

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or AWAKENED INDIA*



NOVEMBER
2003



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

VOL. 108
ISSN 0032-6178



Monthly Journal of Ramakrishna Order
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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

NOVEMBER 2003

No. 11

Traditional Wisdom

DETACHMENT

आपातवैराग्यवतो मुमुक्षून् भवाब्धिपारं प्रतियातुमुद्यतान् ।
आशाग्रहो मञ्जयतेऽन्तराले निगृह्य कण्ठे विनिवृत्य वेगात् ॥

The shark of hankering holds by the throat those seekers of liberation who have only a semblance of detachment and are trying to cross the ocean of transmigratory existence. Violently snatching them away (from the knowledge of Brahman), it drowns them midway. (*Vivekachudamani*, 79)

Mandodari told her royal husband Ravana, 'If you are so intent upon having Sita as your queen, why don't you impose on her by assuming the form of her husband Rama with the help of your magical powers?' 'Fie on you!' explained Ravana, 'Can I stoop to the pleasure of the senses while I am in the holy form of Rama—a form the very thought of which fills my heart with such unspeakable joy and blessedness that even the highest heaven appears to me worthless?' (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 138)

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

He is free, he is great, who turns his back upon the world, one who has renounced everything, who has controlled his passion, and who thirsts for peace. One may gain political and social independence, but if one is a slave to one's passions and desires, one cannot feel the pure joy of freedom. (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 5.419)

∞ This Month ∞

The *Bhagavadgita*-based mental traits that mark out a true devotee are discussed in this month's editorial **The Devotional Mindset**.

Some news clippings and a notification about publications from 'News and Notes' are featured in this issue under **Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago**.

Swami Atulanandaji's comments on verses 6 to 13 of the eighth chapter of the *Gita* are featured in **Reflections on the Bhagavadgita**. The effect of the predominant thought at the time of death on one's life hereafter, the need to remember God all the time, the significance of constant practice—these important points are discussed in this instalment.

In the third and concluding part of his research article **The Kali Temple at Dakshineswar and Sri Ramakrishna**, Swami Prabhānandaji narrates with copious references Sri Ramakrishna's arrival at Dakshineswar, his assuming charge successively as priest of the Radha-Kanta and Kali temples and his first vision of Kali. The author justly concludes that the Dakshineswar temple is a reminder 'that the realization of God is the only goal of all religions and of all people everywhere'. Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, the author is a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission. He has to his credit a number of books and articles, in English and Bengali.

In his thought-provoking article **Fundamentalism, Tolerance and India's Heritage**, Dr Anil Baran Ray discusses the topical relevance of Sri Ramakrishna's message of the

harmony of religions, based on the oneness of spiritual Reality. Pleading for a positive attitude towards all religions, the author rightly observes that India would become great not through religious fights but through religious harmony, sacrifice and service. Familiar to our readers, the learned author is professor and former head of the department of political science, University of Burdwan, West Bengal.

Readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* know the younger Naren, whom the Master praised for his guilelessness and purity. **Narendra Nath Mitra (The Younger Naren)** by Swami Chetananandaji is his biography, third to be included in the revised edition of the author's well-known book, *They Lived with God*. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Chetananandaji is head of the Vedanta Society of St Louis.

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad is the second instalment of a translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidya-mandira, Belur. The elaborate notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

Glimpses of Holy Lives features incidents from the life of Sant Narsi Mehta, the well-known poet-saint from Gujarat.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition by Swami Premeshanandaji features the author's comments on sutras 1 to 15 of the second chapter, 'Sādhana Pāda'. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, translator of the original Bengali notes, is a former Professor of Statistics from Calcutta University.

The Devotional Mindset

EDITORIAL

God remains just a three-letter word to us as long as we have not had our fill of worldly pleasure and pain. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, the mother keeps herself busy with her cooking as long as the child remains happy playing with the toys. Second, we do not feel the need for God as long as our needs are met by the world. We need God mostly to help us in our worldly agenda: name, fame, prosperity, cure from diseases and so on. Such devotion is not much different from barter, though it is better to pray to God than depend on one's puny little ego. Among the four classes of people who worship God, Sri Krishna calls such devotees *ārta* (the afflicted) and *arthārthī* (seekers of prosperity).¹ There is a plus side to such devotion: it inculcates and strengthens in the devotee the habit of turning to God. In course of time, this can help him turn to God for God's sake.

Qualities a Devotee Can Gainfully Cultivate

True devotion to God *for* God begins with the third class of devotees, whom Sri Krishna calls *jijñāsu*. Having had their fill of what the world has to offer and being convinced of its ephemeral and miserable nature, they look for the real meaning of human existence. They begin their quest for an abiding reality. In other words, they seek to know their real nature, the nature of God, and their relationship with Him. Are there any guidelines by which such seekers could conduct themselves? The *Bhagavadgīta* says yes. In its second and fourteenth chapters Sri Krishna describes the traits of a man of steady wisdom (*sthītaprajñā*) and of one who has transcended the *gunas* (*triguṇātīta*). According to Sri Shankaracharya these traits are enumerated with a view to helping

spiritual aspirants acquire these qualities by special effort, since the traits of a realized soul are the means of attaining realization.² Verses 13 to 19 of the twelfth chapter of the *Gīta* describe the characteristics that endear a devotee to God. According to Sri Shankara, these qualities describe a sannyasin's life. According to Sri Ramanuja, however, these traits are the devotional elements in a karma yogi who adores God through his work. Either way, a *jijñāsu* can gainfully cultivate these traits in his search for God. These traits can be grouped under four heads: the devotee's mindset, his attitude towards others, towards the world and towards work. In this essay we discuss the devotee's mindset.

Freedom from the Sense of 'I' and 'Mine'

The ideal is to be free from egotism and the sense of possession regarding things animate and inanimate. That is easier said than done. Sri Ramakrishna describes two types of ego: (1) the unripe ego that entangles one to sense enjoyments, making one feel 'I am the doer. I am the son of a wealthy man. I am learned. I am rich. How dare anyone slight me?'; (2) the ripe ego, which is also called the servant ego, devotee ego or knowledge ego.³ Rather than worry about getting rid of his ego, a seeker on the path of devotion tries to cultivate and strengthen the ripe ego. He feels that God is the Master and he His servant. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, 'One should have such burning faith in God that one can say: "What? I have repeated the name of God, and can sin still cling to me? How can I be a sinner any more? How can I be in bondage any more?"' (138) Without this strong faith in oneself any professed faith in God can only be in name and of not much help in one's spiritual en-

deavour. That explains Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on faith in oneself before faith in God.

The devotee ego is based on one's certitude about and relationship with the indwelling God. Such an 'I' gradually weans the aspirant from his attachment to body and mind, the root of attraction to sense objects. The devotee imagines himself to be a spark of the divine Fire, called God. He derives strength from the fact that all auspicious qualities in God—like purity, strength, fearlessness and eternity—are *his* too, even as the fire's burning power inheres no less in the spark. The knowledge ego is based on the luminous, spiritual core of the aspirant's personality. He learns to dwell more and more on the Atman, negating his ephemeral body-mind-based personality.

The devotee ego says 'not I, not I, but Thou', 'I' referring to the body-mind complex and 'Thou' denoting the indwelling God behind it. The knowledge ego, on the other hand, says 'not this, not this, but I', where 'I' refers to the Atman, the core divine reality in the aspirant and 'this' signifies everything other than the Atman, beginning from the aspirant's mind and body and covering everything of the gross and subtle worlds. Despite the difference in temperament, both devotee ego and knowledge ego stress the reduction of identification with body-mind and greater proximity to and identification with God.

Pure, Ever-contented

Contentment is a tall order for devotees of the 'afflicted' and 'after-prosperity' types. A true devotee trains his body and mind not to become too demanding. He nourishes his body looking upon it as an abode of God. He is content with bare minimum necessities for his existence and tries to think more and more of God. He cultivates his discriminative faculty, buddhi, and tries to remain independent of the body, mind, senses and their mutual connection. He trains himself not to have preferences and prejudices.

He cultivates both outer and inner purity, the former by regular wash and the latter by cultivating purity of mind. He does a quality audit on the inputs through his sense organs and trains his mind to think positive thoughts. In Swamiji's words, 'The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them.'⁴ The devotee ego strengthens the aspirant's will power, which helps him struggle with his past mental impressions.

Dedicating Manas and Buddhi to God

Manas is the deliberative faculty in man that makes him cogitate on the pros and cons of the options before him. Buddhi is the discriminative or decision-making faculty in him. It is also the seat of will power. Buddhi does not grow with age, but needs to be cultivated. It is rightly said that growing old is mandatory, not growing wise. The more decisive a man is in small things, the more discriminative and decisive he will be in greater things. Decision-making is indeed difficult in that it involves assuming responsibility for the consequences. While for organizations a committee may help spread the responsibility, there is no option for an individual other than exercising the decision-making faculty in him. Habitual indecision may postpone having to face the consequences—that the delay worsens the situation is another matter—but it also postpones the cultivation and strengthening of buddhi, the indispensable first step towards success, worldly or spiritual. Of course, deciding not to decide on something for a time is a different matter. Maybe, more details are needed for the decision. What is important is to exercise buddhi, the decision-making faculty.

Sri Krishna uses the word *mayyarpita-manobuddhiḥ* to describe his dear devotee. The term means that the devotee's manas and buddhi are focused on God. Sri Ramanuja elucidates the point: The devotee's manas and

buddhi are dedicated to the Lord in that he is convinced that Lord Vasudeva alone is being propitiated by his activities and when duly propitiated, He would grant him the direct vision of the Self.

In any case, dedicating one's manas and buddhi presupposes a systematic spiritual discipline. In the graded path of devotion outlined in the *Gita* (12.8-11), Sri Krishna assures that a devotee with his manas and buddhi riveted on Him is certain to live in Him from then on (Sri Ramanuja more acceptably interprets *atha ūrdhvam* to mean 'from then on' instead of 'after death'). If a devotee considers this difficult, Sri Krishna asks him to take to abhyasa yoga, or the yoga of practice. Sri Ramakrishna explains abhyasa yoga with an example:

At Kāmārpukur I have seen women of the carpenter families selling flattened rice. Let me tell you how alert they are while doing their business. The pestle of the husking-machine that flattens the paddy constantly falls into the hole of the mortar. The woman turns the paddy in the hole with one hand and with the other holds her baby on her lap as she nurses it. In the mean time the customers arrive. The machine goes on pounding the paddy, and she carries on her bargains with the customers. ... You see, she has all these things to do at the same time—nurse the baby, turn the paddy as the pestle pounds it, take the flattened rice out of the hole, and talk to the buyers. This is called the yoga of practice. Fifteen parts of her mind out of sixteen are fixed on the pestle of the husking-machine, lest it should pound her hand. With only one part of her mind she nurses the baby and talks to the buyers. Likewise, ... a householder should devote fifteen parts of his mind to God; otherwise, he will face ruin and fall into the clutches of Death. He should perform the duties of the world with only one part of his mind. (367-8)

To continue with Sri Krishna's graded path of devotion. He offers an alternative for those who find the yoga of practice difficult: 'Work for My sake; even by such actions you will attain perfection.' For those not capable of following this, Sri Krishna has the last option: 'Offer the fruits of all your actions to Me.'

A devotee with his manas and buddhi dedicated to God is described as *sthiramatiḥ*, steady-minded with regard to spiritual truths. He sticks to the essentials of religion, which is to realize the divinity latent in him. He judges things by how far they conduce to his transformation from animal nature to human nature to divine nature. He values the 'secondary details' of religion ('doctrines or dogmas, or rituals or books, or temples or forms')⁵ only to the extent they help transform his character.

Firmness of Conviction

A firm conviction in the divinity behind the world and its inherence in man is fundamental to meaningful devotion. A true devotee is not assailed by arguments to the contrary, because his conviction is born of spiritual discipline, not vain scholarship. He is convinced that his prayers for devotion are certain to reach God, who hears even the sound of anklets on the feet of an ant.⁶ With an example Sri Ramakrishna's illustrates the perseverance of a devotee of firm conviction:

Sometimes it happens that discriminating between the Real and the unreal, a man loses his faith in the existence of God. But a devotee who sincerely yearns for God does not give up his meditation even though he is invaded by atheistic ideas. A man whose father and grandfather have been farmers continues his farming though he doesn't get any crop in a year of drought. (238)

Detachment from the Household

The term *aniketah* literally means 'one who has no abode'. This has obvious reference to the sannyasin. To be of significance to others, the term has to be understood to mean one who is not attached to his home, his family. There is truth in the saying 'There is nothing wrong in being a householder, but let not the house hold you.' Sri Ramakrishna's example of a maidservant in the house of a rich man illustrates the point. She performs all the household duties, but her thoughts are fixed on her own home in her native village. She brings up

her master's children as if they were her own. But in her own mind she knows very well that they do not belong to her at all. (81)

Other Mental Traits

Detached from his lower nature and more identified with his pure 'I', a devotee has certain distinguishing mental traits:

Freedom from joy and anger: Worldly joy arises from the contact of sense organs with sense objects; worry results from the severance of this contact. Anger and lack of forbearance are a sequel to obstacles in the way of sense enjoyment. A devotee does not hanker after worldly things, for his search is directed within, to God, the source of abiding joy. He is free from desire, anger and greed, the three-fold gateway to hell.⁷ Sri Krishna considers him a yogi and a happy man who is able to withstand even while alive the impulses arising from lust and anger.⁸ Sri Shridhara Svamin's gloss on this verse (5.23) cannot be more impressive: 'A dead man does not succumb to the impulses arising from lust and anger when weeping young maidens touch his body or when his son and wife cremate his body. If a man is able to withstand such impulses even while alive, he is a yogi, he is a happy man.'

Freedom from fear, worry and anxiety: Since he is free from the desire to possess sense objects, a devotee is free from fear. Nothing in this world is exempt from fear. In the forceful words of Bhartrihari, 'In enjoyments is the fear of disease; in social position the fear of falling off; in wealth the fear of (hostile) kings; in adoration the fear of humiliation; in strength the fear of enemies; in beauty the fear of old age; in scholarship the fear of opponents; in virtue the fear of slander; and in body the fear of death. Everything in this world is fraught with fear; renunciation alone is fearlessness.'⁹

A bhakta's renunciation is not a forced giving up. As he moves closer to God, lesser things drop off by themselves. He gives up the lower for something higher. According to Narada, a bhakta's love is not desire-oriented be-

cause it is of the form of renunciation.¹⁰

Worry and anxiety result from getting worked up about the turn of events, expecting a favourable outcome every time. A devotee is free from such anxiety because he turns to God for the solution of his problems, and believes that God *does* listen to his prayers and will give him adequate strength to face problems. Sri Ramakrishna's life illustrates an important point. Even amid the excruciating pain of throat cancer, he continued to dwell in God and help others advance on the way to God. A devotee will do well to remember his saying, 'Let the body and pain take care of themselves; O mind, you be happy.' A true devotee does not pray for cure of his disease, but for devotion and strength to go through the ordeal.

Impartiality: Having no axe to grind, a devotee does not take sides in an issue. He is equally disposed towards all, but maintains a healthy detachment from people.

* * *

We have discussed certain distinguishing mental traits by which the true devotee is known from a shopkeeper in religion. The true devotee's attitude towards the world, towards others and towards work—these will be the subject of the next editorial. *

References

1. *Bhagavadgita*, 7.16.
2. Sri Shankaracharya on the *Gita*, 2.55; 14.25.
3. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 860.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.300.
5. *Ibid.*, 1.124.
6. *Gospel*, 916.
7. *Gita*, 16.21.
8. *Ibid.*, 5.23.
9. *Vairagya Shatakam*, 31.
10. *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, 7.



Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



November 1903

Great men have found no royal road to their triumphs. It is always the old road, by way of industry and perseverance. A constant struggle, a ceaseless battle to bring success from inhospitable surroundings has ever been the price of all great achievement.

Even existence is impossible to the individual without the Collective. Therefore to move slowly towards the infinite Collective *en rapport* with it, happy in its happiness, distressed in its affliction, is the one duty of the individual. Not mere duty—lack of it means death, fulfilment immortality.

One of the greatest artistic marvels of the world is to be seen in the museum at Harvard University. This curiosity consists of hundreds of specimens of flowers and plants formed of glass, but with such exquisite fidelity to Nature that they appear to be real, every tint and marking, every tiniest detail, being faithfully reproduced. They are made by a secret process, the artists being a father and son in Germany, who, it is said, may let their secret die with them. As an instance of the wonderful workmanship it may be mentioned that the very hairs which appear on the stems of certain plants are reproduced on the glass imitations.

There is a pond at Golconda which is fed by the waters from some hot springs. This pond has an area of two or three acres, and the temperature of the water is about 75 degrees, and in some places where the hot water bubbles up from the bottom the temperature is almost at boiling point. Recently a discovery has been made that this warm lake is literally alive with carps, some of which are more than a foot long. All efforts to catch them with a hook and line have failed, and they will not touch the most tempting bait. A few of them have been shot, and contrary to the general supposition, the flesh was found to be warm and palatable.

A notification on some publications:

Important Works	R	A	P
<i>Lecture on the Vedanta</i> by Swami Saradananda	0	1	0
<i>Lectures, Literary and Religious</i> by Swami Saradananda	0	8	0
<i>Re-incarnation</i> by Swami Abhedananda	0	1	0
<i>Sri Krishna</i> by Dr J N Mitra	0	6	0
<i>Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa</i> by P C Mozoomdar	1	10	0
<i>The Hindu System of Moral Science</i> by Kishori Lall Sarkar, MA, BL	0	1	0
<i>The Hindu System of Religious Science & Art</i> - do -	1	0	0

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—From 'News and Notes'

Reflections on the *Bhagavadgita*

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Chapter 8 (*continued*)

6. Whatever being (or condition) one thinks of at the end, when leaving the body, that (being, that condition) and no other, does he attain, O son of Kunti, because of his constant thought of that being or condition.

Our last thought determines the future state of the soul whatever that thought may be. We find a story in the *Mahabharata* illustrating this fact. Most of us will remember the story as beautifully told by Swamiji. There was in India a great king named Bharata. Following the injunctions of the shastras, when he grew old this king renounced the world, leaving his kingdom to be ruled by his son. He entered the Himalayan forest and there, far from his palace, wealth and former enjoyments, built himself a little hut on the banks of a river. He collected and prepared his own food. There he spent his days communing with God, who is the Spirit present in the forest, in the trees, in the river and in the soul of man. One day while he was meditating on the riverbank a deer came to drink water. As the deer was drinking, a lion in search of prey roared a little distance off. So frightened became the deer that she made a big jump to clear the river. This sudden fright and great exertion made the deer (which was with young) give birth to a little fawn. Then she died on the spot. The little fawn fell in the water and was being carried off by the stream. The king, who had been roused from his meditation by the roar of the lion, saw what happened and in the kindness of his heart he rescued the fawn from what would have been certain death. He preserved its life. The fawn grew up and became very much attached to the king, who also felt great attachment for the deer. The more the king became attached to

the deer, the less he could concentrate his mind on God. He was always thinking of the well-being of the deer anxious that no mishap should overtake it. Some years passed and then the king's end approached. When he was about to die, instead of turning towards God his mind was occupied with the deer. He felt great anxiety as to how it would be able to find food and how it would be protected from wild animals after he was gone. And with his mind burdened with these thoughts and giving one last look at his beloved deer, the king passed away. And as a result the king was born as a deer in his next birth.

That shows that our last thoughts are very important. And we know how very widely the last moments differ with dying persons. There are holy men who before leaving the body have sublime heavenly thoughts and visions. They see heaven opened before them; angels administer unto them and beckon them to enter the realm of unspeakable joy. Even before they go forth, they have entered bliss. And others, how very sad, how great is their suffering, their agony, when tormented with evil thoughts and apparitions; the soul seems hidden in utter darkness, watched over by evil influences. And again there are the highest of all beings, those who step out in the state of samadhi, meditating on God as their only refuge, on God as their inner Reality. Even before putting aside the physical garb they have entered into Him, who has been their very own all the days of their life.

Their last moments are an expansion of soul. From personal they become impersonal, from individual they become universal. Death is not a change to them. It is only a laying aside of the vehicle.

In India I visited a hospital where sannyasins alone were received as indoor patients. There had been a woman there who had adopted the sannyasin garb. During her travels on foot, she was taken ill and was brought to the hospital for treatment. The fever ran very high and the patient became delirious, so much so that she had to be held down to her cot with straps. But shortly the medicine took effect and the sannyasini not only calmed down, but also seemed to be on the road to speedy recovery. It was noticed that she was very pious and well read in the shastras. It was thought that soon she would be able to leave the hospital and resume her wandering life. But one morning she was found to be suffering from a relapse. She was however very quiet and peaceful in mind. She told the swami in charge that she would not recover her health. And she begged of him that a little water be brought to her, fresh from the Ganges. The holy river was not far distant and the water was brought to her. Then she rose from her cot, spread a blanket on the floor, sprinkled over it the holy water and seating herself on the blanket began to recite with strong voice the entire *Gita*. When she had finished reading the *Gita* she sat down for meditation and with her mind thus concentrated on God she departed from this world.

How can we account for different experiences by different persons during the hour of death? How can we avoid darkness? How can we enter the state of bliss when the last moment comes? This is what Arjuna wants to know. How can we enter into the presence of God and escape all suffering? On what do our last thoughts depend? Our last thoughts depend on previous thoughts. What we have been thinking all our life, what we have been occupied with all our life, our desires, our am-

bitions—*these* determine our last moments. Those moments will be full of thoughts we are familiar with throughout our life. Only such thoughts then arise in us spontaneously; they have been most prominent during our lifetime. We cannot get rid of them during our last moments. The mind follows the path of least resistance. As in dream or during high fever the mind runs its own course, quite beyond our control, so when weak and suffering during our last hours, we will not be able to change the lifelong tendency of the mind.

Through the life of every one of us run as it were our theme, our ambition, our hope, our aspiration and our ruling passion. And on and around *that* our entire life is woven. All our endeavours, all our actions are but variations of the main theme. There is this one basic note and all our efforts can be traced back to this fundamental strain. It is with this theme playing in our ears that we shall depart. This great and deep-seated hope that has guided us through life will guide us in the beyond. We will meet that condition which we have loved most here on earth, that which was dearest to us, that which was the object of our constant thought; just as the king constantly occupied in his thought with the deer, became a deer in his next life. 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' said Jesus.¹ Different as are the conditions in this life, so different must be the conditions of the hereafter. We create our own destiny, our own heaven and our own suffering—here or hereafter. It matters little where we go or what we meet, if our mind is pure. The mind is the seer of our joy and sorrow. Our thoughts are our friends as well as our enemies.

There have been bhaktas who feared not even hell, because their Beloved would be with them no matter where they went. Hell would be heaven to them with the Lord at their side. Prahlada was willing to be born in a swine body provided he had intense love for his Vishnu. Martyrs have been burned at the stake, rejoicing and jubilant. Where our

thoughts are, *there* we shall have to go. We are always following our thoughts and the time of death will be no exception. It is said that when there is a great mutual love, then we will meet with the beloved one after death. And when

that great love is directed towards God, then we will go to *Him*. The answer to Arjuna's question is then easily found. Sri Krishna gives it in the next verse.

7. Therefore, at all times, think of Me and fight. With mind and intellect absorbed in Me, you will doubtless come to Me.

The Lord always explains his teachings, and He gives reasons for everything. We are never asked to believe anything blindly. So here, after having explained the secret of life after death, the Lord says, 'Therefore—that being so—at all times meditate on Me. Constantly keep your mind fixed on Me and at the same time perform your *svadharma*, your duty as a kshatriya. Then, with your whole heart at all times consigned to Me, you will come to Me.'

When the whole heart is devoted to God everything in the universe will be perceived as His manifestation. He is seen in the doer. He is seen in the deed. And He is seen in the result. The heart is filled with the Deity. He is seen everywhere. He is always present before the mind.

The fight is not Arjuna's alone. *All* of us have to fight our way out of *maya*. All of us have to perform our respective duties. And we must also try at all times to remember the Lord. We must make that a habit, but how? If we are busy people how can we meditate on God? Yes, that can be done. Meditation is not a matter of external practice. It is true we cannot sit with our eyes closed and fight at the same time. Therefore the Lord shows the way. Give your mind and heart to Me. That will not hinder you in doing your duty. Meditating, reading, listening is all good. But do not forget to give Me your heart. When you give your heart to me, it remains always with Me. I shall keep

it safely and you can fight at the same time.

When Kunti was living in the forest with her sons, the Pandava brothers, she had to undergo terrible hardships. She, the queen used to luxury, waited on by an army of servants, was now alone in the forest with her sons. Her suffering was at times intense. She was greatly devoted to Krishna, who was her brother's son and an intimate friend of her sons. One day Sri Krishna visited them in the forest and seeing their pitiful condition was moved with compassion. He asked Kunti what He might do to relieve her suffering. And then Kunti said, 'O Krishna, Thou art the Lord. I pray that my mind may direct its devotion towards Thee as constantly as the flowing Ganges directs her stream towards the ocean.' When the whole heart is devoted to God everything in the universe will be perceived as His manifestation.

He is seen in the doer. He is seen in the deed. And He is seen in the result. The heart is filled with the Deity. He is seen everywhere. He is always present before the mind. And the goal after death, also, is necessarily He. That comes from loving and constant thought on Him.

Those who are so fortunate as to be always conscious of God's presence live in great peace and contentment. They have nothing to fear and in all conditions of life they remain unmoved, serene and happy. The *Yoga Vasishtha* says of such persons that even 'when a shower of arrows pierces their bodies they are as calm as if soft lilies were being thrown at them. A bed of flames is to them like a soft

cushioned bed sprinkled with some water; and should their heads be cut off, it would be to them like sweet slumber.' It is the secret of happiness here and hereafter. 'Even in this life *they* have conquered death whose minds are firmly fixed on Me.'² We know this to be true. We know it to be the only remedy for all evil. And still we forget. Therefore a little practice is necessary. We must try again and again. If we fail, that is nothing; we may try again. In that way, little by little, we will grow strong and self-controlled. Great results come from little practice even, if only persisted in.

We remember the story of the little bird who tried to empty the ocean by carrying a few drops of water in its beak. The bird had left its eggs on the shore and during its absence the ocean had rolled in and swallowed the eggs. Returning and not finding its eggs, the bird was very angry and resolved to get back the eggs and at the same time to punish the ocean by pouring out its water with his beak and two wings. First his little wife tried to dissuade him pointing out the helplessness of his state, he a little bird not being a match for the mighty roaring ocean. But after being re-

proved by her husband for her infidelity, she like a good, obedient wife began to assist her husband in carrying off the water, a few drops at a time. Day and night they laboured, but they made little or no headway. Other birds came and teased them for their folly, but they were simply told to cooperate with them or go their way. But finally they all joined in the work. At last Narada, the divine sage, in his wanderings came to the spot where the birds were. They did not desist. Seeing their firm resolve and patient effort, Narada told the birds to invoke Garuda's help. At the sight of the mighty Garuda, the celestial bird, the ocean began to tremble with fear and in great haste returned the eggs to the birds.

Thus we must be at it untiringly, patiently. Then help comes from all sides just as it came to the birds. Even monkeys came to help Rama to recover his wife. As a lion never retraces his steps once he has set out on his path, so man should never abandon a good undertaking, great or small. *Then* success is secured. Great is his reward who perseveres in meditation. Sri Krishna says in the next verse:

8. With the mind made steadfast by habitual meditation, not moving towards anything else, fixed in the supreme resplendent Purusha, O son of Pritha, one goes to Him.

That is called abhyasa yoga: the constant practice of meditation, the repetition of one idea, uninterrupted by any other thought, with reference to God. With the mind thus totally engaged in yoga, not passing over to any other object, the yogi who mediates according to the teaching of the scriptures and of the guru, reaches the Purusha, that is the divine Spirit. Meditation makes the mind calm and removes its restlessness. This is a very difficult and advanced practice to think of God without allowing the mind to wander away. There are so many things to claim our attention; the world is calling from all sides. Still, only by such practice is God, the resplendent Purusha, reached. We have to choose between the world and the highest realization. St John

says, 'Love not the world, neither the things *that* are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'³ 'And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.'⁴

In the *Isha Upanishad* there occurs a beautiful prayer directed to the sun: 'The face of Truth is hidden by a golden disk. Uncover Thy face, O Sun, that I, the worshipper of Truth, may behold Thee.'⁵ So prayed the rishi of old, 'O Pushan! O Sun, sole traveller of the heavens, controller of all, son of creation's Lord, collect Thy rays and gather up Thy burning effulgence.' And then, after having realized that Truth in samadhi, the sage exclaims, 'I behold Thy glorious form. I am He, the Purusha, who

dwells within Thee.⁶

The rishi went beyond phenomena. He knew that the sun is only a manifestation, hid-

ing the Reality, which is God, the Spirit. That Spirit which the yogi reaches is further described in the verses that follow.

9–10. The Omniscient, the Ancient, the Ruler, minuter than an atom, the Sustainer of form inconceivable, self-luminous like the sun and beyond the darkness of maya—he who meditates on Him thus at the time of death, full of devotion, with the mind unmoving and also by the power of yoga fixing the whole prana between the eyebrows, goes to that supreme, resplendent Purusha.

How should we meditate on that resplendent Purusha? As the omniscient and ancient One. He is beyond time, the most ancient. Before time was, He was, beginningless, eternal, the Ruler of the whole universe and still minuter than the atom, more subtle than the smallest particle of matter. He is the Sustainer, who allots to all beings actions and their results. Though He is present everywhere, we cannot conceive of His form. He is self-luminous. He is not known by any agency, neither by understanding, nor by the mind, nor by the senses. He is known only by the Self. For 'There the eyes cannot reach, neither words nor the mind.'⁷ 'From there words reflect back with thought, without reaching the goal.'⁸ He is glorious like the sun, with the splendour of His *nitya-chaitanya*, eternal Intelligence. He depends on none, but everything depends on Him. He is the consciousness in conscious beings, beyond the darkness of maya.

He who thus meditates on Him at the time of death goes to Him. But meditation must be with great devotion and with the mind made strong and steady by long practice of yoga and the constant practice of samadhi. And then the prana, the vital current, must be

fixed between the eyebrows. That means the will and self-consciousness must be directed to the place between the eyebrows, the seat of the spiritual eye. This is a special process of yoga. First the mind is concentrated on the heart. There is a lotus of fire imagined in the heart. And when the whole consciousness is centred in the lotus, the prana, the life-breath, which is controlled through the practice of pranayama, a special method of breathing, is lifted through the *susumnā* up to the place between the eyebrows and through that centre the soul departs from the body.

