्य श्रोत्रियस्य प्रसादिनः ॥३४॥
स्वरूपभूत आनन्दः स्वयं भाति पदे यथा ।

34-5. In the case of one who is dispassionate concerning that [or any] position (or status), who has grasped the inner meaning of the scriptures and is tranquil, the bliss which is one's very nature shines forth by itself as in his [natural] state [of pure Being].

निमित्तं किञ्चिदाश्रित्य खलुशब्दः प्रवर्तते ॥३५॥
यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते निमित्तानामभावतः ।
निर्विशेषपरानन्दे कथं शब्दः प्रवर्तते ॥३६॥

35-6. Indeed word is prompted by some cause as its support.¹ [That Brahman] from which speech [word] recoils on account of the absence of [any] causes, [in that] unqualified supreme Bliss how can word be evoked? [How can word emanate therefrom?]

तस्मादेतन्मनः सूक्ष्मं व्यावृत्तं सर्वगोचरम् ।
यस्माच्छ्रोत्रत्वगक्ष्यादिखादिकर्मन्द्रियाणि च ॥३७॥
व्यावृत्तानि परं प्राप्तुं न समर्थानि तानि तु ।

37-8. This subtle mind, which perceives all [things], turns back from that [Brahman], from which retreat also the senses [organs of knowledge, namely, of] hearing, touch, sight and so on, as well the organs of action; verily, they are not capable of reaching the Supreme.

तद्ब्रह्मानन्दमद्वन्द्वं निर्गुणं सत्यचिद्वनं ॥३८॥
विदित्वा स्वात्मरूपेण न बिभेति कुतश्चन ।

38-9. Realizing that Brahman which is Bliss, without any duality [beyond all pairs of opposites], attributeless, Truth and Awareness through and through, as one's own Self, one fears from nothing else.

एवं यस्तु विजानाति स्वगुरोरुपदेशतः ॥३९॥
स साध्वसाधुकर्मभ्यां सदा न तपति प्रभुः ।

39-40. Indeed he who knows thus from the teachings of his own spiritual preceptor [*guru*], [such a] master [of himself] is never tormented by [the impact of] noble or ignoble actions.

तप्यतापकरूपेण विभातमखिलं जगत् ॥४०॥
प्रत्यगात्मतया भाति ज्ञानाद्वेदान्तवाक्यजात् ।

40-1. The whole world [which] appeared² in the form of tormentor-tormented [relationship] shines³ as the inner Self on account of the Knowledge engendered by the Vedantic teaching.

Sevenfold division of one attributeless Brahman

एकस्यैव निर्विशेषब्रह्मणः सप्तधा भेदः
शुद्धमीश्वरचैतन्यं जीवचैतन्यमेव च ॥४१॥
प्रमाता च प्रमाणं च प्रमेयं च फलं तथा ।
इति सप्तविधं प्रोक्तं भिद्यते व्यवहारतः ॥४२॥

41-2. For empirical purposes a seven-fold distinction is made [in Brahman, which are]: pure [Brahman], God [*iśvara-caitanya*], the individual self [*jīva-caitanya*], the knower (*pramātā*), the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), the object of knowledge (*prameya*) and the result or fruit (*phala*).

(to be concluded)

Notes

1. The functioning of a word is dependent upon a support or a base such as *jāti*, *dravya*, *kriyā* and *guṇa*.
2. Before the dawn of knowledge—that is in the state of ignorance in which one perceives duality.
3. After the awakening of the non-dual knowledge in which the whole world is perceived as one unbroken, infinite mass of Consciousness (*akhaṇḍa*, *paripūrṇa caitanya*).

Weathering Storms

Never discontinue your meditation even if it is distasteful. Again in the course of time the mind will change its mood. You will feel love for God and the world will seem beautiful and joyful. Don't be depressed. Pray to the Master from the bottom of your heart. Then strength will come and you will be able to make all situations favourable.

When the cyclone blows, people become perturbed; but at that time one should try to be calm. Likewise, a storm also arises in the mind. At that time if one can hold on to the Lord firmly, the storm can do nothing. Take refuge in Him wholeheartedly. The storm is not eternal. Good thoughts will come again to the mind and you will experience peace. ...

Be calm and steady and do your duty by surrendering yourself to God. ... Never deviate from the path of blessedness. At last all good will attend you. ... All troubles will go away. Don't fear. Suppressing all other thoughts, try to think only of God and nothing else. Undoubtedly you will succeed.

—Swami Turīyananda



Reviews



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

Kudiyattam: Preliminaries and Performance. *L S Rajagopalan.* The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 84 Thiru Vi ka Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2000. xxvi + 251 pp. Rs 250.

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen/
And waste its sweetness on the desert air,'
moans the poet. The lament aptly fits Kudiyattam, the Sanskrit theatre form of Kerala, perhaps the oldest Indian dance ensemble that has sunk into oblivion because of its very sophistication. Even Malayalis are not familiar with this 'rich honeycomb of rural theatre', as it was not seen until recently outside the exclusive circle of select temples and courts. Few know that the more famous Kathakali has grown out of Kudiyattam. Indeed a Kudiyattam artist can be easily mistaken for a Kathakali dancer—the elaborate make-up is mostly the same for both.

Of late, however, Kudiyattam has emerged under the spotlight of global attention because of the UNESCO's declaration that it is 'a masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity'—and the world citizen must be responsible for its protection and promotion.

Kudiyattam ('dancing in unison') is itself evolved from Koothu, a dance recital of stories by the Chakyar, who is a member of an exclusive community of performing artists. The credit for transforming Koothu into Kudiyattam must go to the Perumal King Kulashekhara, himself an actor-cum-playwright.

Kudiyattam is traditionally enacted only in a Kuthambalam, or theatre built in the premises of major temples. The Kuthambalams of Vadakkunathan temple of Thrissur and the Koodalmanickam temple of Irinjalakuda are justly famous. But in recent times performances have been held in other non-temple mandapams, enabling more of the public to enjoy this rare art.

The themes for Kudiyattam are supplied by the epics, the Puranas and major Sanskrit dramas. The

Chakyar acts the part of the male characters while his wife, the Nangyar, acts that of female characters. Centre stage stands the majestic Kudiyattam lamp, the Kuthuvilakku, creating a magical aura. The other-worldly atmosphere is further enhanced by the powerful beat of three Mizhavus—immense drums played by the assistant, Nambiyar, by whacking them with open palms. Cymbals and Edekkka, a single-stick drum, provide the accompaniment.

The speech is limited to a few lines of Sanskrit poetry, but each line is explored and illuminated with hours of finely detailed storytelling. It is a marvel how the Chakyar treats a single scene from a major Sanskrit play as a full-fledged drama. The poetic quality of the Sanskrit verse with its multiple layers of meaning and figures of speech gets its full bloom in the enacting. Through elaborate exposition a single verse can take upto two hours of acting while a whole play may require some forty days for total presentation. The face with its delicately wrought eye, cheek, brow and lip movements and the elasticity of the face muscles can depict an extensive spectrum of striking emotions. *Netrabhinaya*, communication through the eyes, is so refined, persuasive and wide-ranging that it can portray any situation, thought or activity. The greatest living exponent of Kudiyattam, the 84-year old Ammannur Madhava Chakyar, once took four hours to enact how Ravana approached Sita in Ashokavana. The passion that the King of Lanka evinced for the Princess of Ayodhya was a complete audio-visual commentary on the nuances of the *sringara-rasa*. On another occasion the maestro took fifteen minutes to show how the monkey king Vali breathed his last!

The story is told of a Chakyar who was chased by the bulldog of the local English Collector. The Chakyar stopped in his tracks and enacted picking up an imaginary stone from the ground and hurling it at the dog. The ferocious animal howled in pain and rolled on the road. The Collector took the Chakyar to task for hurting his pet. The Chakyar re-

plied that he would show how he had done nothing to the animal. He enacted Ravana lifting up Mount Kailas with great strain. Lord Shiva, however, pressed the mountain with his toe. The mountain came down with a crash. The Collector felt the mountain was making a bee-line for his head. Like his pet he too collapsed to the ground and writhed in pain. It was a 'painful' demonstration of the Chakyar's histrionic power.

L S Rajagopalan's *Kudiyattam: Preliminaries and Performance* is a reference manual for all interested in this sublime, but almost vanished, art. He has devoted a lifetime to the study of Kudiyattam, has witnessed its performance in a number of Kuthambalams and mandapams and has been on intimate terms with many of the prominent actors with whom he has discussed and explored many subtle points about this highly stylized dramatic technique. The present book is a sequel to his earlier work, *Women's Role in Kudiyattam*, which was warmly welcomed by art critics. He has taken enormous pains to gather from nooks and corners valuable materials on the literary and presentational aspects of Kudiyattam. He has had access to many published and unpublished hereditary manuals of acting instructions called Attaprakaranams and Kramadipikas.