Then he goes to the resplendent Purusha, the Spirit, where the power of cognition and action is at rest. From there, there is no return. What was Personal first, is now realized as Impersonal. This is the most difficult part of the *Gita*. How to leave this world and attain the Highest? The individual becomes the Universal or, as the Hindus sometimes express it, the jiva becomes Shiva.

That highest goal is very hard to reach and is known to very few, though many strive for it. I shall therefore tell you more about it, says Sri Krishna, how it can be reached in different ways and also its name and other matters relating to the subject. Listen:

11. That which the knowers of the Vedas speak of as Imperishable, that which the self-controlled sannyasins, freed from attachment, enter into, and to gain which they live the life of a brahmacharin, that goal I shall declare to you briefly.

Sri Krishna says that He will declare that highest goal which is called Imperishable, which the true sannyasins reach and for the attainment of which man goes through many troubles, and adopts the brahmacharin

life. Those who know the Vedas call this goal Imperishable. The words of those who know and have realized the Truth taught in the Vedas alone is of value. These are the men who speak with authority. 'Verily, verily, I say

unto thee, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen,' said Jesus.⁹ In religion book learning is not sufficient. Any intelligent person can learn the scriptures by heart even, but that is not realizing their Truth. Such persons may be able to expound the text of the Vedas, but that does not make them spiritual. They may be pundits, scholars, but they are not true gurus unless they have realized Truth for themselves. 'An ass laden with a load of sandalwood, knows only the weight of the wood, but not its precious qualities,' says an Indian proverb. So it is with the ordinary pundits. 'Different ways of throwing out words, different ways of explaining texts of the scriptures—these are for the enjoyment of the learned, but not for freedom.'¹⁰

Only those who possess Truth can give Truth. Only those who have visited foreign countries are fit to tell about those countries. Those who have studied from maps and books are not knowers of the land. Who then is the fit guru? Says Sri Shankaracharya, 'He is the true guru who himself has crossed this terrible ocean of life and who, without any idea of gain to himself, helps others also to cross the

ocean.'¹¹ The Upanishad has this to say on inferior gurus: 'Themselves steeped in darkness, but in the pride of their heart thinking that they are intelligent and enlightened, the fools want to help others and they go round and round in many crooked ways, staggering to and fro, and like the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch.'¹²

Sri Krishna refers here to the knowers of Brahman. 'That goal that *they* declare, that very same goal I shall now declare to you, Arjuna.' It is the eternal Spirit devoid of any attributes into which enter those sannyasins, those renouncers who are self-controlled and free from passion. They enter into that Spirit of freedom, after attaining right knowledge and realization. They live the brahmacharin life, the life of continence, of asceticism and hardship. That is the godly life of those who, casting out of their hearts all other desires, labour for salvation, realizing more and more perfectly the illusive character of the universe. That goal then can be realized by meditation. Sri Krishna will now teach how to meditate on God through the sacred syllable Om.

12. Closing all the gates of the senses, confining the mind in the heart and drawing the prana into the head, thus engaged in the practice of concentration,

13. Uttering the monosyllable Om, [the syllable denoting] Brahman, and meditating on Me, he who departs, leaving the body, he attains the supreme Goal.

First we must practise a little meditation. How to practise meditation? By closing the gates of the senses. Through the senses we know the external world. Whatever knowledge comes to us through the senses is knowledge about the universe. But now we are trying to get another kind of knowledge. After realizing the changing, unreal, illusory nature of the external world, the yogi turns away from that and goes inward within himself to explore internal nature. The senses cannot help us there. They stand in the way. They present the world-vision. But we do not want the world now; we want to penetrate beyond

the world. We want to know what stands behind the universe. We must put the senses aside for the present. They call and clamour to make us go outward. But we must make them obey us when we want them to remain silent and quiet when we are engaged in our inward exploration.

How can we do that? How can we close the senses? It is the first step in meditation. Meditation means keeping one thought steadily before us to the exclusion of all other thoughts. We know that whatever we perceive, calls up thought. The moment we see, hear, smell, taste or touch anything, we think

of the object causing the sensation. But in meditation no such thoughts should enter the mind, for that would interfere with the thought of our meditation. We must therefore prevent the senses from functioning. We cannot think very deeply and with great concentration while looking around us, while listening to something, while moving about or while tasting or smelling something. Therefore we meditate in a place where there is nothing to excite the senses or to distract our mind. We retire to a solitary, quiet place where we are not likely to be disturbed in any way or by any person. Then we sit very quietly and we try not to feel the body. We try to forget the body. We close the eyes so that our sight will not call for our attention. The posture must be

The moment we see, hear, smell, taste or touch anything, we think of the object causing the sensation. But in meditation no such thoughts should enter the mind, for that would interfere with the thought of our meditation. We must therefore prevent the senses from functioning.

comfortable. And in noisy places we may close the ears with a little cotton, if necessary, so as not to be distracted by the noise. These are external things that assist us a little. We will understand this better if we know how the senses act.

The external senses like the eyes and ears are only secondary instruments that carry the sensations to the brain. And in the nerve centre in the brain the mind is joined to the sensation. And then we perceive; it becomes a conscious thought. Unless the mind is attached to the brain centre, no sensation will be registered. We know how when we listen attentively we do not hear noises that otherwise we perceive. For example we would not hear the car go by. Neither when we listen attentively

do we observe closely what passes before our eyes. Only those senses act to which the mind is attached. When deeply absorbed in a book, we do not hear the conversation of others in the same room. It is through the help of mind that we are able to gather knowledge from the senses. If we take the mind away from the senses, the sense impressions cannot reach us. No knowledge can come to us through the senses when we withdraw the mind. Then the gates of the senses are closed as it were. No perception can enter through the gates, for there is no mind to receive them. By closing the gates of the senses, no knowledge can reach us through them. But what then? Do we become like inert things? Do we sit like a tree or a stone? No. We have deprived the mind of

sense experience so we must give it something else to attach itself to. Therefore the mind is confined in the heart and made to think of a lotus in the heart. In fact, the common process is first to settle the object on which we wish to meditate. Let us say a golden lotus flower in the heart. Then by concentrating the mind on that imaginary lotus, the mind is itself withdrawn from the senses. The senses are

forgotten. And that is what we want. We want to forget the body, the external, and to think only on the chosen object. Then, after having disposed of the senses and the mind, the prana, the life breath, is also taken hold of and placed in the head. This is a special yoga process. Then, all the functions of the body subside and nothing remains to disturb the yogi. All is quiet within and without. Then, with the whole mind thus concentrated, he utters the syllable Om, the appellation of Brahman, the one inexhaustible Spirit, meditating on its meaning. This is the process.

Having closed all the avenues of knowledge and having concentrated all thought in the lotus of the heart, the yogi ascends by the

susumṇā nāḍī and then fixing the prana between the eyebrows, he utters Om and so he meditates on God.

The body is sometimes called the city of nine gates. But there is another gate which is closed. This is the gate of Brahman situated at the top of the head. The yogi alone knows how to open *that* gate. He who opens that gate and goes out never returns to this body or to any other body. By whatever other gate we go out at death, we shall have to return to this world, we shall have to reincarnate. But the gate of Brahman gives freedom. That means we have finished our course. Evolution is completed. The dream is broken. We are awake never to slumber again.

We have, as it were, to pass through the entire body. The body has six stations, called lotuses or nerve centres. During its evolution the soul passes through these different centres, gathering experiences as it rises from one centre to another. We are not conscious of living in one or another of these centres, but the yogis are. And they can tell from our life in what centre we live, how far we have advanced spiritually. Through all the centres we have to pass. Life is a school. We gather knowledge at every class, in every grade. So long as we are in the lower grades when we live in the three lower centres of the body, we live an animal life, a life of eating, drinking and procreation. That is then our only aim in life. But gradually we learn that there is something more. Then we prepare for a higher class, a higher centre. And the next three centres are for spiritual purposes. The fourth centre is in the heart. When the mind dwells there, spiritual light is seen. The worldly centres are all located below the heart. Then from the heart the mind rises to the throat, the fifth centre. Then man can speak only of spiritual things. He can take no delight in worldly things and he is absorbed in God. He is God-intoxicated. From this centre it is still possible to become worldly again, but not from the sixth centre, located between the eyebrows.

Then the soul comes face to face with God. It is as if only a glass partition is between the soul and God. The devotee seeks to touch God-vision, but he cannot. It is like a light inside a lantern or a photograph behind a glass frame. In the seventh centre all separation falls away. That is the state of nirvikalpa samadhi, samadhi without *vikalpa*, or thought. Sense-consciousness ceases and pure God-consciousness takes its place. The bhakta is then unconscious of external surroundings. He does not take food, and if food is introduced in this mouth, he does not swallow. Life is said to end after twenty-one days in this condition. Then the soul unites with the Supreme. As a magnet draws the iron, so in the seventh state, the Paramatman draws the soul and unites with it. Only when the soul is especially appointed to teach humanity does it return to earth and sense-consciousness. Otherwise the soul mingles with Brahman. 'As water unites with water, [milk with milk or oil with oil], so the knower of Brahman, the thoughtful, becomes one with Brahman.'¹³ And the *Yoga Vasishtha* says, 'He who in nirvikalpa samadhi merges into Brahman is like a light which when divested of wick and oil returns to its fount of universal fire.'

We have seen that through the process of meditation, the jnani at last reaches that state of samadhi when all differentiation disappears and he merges in Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna expressed it, he is like the fly who, drinking the syrup from the edge of the basin, becomes so filled with a desire for more syrup that it plunges into the fluid and gets drowned. But to be drowned in that ocean of nectar, called Brahman, means the attainment of eternal life. He sacrifices his life, his little self, that he may gain eternity, the true Self. Or as spoken of by Sri Ramakrishna, he is like the salt doll that went to measure the depth of the ocean. But as it entered the ocean, it dissolved and was forever lost in the ocean. That is the blissful state of nirvana, or mukti, the jnani liberated.

But in the thirteenth verse, now under discussion, we read, 'Pronouncing the monosyllable Om and meditating on Me, he who goes forth, leaving the body, goes to the supreme Goal.' We may observe that Sri Krishna is speaking for the bhaktas. And the goal Supreme means not the Absolute, but the Personal God. Departing implies going somewhere, to some other place. But the jnani has become the Absolute and no movement can be predicated of him. When the mirror is smashed the image is annihilated. It does not go anywhere. When we empty a pail of water in which there was a reflected image of the sun, the reflected sun is scattered, destroyed and annihilated. But the real sun is unaffected. The false disappears and the real remains. So the false self, the lower self, the ego, is destroyed when the jnani merges into Brahman. Where shall he go? He is Brahman and Brahman is everywhere. The *upadhi* is destroyed, the vehicle. But the soul is in reality always omnipresent, whether through some *upadhi*, some form, it appears to be limited or not.

For the bhaktas, on the other hand, there are different spheres, or *lokas*, where they go after death. Each of these *lokas* is presided over by some deity. The bhaktas do not lose their self entirely. They remain separate from the Lord, always enjoying His presence. They do not want to lose that purified ego through which they can enjoy the sugar; 'I do not want to become sugar.' That is the bhakta's attitude. But the ego that remains is made of *sattva*. All impurity is burned away. It is ego just in appearance, but it is more of Reality. That ego does not bind the bhaktas. It is free from selfishness. It has been compared with a rope that has been burned. The shape of the rope is pre-

served, but such a rope can no longer bind anything. The ego of the bhakta is innocent like that of a child. It can do no harm to any living creature. The great bhaktas have been compared with butter. Though floating in buttermilk, the butter never unites with it once it has been freed from the cream. Even so the devotee living in the world never again mixes with it, once freedom is gained. No matter how busily he may be engaged in this world, the soul of such a bhakta remains perfectly pure. Or, though growing in mud, as a lotus is not soiled by it, so the devotee living in the world escapes being soiled by worldly contact.

For the bhaktas it is easy to think of God because they love God and it is easy to think of anyone we love; it is quite natural to do so. But we all know how different it is for ordinary men do live a spiritual life. And especially the path of prescribed meditation is very difficult. Therefore in the next verse Sri Krishna shows how we may more easily attain Him.

(To be continued)

References

1. *John*, 14.2.
2. *Bhagavadgita*, 5.19.
3. 1 *John*, 2.15.
4. *Ibid.*, 2.17.
5. *Isha Upanishad*, 15.
6. *Ibid.*, 16.
7. *Kena Upanishad*, 1.3
8. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.4.1.
9. *John*, 3.11.
10. *Vivekachudamani*, 58.
11. *Ibid.*, 37.
12. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.5.
13. *Ibid.*, 2.1.15.

Always be careful. A careful person is not subject to grief. Never forget that. *Prarabdha* karma [past actions which have begun to yield results] cannot torment a person who is always alert. ... Never give up study of the scriptures, and at the same time practise meditation steadily on a regular basis.

—Swami Turiyananda

The Kali Temple at Dakshineswar and Sri Ramakrishna

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The Rani's Far-sightedness

In order to establish a permanent fund for the worship and service of the deities, Rani Rasmani purchased three large estates at Salbari Parganas, in the district of Dinajpur, from Trailokyamohan Thakur for Rs 2,26,000 on 29 August 1855, three months after the consecration of the temple complex. At that time the annual revenue from these estates amounted to Rs 22,951, 15 annas, 7½ paise. However, these estates, together with the Dakshineswar temple complex, were not converted to *devottar* (endowment) property until Monday, 18 February 1861. It appears that the Rani failed to win over the heart of her eldest daughter Padmamani, despite making a compromise earlier in the lawsuit instituted in the court. Perhaps it was because of the objections raised by Padmamani that the Rani took such a long time to register the Deed of Endowment converting the Dakshineswar temples and other property to *devottar* property.¹

When all her efforts had failed, the Rani finally put her signature on the deed in the presence of the famous Calcutta solicitor Mr J F Watkins on 18 February 1861, the day before her death. Of her two surviving daughters, the younger, Jagadamba, signed the affidavit, but the elder daughter, Padmamani, refused to sign. The last words of the anxious Rani were 'Ma, you have come! But Padma did not sign. What will happen?' Though probably the question of Padmamani's signature had no bearing on it, a series of lawsuits later arose between the different legal heirs of the deceased Rani and the members of the Board of

Trustees and priests. However, in spite of all the legal problems, the wonderful arrangements that the far-sighted and wise Rani had made for the service of the deities proved to be sound enough to ensure that the worship and other observances at the temples could continue uninterrupted.

A New Phase in Sri Ramakrishna's Life

We have mentioned earlier that the arrival of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar just when the temple was being consecrated had great significance. If the sequence of events in his life is carefully examined, it would appear that the temple had been consecrated with the sole purpose of providing him with a suitable place to carry on his intense spiritual practices. His biographer Swami Saradananda commented that every detail in Sri Ramakrishna's life had been pre-arranged by the Divine Mother Herself. Whenever any person or thing or circumstance was required, it was provided naturally, without any effort on his part. His arrival at Dakshineswar, as ordained by the Divine Mother, opened a new chapter in his life.

Yet at first the guileless but firm young man could not approve of his elder brother's decision to accept a position as priest in a temple belonging to a kaivarta. Finally, when all of Ramkumar's arguments failed to convince Ramakrishna, Ramkumar resorted to the *dharma* *mapatra* ('leaf of impartiality'), a course of action sanctioned by the scriptures when no other way to make a decision can be found. Sri Ramakrishna was then reconciled to his

brother's decision. According to Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna began living at Dakshineswar a week after the inaugural ceremony, and at that time he would cook his own food every day on the bank of the Ganges.

Sri Ramakrishna's biographers have raised the question of whether he visited Kamarpukur between the consecration of the temple and his taking on the duty of priest of the Radha-Govinda temple. We feel that perhaps he did. Sashi Bhusan Ghosh wrote:

A few days after the inauguration of the temple, Gadadhar went back to his native village and heard a lot of criticism of his elder brother's decision to accept the position of priest in a temple founded by a kaivarta. After staying for a while at Kamarpukur, he went to visit Sihore, his nephew Hridayram's home. Incidentally, the house of the maternal uncle of his future wife, Sarada Devi, was nearby in Sihore. Only three years old at that time, she happened to be staying there with her mother. Once, on the occasion of a special program of devotional music in one part of the village, a large number of people had assembled. The mother came there with her little girl, as did Gadadhar with his nephew Hridayram. Somebody jokingly asked the girl, 'Of so many boys here, whom would you like to marry?' The girl raised her finger and pointed to Gadadhar. We cannot vouch for the veracity of the incident, but there is no reason to doubt that after the inauguration of the Kali temple Gadadhar came back and lived for a while at his native place.²

This view is also endorsed by Akshay Kumar Sen in his *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*. According to him, Sri Ramakrishna was dejected at seeing his elder brother accept the position of priest in the temple. Unable to decide what to do, he went back to Kamarpukur. Later his mother, Chandramani Devi, and his second elder brother, Rameswar, persuaded him to return to Dakshineswar.

The majestic Navaratna temple of Dakshineswar stood in all its grandeur against the bright blue sky. Around the Panchavati, the garden was thick with vegetation, and to the west, the Ganges flowed on ceaselessly with

its soft murmuring sound. During the day the rays of the sun spread a golden glow all round, while at night the rays of the moon shed a soft silvery radiance. The sweet fragrance of the flowers and the singing of the birds—all these things appealed to the artist in Sri Ramakrishna. His naturally indrawn mind soared far above the sensuous beauty, as behind everything he could perceive the working of the Divine, which is the source of all beauty and which is Beauty itself.

Sri Ramakrishna As Priest of the Radha-Kanta Temple

Within a few days Sri Ramakrishna's nephew Hridayram, who was four years younger than the Master, came to Dakshineswar in search of a job. Though they had a good relationship, Sri Ramakrishna's personality was beyond the comprehension of his nephew. Absorbed in his own world, Sri Ramakrishna would sometimes make beautiful images of Shiva out of clay and worship them. Once Mathurmohan happened to see one of these images. Being enchanted by it, he showed it to Rani Rasmani, who also praised it highly. After much counselling, they at last persuaded him to accept the position of *beshkar* (dresser) of the Goddess. Hridayram was also appointed to assist Ramakrishna and Ramkumar. According to Swami Saradananda, Sri Ramakrishna took on this responsibility about two or three months after the inauguration ceremony.³ Then, shortly afterwards, on the day of Nandotsava (6 August 1855), the priest of Govindaji was fired when the foot of the image was broken, and Sri Ramakrishna was asked to replace him. It was exactly sixty-six days after the consecration of the temple that he took over as priest of the Radha-Govinda temple.

All things taken together, we cannot deny the fact that Sri Ramakrishna was reluctant to accept a job as priest. But forced by various circumstances, he at last accepted a job in a temple founded by the kaivarta Rani Rasma-

ni. Even then, however, he complained to the Divine Mother with tears in his eyes, 'Ma, at last You made me take food from a kaivarta.' Later, while reminiscing about those days, he would sometimes say, 'I felt extremely afflicted to think that I should have to take food from a kaivarta. Even many of the poor indigent people did not come to the Kali temple of Rasmani to take their food for that reason. As sufficient number of people could not be procured to take the cooked food offered to the Deity, cows were fed with it, and the rest had to be thrown into the river.' (1.147) Of course, later, when Sri Ramakrishna was engaged as priest, he accepted the cooked food offered to the Deity.

As Priest of the Kali Temple

Ramkumar worshipped Mother Kali for one year and then turned over the responsibility for Her worship to Ramakrishna, while Hriday took charge of the worship in the Radha-Kanta temple. It was Ramkumar's intention to return to Kamarpukur for a while, but before he could get there he fell sick at Shyamnagar-Mulajor and died. His sudden death made Sri Ramakrishna more and more indrawn and intensified his longing for God. Gradually Sri Ramakrishna became overwhelmed with *raga* bhakti (supreme love for God), and often his worship did not follow the established procedures as laid down in the scriptures. This generated waves of commotion among the temple staff. But at the same time his sincerity and whole-souled devotion filled the minds of onlookers with awe, and both Mathurmohan and Rani Rasmani were enchanted by his intense longing and earnestness.

The Vision of Mother Kali

Sri Ramakrishna later described the state of his mind at that time: 'There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water

from it, I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was wringing them likewise.' Overwhelmed with agony, he one day decided that he could no longer live. Just as he was about to put an end to his life, he was suddenly submerged in a 'boundless infinite Conscious Sea of Light, ... a continuous succession of Effulgent Waves coming forward, raging and storming [him] from all sides with great speed'. (1.163) Then, within that luminous sea of Consciousness, he saw 'the Divine Mother's form consisting of pure Consciousness only—the form of Hers with hands that give boons and freedom from fear'. He then lost all consciousness of the external world and had no knowledge of what happened that day or the next. But within his heart there was a current of intense bliss that he had never before experienced.

Thereafter arose in his mind a great yearning for the immediate and constant vision of the Mother in the form of pure Consciousness. Gradually this too was attained. Even when he was not meditating or worshipping the Mother, he would see Her effulgent presence smiling, talking to him, guiding him and accompanying him wherever he went. His blissful play with the Divine Mother continued with ever-increasing intensity. He was then able to perceive Her presence as pure Consciousness and Bliss everywhere. On 16 December 1883, Sri Ramakrishna described his state of mind at that time to the devotees. He said:

The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kāli temple that it was She who had become everything. She showed me that everything was full of Consciousness. The Image was Consciousness, the altar was Consciousness, the water-vessels were Consciousness, the door-sill was Consciousness, the marble floor was Consciousness—all was Consciousness.

I found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in Bliss—the Bliss of Satchidānanda. I saw a wicked man in front of the Kāli temple; but in him also I saw the Power of the Divine Mother vibrating.

That was why I fed a cat with the food that was to be offered to the Divine Mother. I clearly perceived that the Divine Mother Herself had become everything—even the cat.⁴

Gradually the bliss of his visions overwhelmed him so much that it became impossible for him to do the formal worship. His cousin Ramtarak (Haladhari) was then appointed as the priest, and Sri Ramakrishna was released from his duty of formally worshipping the Mother. This was about 1858.⁵

The Rani Taken to Task

One day, while he was still officiating as priest, a strange incident occurred. As he described it,

At one time Rani Rasmani was staying in the temple garden. She came to the shrine of the Divine Mother, as she frequently did when I worshipped Kāli, and asked me to sing a song or two. On this occasion, while I was singing, I noticed she was sorting the flowers for worship absent-mindedly. At once I slapped her on the cheeks. She became quite embarrassed and sat there with folded hands.⁶

Blessed with rare insight, the devout Rani could appreciate the Master's intent, and at her strict orders no officer or employee dared say a word against him. Rani Rasmani served the Divine Mother with great devotion for about six years after the consecration of the temple and then passed away.

By practising, one after another, the most severe and intense sadhanas according to the various spiritual paths prescribed in the Puranas, the Tantras and the Vedas, Sri Ramakrishna attained the culmination of spiritual realization in each path. Then, when he had successfully completed the spiritual disciplines that had evolved in India, he turned to the paths of Islam and Christianity and attained the fulfilment of each of them also. Later he described his experiences, saying, 'I had to practise each religion for a time—Hinduism, Islām, Christianity. Furthermore, I followed the paths of the Śāktas, Vaishnavas, and Ve-

dāntists. I realized that there is only one God toward whom all are travelling; but the paths are different.'⁷

The Great Spiritual Wave

This was an unprecedented event in the history of religion. As the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee pointed out, 'His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.' This is why he is adored today as the greatest of the Incarnations of God. 'A new religion for modern times' was thus established by him, about which Swami Vivekananda said, 'The great tidal wave that has arisen from this centre will, like a mighty deluge, inundate the whole of mankind and carry everyone on towards liberation!' A glimpse of this tidal wave was first seen in 1875 when the great orator and Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen began writing about Sri Ramakrishna in various papers and periodicals. After that many people became drawn to the Master and started visiting him at Dakshineswar. The first time that M, the recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, visited the Master in 1882 he observed that his room was filled with people. The Master was talking about God, and M stood watching him, speechless. It seemed to him as if the great saint Shukadeva himself were describing the glories of God, and all the holy shrines and places of pilgrimage had converged in Sri Ramakrishna's room.

In the early days, Sri Ramakrishna lived in the kuthibari, the owner's bungalow. Later he moved to the room on the northwest corner of the temple courtyard, and this is where M and other devotees who came in later days met him. Sri Ramakrishna lived in that room for about fourteen years until he left Dakshineswar for good on 26 September 1885, when he moved to Calcutta for his medical treatment. Thus the Master lived at Dakshineswar for thirty years, with only a few short breaks

for visits to Kamarpukur or to some holy places of North India.

Like a fully blossomed lotus in the middle of a lake which attracts bees from all directions, Sri Ramakrishna lived in this room for one and a half decades, drawing spiritual seekers from all over. Referring to this room, Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, 'There has been much chanting of the Lord's name in this room. That is why the atmosphere has become so intense.' But besides this, the room is associated with many incidents of his life—incidents which scriptures love to describe as 'divine lila'. Just as the Ganges at Dakshineswar has its ebb tide and flood tide, so also Sri Ramakrishna's life flowed in various ways. Sometimes he laughed and wept and danced and sang in his room in the ecstasy of divine love, and at other times he became merged in samadhi with no consciousness at all of the external world. Those who had some insight into the Master's states could perceive that he was continually immersed in an ocean of divine Consciousness. Sometimes he was swimming, sometimes he was diving to the depths, and sometimes he was floating on the surface. But invariably he was full of divine joy. Like the Ganges, which sanctifies the land through which she flows, so also Sri Ramakrishna sanctified the whole of Dakshineswar.

Conclusion

If we could trace the imprints left by Rani Rasmani and Sri Ramakrishna in the valley of time, we would find that the currents of their lifelong spiritual sadhanas merged at Dakshineswar, producing one of the holiest and most important pilgrim centres of the world. Even now, in and around Dakshineswar one can see the hallowed footprints of the divine personality, Sri Ramakrishna, and feel, through the spell he has cast, the living presence of the Divine. The power of Sri Ramakrishna's profound sadhanas, as also of his samadhi and ecstasies, still permeates his room, the Pancha-

vati, the Pir Tala and the temple courtyard. It pervades the very air of the whole place. What is more, this power has spread throughout the world, bringing hope to a strife-torn world living under the constant threat of nuclear war. The Dakshineswar temple stands today to remind us that the realization of God is the only goal of all religions and of all people everywhere. *

Notes and References

1. Ashutosh Das, a well-versed lawyer and grandson of Padmamani, has commented that the question of Padmamani putting her signature on the deed should not have arisen. The absolute right of women did not extend to property according to the Dayabhaga law. Therefore, neither in the Deed of Gift nor in the Affidavit was the signature of female heirs a necessary requirement. Further, it appears that in the Deed of Gift Jagadamba's signature also was not there, nor was any separate Affidavit appended. Thus no problem should have arisen in the absence of Padmamani's signature. (Nirmal Kumar Roy, *Rani Rasmanir Jivanvrittanta* [Udbodhan edn.], 131.)
2. Sashi Bhusan Ghosh, *Sri Ramakrishna Dev* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1332 BS), 93-4.
3. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978), 1.150.
4. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 345-6.
5. From an account book maintained by the Kali temple estate it is learned that in 1858 Ramtarak and Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Mother Kali and Radha-Kanta respectively. This was quoted by M in *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. In the same year, at the time of the Durga Puja festival, Sri Ramakrishna went to Kamarpukur, and in the following month of Vaishakh he was married.
6. *Gospel*, 119.
7. *Ibid.*, 129.

Fundamentalism, Tolerance and India's Heritage

(The Continuing Relevance of Sri Ramakrishna and His Message)

DR ANIL BARAN RAY

I

If the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the wrangles over it, the Godhra killings and the Gujarat massacre indicate anything, it is this: the country has been in the grip of an atmosphere of intolerance that inevitably grows out of what is called fundamentalism these days.

Fundamentalism, according to its dictionary meaning, denotes the belief that the truth represented in the fundamental texts of one's own religion alone is real and that all other religious texts, indeed the religions themselves, are untrue and unreal. Utterly inconsistent with India's age-old history and cultural heritage, such an intolerant attitude found its most profound disapprover in Sri Ramakrishna, who showed with examples from his own life that truth could never be farther from such an attitude. A few words first on the acknowledged profundity of Sri Ramakrishna as a thinker before we reflect on the continuing relevance of his message, which is in consistence with India's rich cultural heritage of tolerance and acceptance.

World Thinkers on Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna was not a scholar in the conventional sense of the term. He did not go to any school, college or university, nor did he read any religious scriptures or books on theology or philosophy. Yet this simple man of the village spoke such profound words of wisdom that many great scholars looked at his genius with amazement.

Max Muller, a contemporary of Sri Ramakrishna, wrote an essay published in 1896

in which he called Sri Ramakrishna 'a man of original thought'.¹ Two years later he published the first-ever book-length study by a Westerner on the life and sayings of Sri Ramakrishna.² Thirty years later, in 1929, another illustrious Westerner, Romain Rolland, published *The Life of Ramakrishna*, wherein he called Sri Ramakrishna 'the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life' of the Indian people.³ Christopher Isherwood observed that Sri Ramakrishna was a 'phenomenon' so extraordinary that he was much more than conventional characterizations such as 'holy man', 'mystic', 'saint' or 'avatar'.⁴ Sri Aurobindo thought that Sri Ramakrishna's uniqueness lay in the fact that 'In him the spiritual experiences of the millions of saints who had gone before were renewed and united.'⁵ Rabindranath Tagore eulogized Sri Ramakrishna for having built a shrine of unity by mingling diverse courses of worship in his life and meditation.⁶ The finest of such tributes came from Arnold Toynbee, who said in his foreword to a book on Sri Ramakrishna that Sri Ramakrishna was the most complete 'religious genius' that the world had ever known.⁷

God Can Be Reached by All Paths

What was it in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings that evoked the admiration of so many eminent persons from across the world? This question is answered best in the words of Richard Schiffman: 'He didn't teach ... he was himself the teaching; he was himself concrete proof that higher states of consciousness are real and attainable.'⁸ Our higher state of con-

consciousness tells us that God is the ultimate reality and that God can be attained through sincere efforts towards discriminating between the ephemeral and the eternal. God is the ultimate reality because God alone is eternal while everything else in the world—money, fame and worldly pleasures—last only for a while.

Having taught that higher states of consciousness are attainable through sincere efforts, Sri Ramakrishna next made the point that such efforts could be made in multiple ways. God Himself ordained many ways of worship to suit the varied temperaments and levels of spiritual attainment of His worshippers. In his own inimitable style, Sri Ramakrishna explained that a mother does not dish out the same preparation of fish to all her children. Depending on their different tastes and digestive powers, she serves fish pulao to one, fried fish to another and so on. Various spiritual practices and modes of worship are thus the Universal Mother's own making. 'To each his own' is Her principle, and a true devotee never quarrels with another's mode of worship, because he knows that different creeds are but different paths to reach the supreme Consciousness. So a man at a higher level of consciousness never disputes with others over doctrines or dogmas.