In the first section of the book Rajagopalan has given exhaustive details regarding the consecration of the Kuthambalam and the Purvaranga, or varied activities performed on the stage before the actual enacting of the drama. The Kerala tradition mostly follows Bharata's *Natya Shastra*, but makes minor variations here and there. In the second section Rajagopalan illustrates his thesis by a step-by-step description of the dramatization of the 'Thorana Yuddham' which forms the third act of the *Abhishaka Natakam* by the pre-Kalidasa playwright Bhasa. The central scene is the fight between Hanuman and the rakshasas, which takes place at the gate, Thorana, of Ashokavana. The battle is not enacted as such, but is presented by way of a report by the gardener Shankhakarna to Ravana. The trepidation of the gardener and the wrath of Ravana are finely contrasted with the great aplomb of Hanuman facing the terror of the three worlds.

One feature of Kudiyattam is that the Chakyar has to be a quick-change artist, acting in turn contrary roles with seamless ease. For instance, Shankhakarna in a trice becomes Ravana and vice versa. Yet another pleasant feature is the role played by

the Chakyar as the licensed jester, Vidushaka. Much-needed comic relief is provided by the Vidushaka, who speaks in Malayalam at length, delightfully parodying the Sanskrit of the hero. The jester hilariously alludes to current social problems and makes fun of individuals in the audience guilty of some faux pas. Of course, the person targeted cannot protest, but has to join in the laughter of the audience. Rajagopalan's book is a veritable mine of information about the theory and practice of Kudiyattam with critical comments from the literary and theatrical angles. Many Sanskrit texts used in different plays are given in the appendix. Again the lucid glossary helps the reader to appreciate many of the elements that go to enhance the artistry of Kudiyattam.

Altogether, Rajagopalan is to be congratulated on the yeoman service he has rendered to Kudiyattam; and a share of the credit must also go to the editorial staff of the Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, who have helped the author at every stage to design this monograph. Sadly we remember the late Dr S S Janaki, Director of the Institute, whose expert guidance has left a palpable glow on this labour of love.

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Hindu Symbols. Swami Harshananda.
Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road,
Basavanagudi, Bangalore 560 019. 2000.
40 pp. Rs 9.

Swami Harshananda rightly thinks that the fundamental concepts of any field of knowledge, which form the basis of its complicated superstructure, are essentially abstract. And just as the use of symbols is inevitable in secular sciences, it is absolutely necessary in religion too. Especially, Hinduism deals with such topics as God, creation, soul and the ultimate Goal, which are abstract, and there is a need to understand the abstract concepts through concrete symbols.

Accordingly, the author has made a successful attempt to give a brief account of the important symbols, emblems and sacred objects that are essential parts of Hinduism. He has dealt with the following important religious symbols: Praṇava (Aum), Śivaliṅga, Śricakra, Ūrdhva-puṇḍra and so on; trees like aśvattha, tulaśi and bilva; animals like

bull and cow; other symbols like kumbha or kalaśa, moon, sun, śālagrāma śilā, snake and svastika. The booklet is useful for all Hindus and others who want to know about the real significance of the Hindu symbols. The author deserves sincere thanks for his efforts to present relevant information concerning the meanings of symbols and emblems in Hinduism.

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Yoga: Its Mystery and Performing Art.

Swami Sadhanananda Giri. Jujersa Yogashram, PO Jujersa, Howrah 711 302. 1998. 184 pp. Rs 150.

Cittanadi nāma ubhayato vāhini, vahati kalyāṇāya vahati pāpāya ca'. This commentary of Vyasa on the philosophy of Patanjali reiterates the truth that the river called *citta* (the internal soul or mind) flows in two directions: one leads to bliss and the other to its opposite. Obstruction of one channel will increase the velocity of the other. But one has to choose the first.

For some, yoga mainly implies some special kind of respiration. Without inspiration and expiration nobody can survive. So one has to breathe in and breathe out so tactfully as to live with ease and yet attain at the same time the desired level of perfection.

The Vedas, Puranas and Tantras echo the same truth that in order to perceive the Self one has to sublimate the soul (*cittaśuddhi*). The knowledge that the supreme Reality is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is nothing but mere deductive knowledge we learn from the scriptures. But we can realize the Absolute by yogic practices. Yoga is the individual being's rendezvous with the supreme Being, the merging of the former's little existence in the ocean of unalloyed Bliss. This is the zenith of perfection in yoga sadhana.