Sri Ramakrishna was himself an embodiment of his teaching and taught by the example of his own life. Though coming from an orthodox brahmin family, he first practised the various Hindu modes of worship and then took to Islam and Christianity, one after another, as ways to God-realization, thereby proving the equal validity of various ways of attaining the supreme Consciousness. The message that also follows from this is that true religion can never be sectarian, that there is no scope in it for communalism, and that it is sheer dogmatism to belittle another man's re-

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ligion or show disrespect to the God that another religion believes in. To put it in Sri Ramakrishna's own words:

Some people indulge in quarrels, saying, 'One cannot attain anything unless one worships our Krishna', or, 'Nothing can be gained without the worship of Kali, our Divine Mother', or, 'One cannot be saved without accepting the Christian religion.' This is pure dogmatism. The dogmatist says, 'My religion alone is true, and the religions of others are false.' This is a bad attitude. God can be reached by different paths.⁹

Needed a Positive Attitude

Having advised people with his life's example to give up their dogmatic and fundamentalist attitude to religion, Sri Ramakrishna exhorted them instead to cultivate the positive attitude to religion to the following effect:

Place your devotion whole-heartedly at the service of the ideal most natural to your being, but know with unwavering certainty that all spiritual ideals are expressions of the same supreme Presence. Do not allow the slightest trace of malice to enter your mind toward any manifestation of God or toward any practitioner who attempts to live in harmony with that Divine Manifestation. Kali, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Allah—these are all the full expressions of the same indivisible Consciousness and Bliss. These are revelatory initiatives of Divine Reality, not manmade notions. Blessed is the soul who has known that all is one¹⁰

Tolerance and Acceptance

It was this great Hindu tradition of tolerance and acceptance—or the *oneness* of all—that Sri Ramakrishna handed down to his

It was this great Hindu tradition of tolerance and acceptance—or the oneness of all—that Sri Ramakrishna handed down to his chief disciple Swami Vivekananda. And true to the responsibility that devolved on him, Swami Vivekananda preached it to humanity at large.

chief disciple Swami Vivekananda. And true to the responsibility that devolved on him, Swami Vivekananda preached it to humanity at large. Mark the words with which he characterized Hinduism and the culture of the land that gave birth to Hinduism at the Chicago parliament of religions in 1893:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to

Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated

by millions of human beings: '*As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.*'¹¹

If such had not been the great tradition of the most ancient religion of India, if it were not as tolerant and welcoming of other religions, this ancient land called Bharata could not have accepted the various races of the world—Aryans, non-Aryans, Shakas, Huns, Pathans, Mughals—and absorbed them all 'in one body' as Tagore sang in his magnificent poem 'Bharat-tirtha'.¹²

II

In the context of the composite culture that grew out of the intermingling of races in India, to which Hinduism with its great tradition of tolerance and acceptance made its singular contribution, is it not a travesty of both the age-old history and the religious tradition of the land to claim that all who did not conform to the tenets of Hindutva¹³ were not true and sincere Indians? Such an assertion amounts to what Sri Ramakrishna called dogmatism, and thus is a negation of all that that prophet of religious harmony stood for. And to the extent it creates uncharitable feelings between communities of people professing different religions, it hampers the unity and integrity of India as a nation.

The Continuing Relevance

The spirit of Sri Ramakrishna enjoins all mis-perceiving Hindus to correct their ways. It equally appeals to all non-Hindus of India to help the cause of religious and national unity. Since religions are only different ways of reaching the same indivisible Consciousness, a Muslim or a Christian must keep to his own religious identity as much as a Hindu does, but must at the same time see to it that he does not think, say or do anything that might divide people along religious lines. It is the sacred duty of all of us to ensure that we are not overtaken by our perverted intellect (*matuari buddhi*, as Sri Ramakrishna chose to call it) and that we do not engage ourselves in anything

that would lead to internecine communal fights.

Sri Ramakrishna's message has become even more relevant in the context of problems that our society and polity face today. As a matter of fact, we have created enough troubles for ourselves as a nation, particularly in the last ten years, by being blind to the teachings of the Great Master and by allowing ourselves to be carried away by narrow interpretations of religion. Let us keep in mind the continuing relevance of Sri Ramakrishna and his message and save our nation from further fragmentation and peril. India will become great not through religious fights but through religious harmony, sacrifice and service. So let these be the national ideals of a redeemed and resurgent India. Sri Ramakrishna was the perfect embodiment of these ideals. Indeed, as Swami Vivekananda said, he is 'the sage for the time, one whose teaching is just now, in the present time, most beneficial'.¹⁴ *

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6. Rabindranath Tagore, 'To the Paramahansa Ramakrishna Deva' in *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, February 1936), 53.
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14. CW, 3.268.

Once we assuage our conscience by calling something a 'necessary evil', it begins to look more and more necessary and less and less evil.

—Sydney Harris

Narendra Nath Mitra (The Younger Naren)

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Blessed are the cheerful, for they make others happy. Pure joy is contagious and refreshing. People love to be around a blissful person, and they avoid those who are depressed and sad. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, an American poet, wrote:

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.
Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all.

The younger Naren, a joyful boy, was a student in Vidyasagar's school. M, the headmaster of that school, introduced the younger Naren to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master called him 'the younger Naren' because his name was similar to the pre-monastic name of Swami Vivekananda, who was called 'the elder Naren'.

The devotees called M 'the kidnapping master' because he was responsible for bringing to the Master the younger Naren, Subodh, Tejachandra, Narayan, Haripada, Binod, Paltu, Purna and other young devotees. We know nothing about the younger Naren's family, his life or when he was born and when he died. We do know that he lived at Telipara Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta, and that his father did not approve of his close relationship with the Master.

The younger Naren first visited the Master in Dakshineswar on 7 March 1885 with M and some of his young friends. M vividly described how the Master entertained his young devotees:

Sri Ramakrishna was in the happiest mood with his young and pure-souled devotees. He was

seated on the small couch and was doing a funny imitation of a kirtani [a woman singer]. The devotees laughed heartily. The kirtani is dressed lavishly and covered with ornaments. She sings, standing on the floor, a coloured kerchief in her hand. Now and then she coughs to draw people's attention and blows her nose, raising her nose-ring. When a respectable gentleman enters the room, she welcomes him with appropriate words, still continuing her song. Now and then she pulls her sari from her arms to show off her jewels.

The devotees were convulsed with laughter at this mimicry by Sri Ramakrishna. Paltu rolled on the ground. ... [The Master] said to Paltu with a smile: "Don't report this to your father, or he will lose the little respect he has for me. You see, he is an 'Englishman.'¹

It is truly amazing how Sri Ramakrishna could change his mood from merrymaking to samadhi in a moment. M's record continues:

The Master began to look intently at the younger Naren and went into samādhi. Did he see God Himself in the pure-souled devotee?

The devotees silently watched the figure of Sri Ramakrishna motionless in samādhi. A few minutes before there had been so much laughter in the room; now there was deep silence, as if no one were there. The Master sat with folded hands as in his photograph.

After a short while his mind began to come down to the relative plane. He heaved a long sigh and became aware of the outer world. He looked at the devotees and began to talk with them of their spiritual progress.

Master (*to the younger Naren*): 'I have been eager to see you. You will succeed. Come here once in a while. Well, which do you prefer—jnāna or bhakti?'

The younger Naren: 'Pure bhakti.'

Master: 'But how can you *love* someone un-

less you *know* him? ... (To M) Since a pure-souled person has asked for pure bhakti, it must have some meaning.

'One does not seek bhakti of one's own accord without inborn tendencies. This is the characteristic of premā-bhakti. There is another kind of bhakti, called jñāna-bhakti, which is love of God based on reasoning.

(To the younger Naren) 'Let me look at your body; take off your shirt. Fairly broad chest. You will succeed. Come here now and then.' (718)

At five o'clock the younger Naren was ready to go home. Sri Ramakrishna stood by his side on the northeast verandah and gave him various instructions. Then the boy saluted the Master and departed. (721)

Sri Ramakrishna not only taught religion, but he could also impart religion or God-realization with a mere look or a touch. In *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, Swami Saradananda described the power and potentiality of the Master's touch:

As soon as those marked devotees arrived, or a short while thereafter, the Master took them aside and asked them to meditate. While in ecstasy, he then touched their chests or tongues. This powerful touch forced their minds inward, withdrawing them partially or completely from sense objects, awakening their accumulated spiritual tendencies, and engaging them in the effort to realize God. At that touch, some devotees had visions of divine light or of the luminous forms of gods and goddesses; some plunged into deep meditation and experienced an indescribable bliss; some felt an immediate release of the knots in their hearts and felt an intense longing for God; some became ecstatic and experienced savikalpa samadhi; and some rare souls had a foretaste of nirvikalpa samadhi. Thus, many people who came to him had visions of luminous divine forms and other experiences. The Master told us that his touch caused the younger Naren to become absorbed in meditation on the formless God.²

Sri Ramakrishna was concerned about his young devotees, so he asked M:

The younger Naren often visits me. Do you think his people at home will object? He is very

pure and doesn't know what carnal pleasure is.

M: 'He is a "large receptacle".'

Master: 'That is true. Further, he says he remembers spiritual things after hearing them once only. He told me, "I used to weep in my boyhood because I couldn't see God."³

On 6 April 1885, Sri Ramakrishna visited Devendra Majumdar's house in Calcutta. M and the younger Naren accompanied him. On the way, the younger Naren laughed heartily as he listened to the Master's words. The Master said to M, laughing and pointing at Naren: 'Look at him! Look! How naive he looks when he laughs, as if he knew nothing. He never thinks of these three things: land, wife and money. God cannot be realized unless the mind is totally free from "woman and gold".' (738)

At Devendra's home the Master said, 'It is hard to recognize an Incarnation of God unless the mind is totally free from "woman and gold". A man asked a seller of egg-plants the value of a diamond. He said, "I can give nine seers of egg-plants in exchange, and not one more."' All the devotees laughed but the

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younger Naren laughed very loudly. Noticing that the boy had quickly understood the implication of his words, the Master remarked, 'What a subtle mind he has! ... Renunciation of 'woman and gold' from boyhood! Amazing indeed! It falls to the lot of a very few. A person without such renunciation is like a mango struck by a hail-stone. The fruit cannot be offered to the Deity, and even a man hesitates to eat it.' (739-40)

There is a saying, 'The path of the good has many obstacles.' The younger Naren's parents were strongly opposed to their son's spiritual impulses, and they did not approve of their son's visits to the Master at all. One day the Master, out of compassion, wanted to visit his home. The younger Naren welcomed the Master to his home, but at the same time he was fearful lest his father learn of it.

On 12 April 1885, the Master visited Balam's house in Calcutta. Trailokya Sanyal sang: 'O Mother, how deep is Thy love for men! Mindful of it, I weep for joy.' Listening to the song, the younger Naren went into deep meditation and became as still as a log. Sri Ramakrishna said to M, 'Look at him. He is totally unaware of the outer world.' When the younger Naren was leaving sometime later, the Master told him, 'Show great devotion to your parents; but don't obey them if they stand in your way to God. You must gird your loins with great determination. ...' (754-5)

On 26 May 1885 Sri Ramakrishna went to the Vaishnava festival at Panihati, accompanied by nearly twenty-five devotees, including the younger Naren. They travelled by boat

'Look at him! Look! How naive he looks when he laughs, as if he knew nothing. He never thinks of these three things: land, wife and money. God cannot be realized unless the mind is totally free from "woman and gold".'

to Panihati, which is a few miles north of Dakshineswar. At the festival they all witnessed as the Master danced in ecstasy with a party of kirtan singers. Swami Saradananda described what happened when they returned to Dakshineswar that evening:

We reached the Dakshineswar temple garden at about 8:30 pm. The Master sat in his room, and his devotees bowed down and took their leave of him before returning to Calcutta. As everyone was boarding the boat, a young disciple [Swami Saradananda] remembered that he had forgotten his shoes, so he ran back to the Master's room to get them. When the Master saw him and learned why he had returned, he said jokingly: 'It is fortunate that you remembered your shoes before the boat took off. Otherwise the fun and joy of today's festival would have been spoiled.' The young disciple smiled at his comment, bowed down to him again, and was about to leave when the Master asked: 'How did you enjoy the day? It was a veritable fair of Hari's name, wasn't it?' The disciple agreed. The Master then mentioned the names of those devotees who had had spiritual experiences at the festival, and praised the younger Naren, remarking: 'That dark-complexioned boy has been visiting this place for a short time only but already he is having ecstasies. The other day his ecstasy was hard to stop—he had no outer consciousness of his surroundings for more than an hour! He says that nowadays his mind merges into the formless God. He is a good boy, isn't he? Please go to his house one day and talk to him. Will you?'

The young disciple agreed at first, but then he said, 'But, sir, I like no one as well as I do the elder Naren [Vivekananda], so I don't feel like visiting the younger Naren.' The Master scolded him, saying: 'You brat! You are very one-sided! This is a sign of small-mindedness. Just as a tray of flowers offered to the Lord contains various kinds of blooms, so He has all kinds of devotees. It is a sign of narrowness when one cannot enjoy mixing with everyone. You must visit the younger Naren one day. Won't you?' The disciple promised to visit him and left after saluting the Master. The boat arrived at Calcutta at about 10:00 pm. This young disciple followed the Master's advice and a few

days later went to visit the younger Naren. As they talked the young disciple was blessed with the answer to a serious and complicated problem in his life.⁴

As at daybreak a golden glow in the east heralds the sunrise, so the longing for God indicates the approach of spiritual illumination. Sri Ramakrishna always encouraged his disciples to create hunger for God. Whenever he found yearning in any of his disciples, he publicly told others about that person so that they could get inspiration.

On 13 July 1885, the Master arrived at Balaram's house to attend the Chariot Festival, where he stayed for three days. During his stay when some devotees visited him, he inquired after the younger Naren and remarked about him:

How amazing! Even during his boyhood, on returning from school, he cried for God. Is it a small thing to cry for God? He is very intelligent, too. He is like a bamboo with a big hollow space inside. All of his mind is fixed on me. Girish Ghosh said to me: 'The younger Naren went to Navagopal's house when a kirtan was going on. On entering the house he inquired about you and exclaimed, "Where is he?" He was totally unconscious of his surroundings and practically walked over the people.' He has no fear of his relatives' threats. Sometimes he spends three nights at a stretch at Dakshineswar.⁵

On 14 July during the Chariot Festival at Balaram's house, there was a large gathering. Looking at the younger Naren, the Master said:

What will you gain by merely being intuitively aware of God's existence? A mere vision of God is by no means everything. You have to bring Him into your room. You have to talk to Him.

Some have heard of milk; some have seen milk; and some have drunk milk. Some have seen the king, but only one or two can bring the king home and entertain him. (802-3)

The younger Naren asked the Master, 'Sir, have we any free will?'

Master: 'Just try to find out who this "I" is.

While you are searching for "I", "He" comes out. "I am the machine and He is the Operator." You have heard of a mechanical toy that goes into a store with a letter in its hand. You are like that toy. God alone is the Doer. Do your duties in the world as if you are the doer, but knowing all the time that God alone is the Doer and you are the instrument.

'As long as the upādhi [limitation or attribute] exists there is ignorance. "I am a scholar", "I am a jnāni", "I am wealthy", "I am honourable", "I am the master, father, and teacher"—all these ideas are begotten of ignorance. "I am the machine and You are the Operator"—that is Knowledge. In the state of Knowledge all upādhis are destroyed. When the log is burnt up entirely, there is no more sound; no heat either. Everything cools down. Peace! Peace! Peace!' (804-5)

On 15 July at 9:00 a.m., the Master left for Dakshineswar by boat with Gopal-ma, Jogin, the younger Naren and others. Upon his arrival the Master went to the Kali temple to bow down to the Divine Mother. Swami Saradananda wrote:

Then, in an ecstatic mood, he walked with his boy devotees to the natmandir. He sat down and began to sing in his sweet voice:

O Mother, Consort of Shiva,

You have deluded this world.

You entertain Yourself by playing the vina in the great lotus of the muladhara.

Your music vibrates through

the great mantra in three scales,

Taking the form of the three gunas.

The Master was singing while seated in the northern part of the natmandir facing the Divine Mother. The devotees—some sitting and

'That dark-complexioned boy has been visiting this place for a short time only but already he is having ecstasies. The other day his ecstasy was hard to stop—he had no outer consciousness of his surroundings for more than an hour!'

some standing—were overwhelmed as they listened to the song. While singing, the Master suddenly stood up and went into ecstasy. The singing stopped. His divine smile flooded the entire place with bliss. The devotees remained motionless as they gazed upon the beautiful form of the Master. Seeing the Master's body leaning a little, the younger Naren reached out to hold him and keep him from falling. But as soon as he was touched, the Master cried out in pain. The younger Naren withdrew himself when he realized that the Master did not want to be touched. From inside the temple Ramlal heard the Master cry out and hurried to take hold of him. The Master remained in that state for some time and only gradually regained his normal consciousness after hearing the name of God. But he could still not stand in a normal way because of that divine intoxication. His legs were wobbling excessively.

In this condition the Master crawled down the steps of the northern side of the natmandir to the temple courtyard. He was then speaking like a little child, saying: 'Mother, I shall not fall. Shall I fall?' In truth, when watching the Master at that time one felt that he was a boy of three or four years. He was saying those words as he gazed at the Mother, depending on Her as he confidently made his way down the steps. After crossing the courtyard, the Master reached his own room and went to the western semicircular veranda to sit. He was still in ecstasy; the mood possessed him. Gradually he returned to the normal plane of consciousness.

Afterwards, the reason for the Master's pain when the younger Naren touched him during

The Master remarked: 'This boy has reached a high state of spirituality. He will be a great yogi if he is not smitten by sex and money.' As a decree of fate, the younger Naren married, but it was an unhappy marriage. He also became an attorney but could not make much money.

ecstasy came to light. The younger Naren had a tumour on his left temple that was growing day by day. Doctors had performed surgery on his tumour and applied medicine to reduce the pain, but the wound had not yet healed. We had heard that one with a wound on the body should not touch a divine form, and that statement was unexpectedly proven to be true in front of us. The Master had undoubtedly suffered pain. However, we were unable to understand the inner power that caused him to recoil automatically from that unpleasant touch when he was absorbed in a divine mood and had lost consciousness of his surroundings. We knew that the Master had a high opinion of the younger Naren's purity of character. And when the Master was in a normal state, he touched the younger Naren as he did others, despite his wound, allowing him to touch his feet and move around with him. How then could the younger Naren have known that the Master could not bear his touch during ecstasy? But after that, until his wound was completely healed, the younger Naren did not again touch the Master during ecstasy.⁶

On 28 July 1885 the Master again went to Balaram's house for lunch and then in the afternoon visited three devotees' homes. The younger Naren came and said to the Master that he would no longer be able to visit him often because he needed to prepare for his examination.

Master (*to the younger Naren*): 'I didn't send for you today.'

The younger Naren (*smiling*): 'What can be done about it now?'

Master: 'Well, my child, I don't want to interfere with your studies. You may visit me when you have leisure.'⁷

The Master said these words as if he were piqued. He loved his young disciples and was trying to transmit his spiritual treasure to them quickly as his cancer had just begun to develop.

That evening when the Master visited the houses of Golap-ma and Yogin-ma, the younger Naren accompanied him. The devotees always invited the younger Naren to their gath-

erings, because of his amusing conversation and jovial nature. Golap-ma said: 'I have brought the younger Naren; without him, who would there be to make us laugh?' (823) At Yogin-ma's house, the younger Naren saw some boys in the street climbing the windows to see the Master. He said to them: 'Why are you here? Get away! Go home!' The Master said tenderly, 'Let them stay.' Some young musicians entertained the Master, and he enjoyed their violin, flute and other instruments. When Golap-ma mentioned that a devotee who could sing perhaps would not dare to before the Master, a young musician responded: 'Why? I can sing even before my father.' The younger Naren remarked with a smile, 'But he has not yet advanced that far.' (824) All laughed.

On 9 August 1885 at Dakshineswar the Master explained why he was so fond of his young devotees: 'I feel peace of mind when I see the youngsters. How can I feel joy at the sight of those who have begotten children and are engaged in lawsuits and are involved in "woman and gold"? How could I live without seeing pure-souled ones?' (829) Observing the younger Naren's guilelessness, the Master remarked: 'The younger Naren gets kumbhaka [retention of breath] without any effort, and samādhi too. Sometimes he stays in an ecstatic mood for two and a half hours; sometimes even more. How wonderful!' (832)

The Master's cancer gradually grew worse and his devotees suggested that he move from Dakshineswar to Calcutta, where doctors would be more easily available. Moreover, most of the devotees lived in Calcutta, and he needed special care and nursing. On 2 October 1885, the Master moved to the Shyampukur house in Calcutta. The younger Naren visited the Master often and listened to his spiritual discourses. On 23 October a musician sang many devotional songs to him. Despite his illness, he went into samadhi.

M recorded: 'The singing was over. Many of the devotees were in a rapturous

mood. There was a deep silence in the room. The younger Naren was absorbed in meditation. He sat like a stump. Pointing him out to the doctor [Mahendralal Sarkar] Sri Ramakrishna said, "A very pure soul, unstained by the slightest touch of worldliness.'" (873)

The younger Naren promised the Master that he would show him an instrument that demonstrated the nature of electricity. On 27 October 1885, he brought it to the Master at the Shyampukur house.

On 5 November, there was an informal Kali Puja at the Shyampukur house. The younger Naren was present, and he offered flowers to the Master along with other devotees.

As the polluted air of Calcutta was not helping the Master, Dr Sarkar advised the devotees to move him outside the city. The devotees rented a garden house in Cossipore, on the outskirts of Calcutta, and moved him there on 11 December 1885.

On 13 April 1886 the younger Naren went to see the Master. On that day three physicians came to examine the Master. M recorded:

[Dr] Haldar: 'Sir, when that boy (*pointing to the younger Naren*) came in, you said he had controlled his passions.'

Master: 'Yes, it is true. He is totally unaffected by worldliness. He says he doesn't know what lust is. (*To M*) Just feel my body. All the hair is standing on end.'

The Master's hair actually stood on end at the thought of a pure mind totally devoid of lust. He always said that God manifests Himself where there is no lust. (952)

It is hard for ordinary people to unveil the mystery of a great soul like the younger Naren. Why did Providence frown on him? Why did he fall from a high spiritual plane to the mundane world?

There is a saying, 'Inevitable are the decrees of fate.' Despite Sri Ramakrishna's high opinion of the younger Naren, the young man had to enter into family life. We do not know exactly what happened. It is likely that his parents forced him to marry so that he would not become a monk by associating with the Master. Swami Saradananda wrote: 'When a young devotee (the younger Naren) came to see him at the Cossipore garden house after his marriage, the Master grieved as if he had lost a son. He wept bitterly, throwing his arms around the boy's neck and telling him repeatedly, "Try not to forget God and sink into the world completely."' ⁸

Vaikuntha Nath Sanyal wrote in *Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita*:

During his student life, the younger Naren came to the Master. While meditating on God, he would experience samadhi. The Master remarked: 'This boy has reached a high state of spirituality. He will be a great yogi if he is not smitten by sex and money.' As a decree of fate, the younger Naren married, but it was an unhappy marriage. He also became an attorney but could not make much money.

Holy Mother also mentioned that the younger Naren later became involved with worldly things.

Although the younger Naren became a householder, he kept in touch with the disciples of the Master and helped them. When Swami Vivekananda returned from the West and inaugurated the Ramakrishna Mission on 1 May 1897, Narendra Nath Mitra, attorney, became the first secretary of the organization. He also helped Sister Nivedita and other Western disciples of Vivekananda.

It is hard for ordinary people to unveil the mystery of a great soul like the younger

Naren. Why did Providence frown on him? Why did he fall from a high spiritual plane to the mundane world? He received so many blessings from the Master; why did he stumble in his spiritual journey? What can we learn from what we know of his life? Perhaps the Master wanted to teach us the pitfalls of spiritual life through him: This path is very slippery. Be careful. Never be proud. Of course, nothing is lost. We read in the *Chandi*: 'Verily, Mahamaya forcibly draws the minds of even the jnanis and throws them into delusion.' ¹⁰ But we also read in the *Bhagavadgita*: 'Proclaim it boldly, O son of Kunti, that My devotee never perishes.' ¹¹ There is no doubt that Sri Ramakrishna's love, affection and divine touch saved the younger Naren's soul from maya. *

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3. *Gospel*, 725.
4. *Divine Play*, V.10.19.
5. *Gospel*, 811.
6. *Divine Play*, IV.5.23-6.
7. *Gospel*, 815
8. *Divine Play*, V.7.17.
9. Vaikuntha Nath Sanyal, *Sri Ramakrishna Lilamrita* (Calcutta: 1936), 334.
10. *Jñānināmaṃ cetānsi devī bhagavatī hi sā; Balādākṛṣya mohāya mahāmāyā prayacchati.* —*Chandi (Devi Mahatmya)*, 1.55.
11. *Bhagavadgita*, 9.31.

Dip your mind in the jar of the Lord's name, and all the unclean stuff will be washed away. Then dip it in the jar of the Lord's grace. You will see how beautifully your real nature will shine forth. ... If you want happiness in the world, think of yourself as pure gold and not as gold-plated.

—Swami Adbhutananda

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

The order of duties prior to renunciation (*sannyāsa*)

संन्यासपरिग्रहात्पूर्वं कर्तव्यानाम् अनुक्रमणम्

ब्रह्मचर्याश्रमेऽक्षीणे गुरुशुश्रूषणे रतः ।

वेदानधीत्यानुज्ञात उच्यते गुरुणाश्रमी ॥१॥

दारमाहृत्य सदृशमग्निमाधाय शक्तिः ।

ब्राह्मीमिष्टं यजेत्तासामहोरात्रेण निर्वपेत् ॥२॥

1, 2. [A devoted student] engaged in the service of his *guru* (spiritual preceptor) during the period of his celibate studentship (*brahmacarya āśrama*) of undecaying [value], is said to be a *brahmacārīn* [that is one belonging to the *brahmacarya āśrama*]. On completion of the study of Vedas [and] on receiving the *guru*'s permission [that is on completion of the *brahmacarya āśrama*] the celibate student (*brahmacārīn*) [may enter the stage of a householder, that is *gārhasthya āśrama*, by] marrying a [suitable] wife, [consistent with and] similar to himself [that is his nature, stature and the like]. [After having finished his duties as a householder and desiring to enter the *vānaprastha āśrama*], he shall kindle the sacred fire [following his discriminating] power; [and then] perform the *brāhmī* sacrifice¹ [lasting] for a day and a night [at the end of which the fire shall be extinguished].

संविभज्य सुतानर्थे ग्राम्यकामान्विसृज्य च ।

संचरन्वनमार्गेण शुचौ देशे परिभ्रमन् ॥३॥

वायुभक्षोऽम्बुभक्षो वा विहितैः कन्दमूलकैः ।

स्वशरीरे समाप्याथ पृथिव्यां नाश्रु पातयेत् ॥४॥

3, 4. Properly dividing his wealth, property and so on among his sons, discarding (abandoning) sensual pleasures, wandering about in holy places, journeying along as a *vānaprastha*, subsisting on air only or on [air and] water or [in case he is dissatisfied with only air and water,] on prescribed fruits and roots, withdrawing [all the external worldly life] into his own person, he shall not allow tears² [of lamentation] to fall on the ground.

Only a person without a wife is entitled to renunciation

विदारस्यैव संन्यासाधिकारः

सह तेनैव पुरुषः कथं संन्यस्त उच्यते ।

सनामघेयो यस्मिंस्तु कथं संन्यस्त उच्यते ॥५॥

5. How can a person [who is a *vānaprastha*] with a wife be a renouncer? How can a person who [although having a wife] is [merely] designated (that is given the appellation) [as an ascetic *vānaprastha*] be said to have renounced worldly life?³

Notes

1. The *brāhmī* sacrifice is a prelude to entering the life of an ascetic in forest life (as a *vānaprastha*). This sacrifice is meant to propitiate all the gods (*devas*) with special reference to Brahmā, the Creator. The idea is that the aspirant invokes the blessings of all the gods and pleases them with offerings given as parting gifts, as it were, on the eve of his departure to the forest on a higher mission of Atman-realization through an undisturbed inner life of contemplation.
2. The idea is that he should erase from his mind even the memory of his earlier life in the world as a householder with his kith and kin. No memory, however pleasant or unpleasant, should kindle in him any reaction or emotionally stir him to weep. In fine, there must be a complete and irreversible breakaway from the old life in the world.
3. Only a person without a wife is entitled to renunciation (*sannyāsa*), since the abandonment of the desires like that for a wife is enjoined on a person seeking to renounce. This being so, how can a person having a wife and retiring to forest life along with her be considered to have renounced? How can merely having the appellation of a *vānaprastha*, while being with a wife, make him a renouncer? The idea is that such a person cannot be considered to have renounced the world.

(To be continued)

The Way Out

Time, the avenger of everything, comes, and nothing is left. He swallows up the saint and the sinner, the king and the peasant, the beautiful and the ugly; he leaves nothing. Everything is rushing towards that one goal, destruction. Our knowledge, our arts, our sciences, everything is rushing towards it. None can stem the tide, none can hold it back for a minute. We may try to forget it, in the same way that persons in a plague-stricken city try to create oblivion by drinking, dancing, and other vain attempts, and so becoming paralysed. So we are trying to forget, trying to create oblivion by all sort of sense-pleasures. And this is Maya. ...

Is there no hope then? True it is that we are all slaves of Maya, born in Maya, and live in Maya. Is there then no way out, no hope? That we are all miserable, that this world is really a prison, that even our so-called trailing beauty is but a prison-house, and that even our intellects and minds are prison-houses, have been known for ages upon ages. There has never been a man, there has never been a human soul, who has not felt this sometime or other, however he may talk. ... Is there no way out? We find that with all this, with this terrible fact before us, in the midst of sorrow and suffering, even in this world where life and death are synonymous, even here, there is a still small voice that is ringing through all ages, through every country, and in every heart: 'This My Maya is divine, made up of qualities, and very difficult to cross. Yet those that come unto Me, cross the river of life.' 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' This is the voice that is leading us forward. Man has heard it, and is hearing it all through the ages. This voice comes to men when everything seems to be lost and hope has fled, when man's dependence on his own strength has been crushed down, and everything seems to melt away between his fingers, and life is a hopeless ruin. Then he hears it. This is called religion. (2.122-3)

—The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, 2.121-3.

Glimpses of Holy Lives

Him They Call a Vaishnava

It is an obvious fact that at every turn of their lives before they are fully accepted, saints are misunderstood, ridiculed and challenged by the very society they are obliged to uplift. The saint, awake to a Reality that is hidden from others, is an incongruity in a gross world of unenlightened mortals who are completely indifferent to the world of Spirit. On the other hand, it is also equally obvious that Spirit alone triumphs in the end and the saint emerges from his ordeals unscathed. Sant Narsi Mehta, the great Gujarati poet-saint and composer of the famous bhajan '*Vaishnavo jana to tene kahiye*', is one such devotee, whose life and example is more relevant now than ever before.