Swami Sadhanananda Giri has made in his book a searching inquiry into the meaning and significance of the term *yoga* as understood by Yajñavalkya and Patanjali. A yoga practitioner develops the capacity to grasp all the scriptures, including the Vedas and Upanishads, as he advances in his practice. The *Hiranyagarbha Saṁhitā* says, '*saṅkalpa-vikalpa tyāgo yogah*', implying that the mind is always in some determinative or alternative modes.

Of the five chapters of the book, the third and fourth are important. In the third chapter Swami Sadhananandaji has written with the utmost sincerity and seriousness about the necessity of yoga sadhana for our ultimate salvation. Based on the sutra '*Yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ*', he refers to the five states of the mind (*kṣipta*, *mūḍha*, *vikṣipta*, *ekāgra* and *niruddha*), which work together to recover it from its wayward occupations and try to concentrate it solely on the supreme Reality. The author also refers to different kinds of yoga like kriya yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, mantra yoga and laya yoga, all of which speak of the absolute unanimity between them. We cannot say that one kind of yoga is better than the rest, as they are complementary to each other. The wise person is he who has truly understood their real significance.

In the fourth chapter the swami has discussed the various components of yoga. To attain success in the path of yoga the aspirant has to undergo disciplines like yama, niyama, asana and pranayama one after another. Of these, pranayama happens to be the most important because the practice of pranayama makes it possible for the sadhaka to merge himself in Brahman.

The concluding chapter deals with the six mystical nerve plexuses, or chakras, from the *mūlādhāra* to the *ājñā*. The higher ones represent, in fact, stages which can only be attained with the help of the guru's guidance. The chakras are also called lotuses and lie in the spinal axis, along which run three main nerve currents, called *idā*, *pingalā* and *suṣumnā*. The *mūlādhāra* is located at the root of the spinal column and is the receptacle of the 'coiled-up' spiritual energy called kundalini. The yogi who can, after prolonged practice, awaken this latent power and channel it through the *suṣumnā*, comes to possess immense power, and nothing remains impossible for him.

A word about the importance of the sadguru's advice. According to the author, guru's grace is indispensable especially in the advanced stages of kriya yoga, when the aspirant's mind risks being led off-track by subtle instincts. Doubts and confusions cannot be removed by mere verbal acknowledgement of spiritual truths. It is only by the guru's grace that the sadhaka's mind learns to rest in itself, in control of the sense organs; only then does the sadhaka reach the supreme state of kriya yoga, the attainment of *akṣara brahman*.

Towards the end of the book the swami has

given twenty detailed guidelines, which help in the performance of kriya and sadhana with care and reverence. In addition to following these rules, the sadhaka is advised to study the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Chandi*. According to the author, the former provides guidance and the latter eradicates sin and leads the aspirant to salvation.

It is no mere cliché that yoga synthesizes all religions; it is a living fact. The book rightly points out that, from the Buddhist *anapana* to the Sufi *zikr*, from the *hesychasm* of Eastern Orthodox Christianity to the Vaishnava mystics, almost all Eastern religions enjoin the practice of yoga in some form.

The secrets of yogic practice have probably never before appeared in print in such a simple and clear exposition. I wish the book wide circulation among those who have taken the ultimate oath of spiritual salvation.

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Mother Power and Mother Worship.

Deepali Sinha. Soumendra Nath Sinha, Ganesghat, Cuttack 753 002. 2002. vii + 120 pp. Rs 90.

The author of this book has tried to bring forth the relevance of women in almost all the spheres of life, mundane and spiritual. She has tried to bring to the fore the inherent divinity associated with Mother worship not only in India but throughout the world.

The book starts with a foreword by Dr Visvanath Chatterjee, followed by a preface by the author. It is divided into three broad parts: 'Ancient Indian Tradition', 'Mother Power and Mother Worship in the World Today' and 'Divine Mother and Sri Ramakrishna'. The first part is further divided into five chapters: 'The Vedas', 'The Upanishads', 'Indus Valley Civilization', 'The Puranas' and 'The Tantras'. The author has briefly explained the condition of women and the powers and privileges they enjoyed during various periods of Indian history. Further, she describes different aspects of the Divine Mother found in the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas. The importance of women is dealt with in short chapters beginning from the third. The themes of the second and third parts of the book are treated extensively and in detail. They stress the truth that women are but different representations

of the varied aspects of the one Divine Mother, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna. His worship of Sri Sarada Devi as the Divine Mother is highlighted as a new concept in Mother worship.