God Sees the Truth ...

Narsi lost his parents very early in his life and grew up in his elder brother Vamshidhar's home. Born with pure tendencies, he found it natural even during his boyhood to associate with and serve holy men. Added to that, he had a great gift for composing devotional music. Vamshidhar, however, was a thoroughly worldly man. His wife, Durit Gauri, was even worse. Besides being utterly insensitive to young Narsi's deeper yearnings, she was a frightful scold. Naturally, the couple did not intend letting Narsi spend his time singing bhajans and mixing with good-for-nothing sadhus. Had they not raised him? Didn't he owe so much to them? Together they planned—as such people always do—Narsi's marriage in order to cure him of his otherworldliness. But marriage did nothing to change Narsi. As things turned out, contrary to their expectations, it became clear that having to engage in worldly business to earn money went against his grain. Defeated in

their purpose, Vamshidhar and Durit Gauri burdened Narsi and his young wife, Manik Gauri, with household chores and heaped insults on them at every step. Luckily for Narsi, Manik Gauri was meek and devoted to him, and he found support in her silent understanding.

Things came to a head one evening, when an almost exhausted Narsi returned from the forest, his frame bent under a heavy load of grass. The task of washing, feeding and watering the cows still remained. Too hungry to carry on with his work, he asked his sister-in-law for something to eat. Always looking for occasions to humiliate Narsi in front of his helpless wife, Durit Gauri came out with her hurtful barbs. And that evening her words were particularly stinging. Feeling abused beyond endurance and being unable to do anything about it, Narsi turned around and retraced his steps towards the forest.

...But Waits

Arriving there he bathed in a pool, gathered some fresh flowers and bilva leaves and made his way to an abandoned Shiva temple he knew. The moment his eyes fell on Lord Shiva's image, the suppressed anguish of his heart burst forth in tears of sorrow. Narsi clung to the Lord's feet and didn't let go for seven days and seven nights, praying unceasingly for relief. Then, while he was in a state of absorption, Lord Shiva appeared and granted him a boon. Narsi desired to see his chosen deity Sri Krishna. At once his mind soared up to a world of celestial beauty where he witnessed Krishna's rasalila with the immaculate gopis, and all his suffering and despondency was forgotten in a sea of unspeakable bliss. Then, giving Narsi His own image, the auspicious

pitambara cloth and a pair of cymbals, Lord Krishna bade him to live the life of an ideal householder, worshipping Him and singing His glories in the world. And the devotee returned home with a heart overflowing with joy.

The first thought that occurred to Vamshidhar and his wife as soon as they saw the beaming, *pitambara*-clad Narsi was that he was trying to pose as a sadhu in order to avoid repaying a small loan that he owed them. That was the last straw! Without giving Narsi a chance to explain, they threw him and Manik Gauri out of their house. Accepting the situation with calm equanimity, Narsi found shelter in a dharmashala.

Man Indicts

However, the compassionate Lord doesn't let His devotee suffer privation for long. Touched by Narsi's love of God, a rich man built the couple a small house and supplied them with the few simple things they needed. Now Narsi immersed himself in worship and meditation, prayer and singing. During this time he also composed hundreds of his now-famous bhajans. Even bereavements, though they came in quick succession—his son, wife and son-in-law died within days of each other—were powerless to affect Narsi. Like the divine sage Narada, he thought that it was God's way of freeing him from worldly cares, and his devotion grew even more intense and one-pointed.

Devotees belong to a class of their own; they care little for man-made castes, guided as they are by the pettiness of a few self-serving people.

One day a humble outcast requested Narsi to come and sing in his house. It was his heart's desire to enjoy the saint's heavenly music with his friends and relatives in his own house, because their movement in the village was severely restricted. One can imagine the stranglehold caste rules had on Hindu society

five centuries ago. But Narsi readily agreed. The outraged villagers perceived this as effrontery and subjected him to merciless stoning as punishment! Narsi submitted himself to the retribution without a bit of condescension. This, at least to a small section of sympathetic villagers, was proof of his sainthood.

Close on the heels of this incident followed another test, of a different kind. In those days people practised a simple system of banking that was largely based on trust and personal reputation. With a view to tarnishing Narsi's character, his detractors consorted with ruffians to pressure some innocent merchants to approach Narsi for a bill of exchange for seven hundred rupees, which they could encash at Dwarka. The merchants were compelled to deposit the money with Narsi, although it was everybody's knowledge that he had no relative or business associate anywhere. Narsi saw through the game but wrote the note all the same, addressing it to a certain 'Seth Shyamalshah Vasudev'. Wonder of wonders! Even before the merchants had time to rest awhile after arriving in Dwarka, Seth Shyamalshah Vasudev Himself came looking for them and handed over their seven hundred rupees!

God Reprives

Miracles like this that happen in saints' lives look unbelievable to us because we are ignorant of the laws that govern the spiritual world. It was a matter of everyday occurrence that when Narsi sang his soulful songs, the garland on Lord Krishna's image would leave its place and wrap itself around Narsi's neck. Suspecting foul play, Raja Mandalik of Junagadh once ordered the priests to tie the garland securely to the image. But he was baffled to see the tied garland fly across the hall to adorn the saint's neck. It is said that Mandalik lost his kingdom on account of his insolence.

What will the Lord not do protect a devotee who forgets himself in His love! *

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

(Translated by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee)

Chapter 2: The Section on Spiritual Practice (*Sādhana-pāda*)

1. *Tapah-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ.*

Mortification [keeping the mind and the body under proper control], study [with a view to intensifying one's convictions] and surrendering fruits of work to God [taking to oneself neither credit nor blame for it] are called *kriyā yoga* [working towards yoga].

2. *Samādhi-bhāvanārthaḥ kleśa-tanūkaraṇārthaśca.*

(It is for) the practice of samadhi and minimizing the pain-bearing obstructions [which arise from lack of control over the mind].

Comment: No investigation of a subtle subject is possible unless one has become *bāhya-sparśeśvasaktītmā*,¹ unattached to sound and other external objects of the senses; hence the first word in spiritual practice is *tapas*, that is to condition the body and the mind in such a way that they can remain put without reacting under external shocks.

Svādhyāya and *īśvara-praṇidhāna* are just like the 'theoretical study' and 'practical laboratory work' of scientists.

Two types of need can be served through samadhi: It is seen in this world that after becoming old some persons proceed to Kashi or Vrindaban to avoid family troubles. Going into samadhi is just like that. If those who dislike worldly affairs can manage to get absorbed in the thought of God, then apart from any other gain they can easily save themselves from the troubles of this world. Then at another level we often see comfort-loving people pretending as if they are endowed with the quality of *sattva*. They are really not seekers of freedom, but live in solitude simply to avoid work. If through the study of scriptures such people come to know about the attainable goal of life, they can easily bring themselves to con-

centrate the mind on God.

Chapter 1 has dwelt on how one can attain samadhi, which is the goal of the yogis. Chapter 2 will deal with the means of qualifying oneself for the practice of yoga. The cause of man's suffering is ignorance, or forgetfulness of one's true Self. To get rid of that, one has to make manifold efforts. When a faint sign of knowledge becomes manifest in the intellect, the possibility of concentrating the mind and immersing it in samadhi opens up. At that stage, the first discipline is to remain unmoved in happiness and sorrow. The second is to study the scriptures dealing with Self-knowledge. The third is to engage the mind in the thought of God, who represents one's true Self. The practice of these three forms of spiritual discipline is absolutely essential for everyone.

In India boys used to be taught *tapasyā*, or mortification, at the stage of brahmacharya (period of training under the guru). The word *tapasyā* has the verb *tap* as its root. *Tap* means 'to mortify', which implies putting up with suffering. Hence the word *tapasyā* means striving to acquire the power to endure suffering. The real meaning of *tapasyā* has now become totally distorted. It seems as if nobody

understands what is meant by *tapasyā* and what its purpose is.

Every living being has to ceaselessly struggle against nature to save itself and to attain prosperity. Even a little infringement of a natural law brings forth reaction from nature; to set that right, one has to undergo a lot of trouble. We see around us the so-called uneducated and uncivilized people in half-naked conditions toil hard through the extremes of heat and cold to earn their livelihood. The educated have thousands of amenities to protect their bodies and externally appear to remain in cosy comfort. But when we examine the joys and sorrows of the lives of people, we find that, being able to endure physical and mental hardship, the uneducated remain relatively free from diseases and worries. They can digest their food easily and are not generally found to suffer from chronic insomnia. On the other hand, we all know how much illness and wastage of energy and money accompany the comforts of the educated. We have heard one adage from villagers: 'Gentlemen die of cold and food.' This means that gentlemen do not have the capacity to withstand even a little bit of cold. From childhood there are elaborate arrangements for protecting their bodies from heat and cold, and as a result they do not have to face nature directly. If on some rare occasion circumstances expose them to nature, they get cough, cold, fever and so many other troubles. As to food, how tempting are gentlemen's dishes! But though relished, good food cannot be properly digested because of lack of natural power of digestion, and everybody knows what woes follow from that. The ancients knew and understood this and that is why they used to inculcate the habit of living with nature from boyhood. The ancients knew how troublesome are the consequences of trying to avoid encounters with nature; that is why in our scriptures austerities have been glorified so much. The main melody of Indian civilization used to be 'plain living and high thinking'. Even a few years back we saw peo-

ple in this country revering like gods austere monks living in thatched huts and subsisting on alms. There is no mystery behind such an attitude except that people intuitively sense that we are all subservient slaves of nature, whereas such ascetics have nature under their control.

The word *svādhyāya* means the study of the Vedas or scriptures according to ancient interpretation, and repetition of the mantra according to yoga shastra. Neither study nor repetition of the mantra becomes particularly fruitful unless one remains conscious about the original purpose of *tapasyā* and *svādhyāya*. *Svādhyāya* means the study of that which gives us the clue of the way that leads through the pursuit of prosperity right up to perfection. Man has to know what he is, why he has been born, and what will be his condition after this life. Consciousness has covered itself [with ignorance] and has been suffering the consequences of its actions through hundreds of thousands of births spanning millions of years. It can have all the enjoyments of this creation within reach by adopting proper means, if it so wishes. Also, if it wishes, it can attain perfect blessedness as well, beyond this life. It is not at all difficult to know these facts. Even now old village folk have many of these truths stored in their minds. Everywhere in India there used to be arrangements for teaching these truths to one and all. It is as a result of such knowledge that the Hindus have retained their existence in spite of so many upheavals. Can we see any distinction between birds and animals and a fool who does not know who he is, where he is and where he will go? Let alone a yogi, everybody should first and foremost know these things.

The commentators on yoga shastra have interpreted the meaning of the word *īśvara-praṇidhāna* as performing one's duties and dedicating the fruits thereof to God. The main purpose of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* is to unite oneself with God, the repository of infinite power, to attain fulfilment in life and, by dint of the

power received from Him, to achieve prosperity and perfection. Followers of all religions know that God is omnipotent, but practically no one knows that living beings are all eternally joined to Him. As soon as a religion starts being preached, it gets into the hands of priests. And how can the priests carry on their business if they proclaim that a pariah has exactly the same relation with God as a brahmin? For this reason in all countries and at all times, deprived of proper education, men keep themselves away from God and thus degrade themselves. Among men there are even inert and beast-like ones who want to remain content, entrusting the priests with all the responsibilities of their lives. In the course of doing whatever they deem to be right, the priests can thus gradually become autocratic. We find all over the world people oppressed in the name of dogmas such as 'the will of the Lord', 'the command of Allah', and 'one's preordained destiny'; all these are nothing but creations of the brains of the priests. The only way one can get rid of these is through *īśvara-praṇidhāna*. This does not mean assenting to the existence of God or becoming a member of some religious sect; nor does it mean brahmins' *sandhyā* devotions [prescribed religious rites performed three times a day] or the sham 'japa and meditation' that are fashionable with some modern religious practitioners. It means keeping the presence of God constantly alive in one's memory.² In our country the truth that 'God is omnipresent' was proclaimed everywhere. But since these days such spiritual truths are not generally culti-

vated anywhere, *īśvara-praṇidhāna* has become buried under sectarian dogmas.

Swamiji used to say, 'The only God I believe in [is] the sum total of all souls.'³ We are all eternally joined to Him. Every one of us is a whirlpool in that ocean of power; whatever power we have in our body and mind has come from God. The closer we can stay to Him and the more conscious we are of Him, the more will be the manifestation of power in us. Great efforts have been made in the Vedas and the Puranas of the Hindus to drive home the point that we have an inner link with God. If one's link with God is maintained, the mind and the intellect become pure. God's power is then reflected within oneself through such purified mind and intellect. Sometimes we see some special power manifesting in some as a result of their past deeds; but if that power is not related to God, it turns diabolic and causes harm to the world. A man who is without *īśvara-praṇidhāna* may lead a moral life solely based on a study of ethics, but he would lack the capacity to protect himself from even small temptations. There are many instances of devoted spiritual aspirants and world-renouncing monks embarking on good deeds and philanthropic work, but refraining from *īśvara-praṇidhāna* and depraving themselves, they become objects of ridicule in society.

Therefore one has to acquire the power to contend with nature through *tapasyā* and comprehend the reality about one's individual self. Then one can unite oneself with the aggregate [supreme Self] and thereby attain true freedom.

3. *Avidyāsmītā-rāga-dveṣābhīniveśāḥ kleśāḥ.*

The pain-bearing obstructions are ignorance [primarily], egoism, attachment, aversion and clinging to life [which are the effects of ignorance].

4. *Avidyā kṣetram-uttareṣāṃ prasupta-tanu-vicchinodārāṇām.*

Ignorance is the productive field of all these [the other obstacles] that follow, whether they are dormant [as in the case of a baby], attenuated [as in the case of a yogi], overpowered [an impression may remain repressed by stronger ones] or expanded [fully active].

5. *Anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmasu nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir-avidyā.*

Ignorance is taking the non-eternal, the impure, the painful and the non-Self for the eternal, the pure, the happy, and the Atman, or Self (respectively).

6. *Dṛg-darśana-śaktyor-ekātmatevāsmitā.*

Egoism is the [false] identification of the seer [the Self] with the instrument of seeing [the sense organs, manas, or mind, and buddhi, or determinative faculty—in short, the body-mind complex].

7. *Sukhānuśāyī rāgaḥ.*

Attachment is that which dwells on pleasure.

8. *Duḥkhānuśāyī dveṣaḥ.*

Aversion is that which dwells on pain [which we seek to avoid].

9. *Sva-rasa-vāhī viduṣo'pi tathārūḍho'bhineveśaḥ.*

Flowing through its own nature [spontaneous by its very nature], and established even in the learned [who know that this body will go], is clinging to life.

Comment: Brahman, the cause of the universe, by way of sport, has covered a portion of Itself by Its *vidyā* maya [power of knowledge] and has divided that portion into innumerable parts. Yogis can enjoy the happiness of emancipation even in this life by attaining that state covered by *vidyā* maya. But the sole purpose of the science of yoga is attainment of *kaivalya* [realization of one's identity with Brahman]. Yogic practice has been prescribed as the means for reaching this very state.