At the end of the book, the author focuses on topical themes like dowry deaths and female infanticide. She calls for an end to all such acts of injustice, reminding us of the essential divinity associated with womanhood.

Santosh Kumar Sharma
Kharagpur

Unconditional Bliss. *Howard Raphael Cushnir*. New Age Books, A-44, Naraina Phase I, New Delhi 110 028. 2001. viii + 204 pp. Rs 125

The musk deer hunts the source of the pleasant odour emanating from its own navel. *A la* deer, man goes on a hunting spree and finally dies in harness for that which lies hidden in him—bliss. Unconditional bliss, claims the author, can be experienced in every situation of life, favourable and unfavourable. Thoughtful men and women in search of inner peace will find this book worthy. It is meant for all those who are ready to *choose* true bliss. Unfortunately, man chooses misery! Why? The book answers this question, and shows the way out.

How to get bliss? Not through free association, meditation or yoga sittings, nor through pilgrimages and painful browsing of scriptural texts, but by practising total presence and allowing the bliss to flow, claims the author. According to him, it is a process of *living the questions*. He shows how this is possible with real-life illustrations that easily convince the reader that bliss *can* be had by all in all circumstances. The author successfully conveys the technique of experiencing the magic touch of total presence, and through that, experiencing bliss.

He takes the reader gradually from the meshes of pressing situations of mundane life to the highest pinnacle of human experience. The presentation is simple and lucid. This is a handy practical guide that will help the reader live in all its fullness every precious moment of life. The author delineates the subtlest workings of the human psyche with such clarity and candour that it ushers the reader into a sublime realm, making him rediscover himself in a new light.

Swami Shuddhidananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata

❧ Reports ❧

Inaugurated. New operation theatre and dental section; at Ramakrishna Saradashrama, Ponnampet; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 18 April.

Conducted. A two-week summer camp for children between 8 and 15 years of age; by Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad; from 27 April to 11 May. More than 500 children attended the camp, whose daily programme included yogasanas, meditation, bhajans, Vedic chanting and moral lessons.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur; by Sri Ajit Jogi, Chief Minister of Chattisgarh; on 2 May.

Laid. Foundation stone for a proposed medical ward; at Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai; by Swami Atmasthanandaji; on 4 May. Revered Maharaj also declared open an English language laboratory at the Technical Institute run by the centre.

Laid. Foundation for a new medical dispensary; at Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarpukur; by Srimat Swami Gitanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 11 May.

Released. Sinhala version of the book *Buddha and His Message*, a compilation of Swami Vivekananda's views on Buddha; by Mr W J M Lokubandara, Minister for Justice, Law Reform and National Integration, Government of Sri Lanka; at Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo; on 13 May.

Inaugurated. The newly built teachers' quarters; at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Che-

rrapunji; by Mr D D Lapang, Chief Minister of Meghalaya; on 13 May.

Awarded. Certificates to participants of a three-day workshop on personality development; at Ramakrishna Ashrama, Kishanpur; by Sri Hira Singh Bisht, Minister for Technical Education and Transport; on 17 May.

Conducted. A five-day spiritual retreat for monastic members of the Ramakrishna Order; by Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore; from 19 to 23 May. 38 monks from 22 branch centres participated in the retreat.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission TB Sanatorium; by Justice Sri Rama Jois, Governor of Jharkhand; on 20 May.

Distributed. 125 saris, 125 dhotis, 1000 assorted garments, 250 kg rice and 125 sets of utensils among 125 families; by Ramakrishna Mission, Patna; at Birol, Darbhanga; in May. The families had lost their homes to a devastating fire accident.

Provided. Fodder and water for 171 cows; by Vivekananda Ashrama, Ulsoor; at Gulati Kaval and Muninagar villages of Bangalore Rural district. Fodder for 480 cows; by Ramakrishna Mission, Jaipur; in Osian tehsil of Jodhpur district; during May. Both districts are drought-affected.

Supplied. Building materials for house construction; by Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, Jayrambati, and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Jalpaiguri; to people rendered homeless by the recent cyclone that hit West Bengal. Besides, Jayrambati Sevashrama also sunk 5 tube-wells and distributed food and clothing in Bankura district. *