Rarely some perfected yogi is able to attain this state. All other living beings remain covered by *avidyā* maya [power of ignorance], the second covering of Brahman. Forgetting their true selves, living beings think of themselves as insentient entities. This insentient entity is called 'buddhi' [intellect]. Man's mind,

vital force and body develop out of this buddhi. Man forgets himself and regards this buddhi as 'I'. As a result he has to play on the stage of creation his life's role with its joys and miseries. By virtue of the experiences undergone by buddhi, certain things seem to be pleasant and certain others seem to be unpleasant. And we see everywhere in this world what great efforts living beings make so that this life full of contradictions, which is thought to represent one's 'I', can continue! How careful we are lest we lose even such a small thing as a pencil. As regards our body and mind, it is simply impossible for us to endure any damage to these, for we consider these as representing the very essence of our entity.

10. *Te prati-prasava-heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ.*

The fine samskaras [subtle impressions that manifest themselves into gross forms later on] are to be conquered by resolving them into their causal state. [Only when the mind (*citta*), which is an effect, is resolved into its primal cause, *asmitā*, or egoism, do the fine impressions die along with it.]

11. *Dhyāna-heyās-tad-vṛttayaḥ.*

By meditation, their (gross) modifications are to be rejected.

12. *Kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāsayo dṛṣṭādrṣṭa-janma-vedanīyaḥ.*

The 'receptacle of works' [the sum total of samskaras] has its root in these pain-bearing ob-

structions, and their experience is in this visible life or in the unseen life [to come].

13. *Sati mūle tad-vipāko jatyāyur-bhogāḥ.*

The root being there, the fruition comes (in the form of) species, life and experience of pleasure and pain.

14. *Te hlāda-paritāpa-phalāḥ puṇyāpuṇya-hetuvāt.*

They bear fruit as pleasure or pain, caused by virtue or vice.

Comment: One has to get rid of one's self-forgetfulness and realize one's true Self—this is how one can free oneself from this predicament. To achieve that, one has to constantly think about one's real Self and stop the tendencies of the mind to go towards the objects of the senses. The mind-stuff restrained in this way has to be merged in *avidyā*, which is its cause, and then *avidyā* has to be merged in what causes it: the Reality that represents one's true nature. When we do some work, it remains stored in our mind-stuff as a subtle impression [karma]. Man has to be born again and again impelled by the aggregate of his karmas and in every life suffer the effects of earlier actions. Just as one earns merit by doing a good action, similarly one may incur sin depending on the means or procedure adopted for the execution of an action. As a consequence, just as there is happiness in man's life, along with that there is misery too. For this

reason, those with discrimination look upon this world as full of misery. By nature insentient things constantly undergo various transformations like change, growth and decay. We forget ourselves and regard such an insentient thing (the buddhi) as representing our 'I'. Hence through hundreds of thousands of lives we incessantly remain busy keeping this mistaken 'I' intact. As soon as we perform an action, it instigates us to perform another. In the process sometimes we do work that is beneficial to us and sometimes we are compelled to do work that is injurious to us. And as it is said in the *Bhagavadgīta*, 'all undertakings are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke.'⁴ Driven by this urge to work, we rise and fall through happiness and misery, and as one body perishes, build another one. In this way through time eternal we lead our lives, enjoying [and suffering from] the fruits of our work.

15. *Pariṇāma-tāpa-saṁskāra-duḥkhair-guṇa-vṛtti-virodhācca duḥkhameva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ.*

To the discriminating, all is, as it were, painful on account of everything bringing pain either as a consequence, or as an anticipation of loss of happiness, or as fresh cravings arising from impressions of happiness, and also as a counteraction of qualities [implying clash between the different forces of nature, one dragging one way, and another dragging another way].

Comment: Under these circumstances, if discrimination arises in us, everything in life seems to be a source of misery.

Pariṇāma-duḥkha (pain as a consequence of changes): There is nothing in this world that is not ceaselessly undergoing changes in various ways. Man's own body, from childhood to old age, passes through so many different states! So strange is the transformation of man's mind that the son of an orthodox brah-

min, after embracing Islam, turns into a heretic and tries to extirpate Hinduism. We see in this world quarrels occurring between even a father and his son out of various issues and sometimes such quarrels end up in fatal consequences. We become horrified when we think what kind of changes will overtake which one among our kins, relatives and friends. Everything is sure to undergo the six kinds of change: birth, existence, growth,

transformation, decay and destruction.⁵ During an earthquake very rich people die buried under the debris of their own palaces. People who save money in iron chests become the victims of dacoits who slit their throats and rob them of their riches. Those who have eyes see that in this regime of natural changes nothing allows us to live in peace free from cares.

Tāpa-duḥkha (pain due to the anticipation of loss): Our own bodies are permanent abodes of misery caused by diseases, old age and death. So many worries and anxieties trouble us day and night.

We toil round the clock to avoid bodily and mental sufferings. But so long as the body is there, misery associated with the body-mind complex (*ādhyātmika duḥkha*) cannot be got rid of. Then, wherever we go, we remain apprehensive about mosquitoes and flies, thieves and robbers, detractors, antagonists and ferocious animals.

To protect ourselves from other beings we have devised guns, cannons and so many other weapons and yet we have not been able to get rid of misery caused by other living beings (*ādhibhautika duḥkha*). Is it not a sorry state of affairs?

Again, all through the year we have to bear so much torture of the seasons: winter, summer and the rains. Natural calamities like excessive rains, droughts, storms, thunderstorms, earthquakes and meteorite hits seem to bring in their wake all the other troubles of human life. These are misery inflicted by the gods (*ādhidāivika duḥkha*).

We are so much deluded and blinded by our yearnings and deceived by hope that we do not see, in spite of ourselves, how we are suffering from the intense burning heat of these three kinds of misery. But when one's power of discrimination is aroused a little, living in this world and holding on to this human body seem like a great punishment.

Samskāra-duḥkha (pain caused by impressions): 'No living beings can stay inert without doing work even for a moment.'⁶ And as soon

as one makes a little bit of movement, the action becomes stored in one's mind as an impression. All our actions can be likened to the missile called 'boomerang'. Whenever impelled by our earlier actions we repeat an action, it at once returns to us and becomes transformed into an impression in our mind.

Back into eternity at some time, for some unknown reason, a desire to do something appeared in our subtle body. Through how many millions of years has that original deed been circulating, transforming itself sometimes as work and sometimes as impression, and whirling us ceaselessly like a wheel along the course of this world! Habituated as we have been to this intensely painful cycle for endless time, we regard it as our 'life'. It would madden us if we could see for once what desperate but futile efforts we make to protect this life. At present we have reached such a situation that it seems as if there is no way out from this work-cycle. We do not understand at all what for we go on waging this battle for life. Hope seems to be the only driving force behind our life.

When the power of discrimination is aroused, we understand that neither what we have done nor what we are doing is beneficial to us. Dismayed by this realization, many discriminating persons without any knowledge of the scriptures have turned nihilists. They have wasted their lives, making unsuccessful attempts at suicide.

Guṇavṛtti-virodha-duḥkha (pain caused by the counteraction of qualities): In this world everything is made of the three qualities, or gunas [sattva, rajas and tamas]. Again these gunas are mutually antagonistic in nature. A person endowed with sattva says, 'Remain absorbed in looking at the serene beauty of the blue sky.' At once one endowed with rajas proposes, 'Let us see how fast each one of us can run under this blue sky.' The person who is endowed with tamas says, 'What good would come of exhausting ourselves through running? Let us enjoy ourselves by lying

stretched on the grass in supreme comfort.' Brahmā says, 'Create more and more new things.' Vishnu says, 'What good is it adding further things? Rather protect those that are already there.' Shiva says, 'What need is there for all this trouble? Destroy the world.' The entire universe is nothing but the interplay of these three gunas.

In our own life also we run around impelled by these three gunas. When we wake up after a deep sleep, we feel quite refreshed in body and mind. Then the student begins his study, the devotee becomes engaged in the contemplation of God, and the pleasure-loving person strolls from one garden to another to enjoy the beauties of nature. After some time, from the depth of our mind rajas rises and urges us to attend to our duties. Then we all busy ourselves with activities. After being exhausted in course of our day's work, we fall asleep at night. From time eternal we are passing our life subservient to these three gunas. Those who are incapable of understanding think that this life is under their control and feel a false sense of pride out of that thought. But those who have eyes can see clearly that in all the thoughts and actions of our life we are just slaves of the three gunas: 'All this world is deluded by these three states composed of the gunas.'⁷

Not that this action and counteraction between the three gunas are going on just in our individual life. None but those who suffer know how much friction occurs in the day-to-day conduct of our fellow human beings due to the diversity of these three gunas. Diversity as well as action and counteraction of these three gunas can constantly be felt even in those things with which we live in this world. Three types of people take three types of food, wear three types of dresses and even their voices, affected by the three gunas, have three different tones. We constantly feel how difficult it is to

adjust ourselves with these varieties of tastes and activities. The society and the country are full of diversity due to such counteraction of the gunas.

Thus it is seen that we cannot remain steadfastly engaged in any of the three kinds of activities: those driven by sattva, rajas, or tamas. As a result of experience gained through many a life, a [spiritual] seeker after liberation comes to know that the only way he can attain peace is by contemplating on God. Hence he wants to remain engrossed in the contemplation of God. But if he remains immersed in the thought of God for some time, his body and mind cannot stand it any longer. The seeker after liberation has to struggle against rajas and tamas for many lives. Even an aspirant of a higher calibre has to persevere very hard in this life to concentrate his mind completely in God. A great soul like Totapuri had to carry on this struggle ceaselessly for forty years. As for ourselves, we constantly experience the tyranny of rajas and tamas.

(To be continued)

Notes and References

1. *Bhagavadgita*, 5.21.
2. This comprehensive meaning of *īśvara-praṇīdhāna* encompasses the various specific meanings mentioned in reference 3 in the October 2003 instalment of this exposition.
—Translator.
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.137.
4. *Sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnirivāvṛtāh*.
—*Gīta*, 18.48.
5. *Jāyate asti vardhate vipariṇamate apakṣiyate naśyati*.
6. *Na hi kaścit kṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt*.
—*Gīta*, 3.5.
7. *Tribhir-guṇamayair-bhāvair-ebhiḥ sarvam-idam jagat; Mohitam ...* —*Gīta*, 7.13.

When it comes to doing for others, some people stop at nothing.



Reviews



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

Creating, Nurturing and Sustaining an OK Organization. *N H Athreya and George Kandathil.* MMC School of Management, PO Box 11269, III Floor, Court Chambers, 35 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020 and Vijay Foundation, 12 Temple Road, Jayalakshmpuram, Mysore 570 012. 2001. 144 pp. Rs 147.

The book plans to plant Transactional Analysis (TA) psychology in business ambience, as the authors make it explicit in the introduction: 'What builds the relationship, productive relationship, among the people in an organization? Understanding oneself, understanding others, understanding the common aims and helping others to do the same, trusting others and being worthy of trust, caring for all concerned, taking practical steps to ward off unhealthy relationships and getting back on the rails when circumstances derail the relationship—all these help.'

Child, adult and parent are not different persons; they are all in the same individual. They reflect the different moods of that person: instinct, experience and analysis. Instinct is the child in man; it is transparent and mirrors man as he is born, with his heritage of earlier births (samskaras). But then, man also collects experience, earned and carried forward during his present life. Experience often lends wisdom, but more often it closes the mind shut. Therefore the parent will always advise 'Do this, don't do that'. The parent is always wiser than the others. The adult is the balance, the open, responsive and discriminating element in the mind of man.

TA is an application of psychology to individuals (and groups) in an organization. The book treats the subject in five parts: Identity, Relationship, Reason, Integration and Restatement.

Under 'Identity' the authors remind the reader than an organization is a living thing. It grows, mutates, decays and dies. What makes for the long life of a business entity, its health and glory? As in ordi-

nary life, so in business. It must be vision, values and harmony of vibrations.

Then it is 'Relationship'. What is a relationship? It is trust, a spontaneous mutuality. Management science talks a lot about corporate loyalty, loyalty to the work, the goal and the leadership. But that loyalty is earned, not claimed or demanded. How it is earned is explained by an elaborate process of leadership, motivation, empathy and a host of other terms in the burgeoning literature on management.

The third part deals with 'Reason'. It talks of the dynamics of the organization. Each person is an energy centre. Energy is a scalar quantity. An organization has a direction. When two powerful energies work together to the same point, the outcome is synergy; when they pull at cross-purposes, the result is zero or, often worse, an explosion.

In the fourth part we have 'Integration'. Integration is through communication, the organization's nervous system that builds light and harmony.

'Restatement' presents an epigrammatic summary: the do's and don'ts for a successful organization. Some are well known: clarify vision, deserve loyalty, and encourage and assist learning for holistic health.

The Indian value system teaches everything that is ably attempted by the authors. We all know that man is a product of manifest nature, which has three qualities: sattva, rajas and tamas. Energy is a must, and that is rajas. But energy can also bring about a Hiroshima. So energy must be reined in and directed to weal and harmony. Sattva is the platform that upholds vision and harmony. As an organization shuns tamas and bridles rajas with the reins of sattva, all that TA and the enormous business literature talk about becomes transparent.

One last word. TA and other psychological tools of managing an organization count on a win-win situation, which has a commercial bias reckoned in terms of gains. But Hindu psychology delves deeper. The leader must build happiness (a win situation) in the employees; the general must

cultivate loyalty in the forces. How is it done? The only answer is in Hindu metaphysics. There must be a feeling of oneness for genuine empathy to rise and last. The win-win situation must be built on total transparency and a conviction of the one same Spirit abiding in all.

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The Compassionate Mother Sri Sri Sarada Devi. *Swami Tanmayananda.* Sri Ramakrishna Sarada Sangha, Malaysia. 2002. xi + 387 pp. Rs 100. Copies available at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. E-mail: srkmath@vsnl.com.

Sri Ramakrishna called her '*dayamayi*, the compassionate one'; Balaram Babu referred to her as the '*kshamarupa tapasvini*, ascetic embodying forgiveness'. She was love personified, peace personified. She lived such a simple life that everybody found her very close to himself, as his own near and dear one. We have heard of devotees worshipping the supreme Being as Mother. We have also heard people calling some saintly women 'Mother'. But in case of Holy Mother, people saw in her their own human mothers. This is unique! She was so human and at the same time, so divine—the Universal Mother, in the true sense of the term! In the pages of this book the motherly aspect of Sri Sarada Devi has come up very vividly.

Based on the Bengali biography *Sri Sri Sarada Devi* by Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya, this book starts with a description of the village where Mother was born. We get an enchanting picture of Mother's childhood surroundings. Then follows a short sketch of her early life: her divine birth, her marriage, training at her father's house as well as under the supervision of her God-intoxicated husband Sri Ramakrishna, awakening of her divinity by him through the *shodashi* puja, her days in the service of her husband at Dakshineswar, Shyampukur and Cossipore; and then the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna and the emergence of Sarada Devi as the spiritual teacher and universal mother to shoulder the responsibility left to her by her divine consort.

The major part of the book deals with her roles as mother and teacher. Four long chapters discuss these roles under the headings Mother-I, Mother-II,

Guru-I and Guru-II. These chapters describe reminiscences of various disciples of Mother revealing various aspects of her personality. These reminiscences are as interesting as they are enlightening. While reading the book, one forgets that one is going through a biography—it is so involving. One is overcome by Mother's unearthly affection bestowed on all who came to her, irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. Many of the instances recorded in this book show how people came to her with their various types of problems, and with what simplicity she solved them. Meant for all sorts of people—men, women, sannyasins, householders, aspirants of spiritual life, or seekers of worldly welfare—Mother's instructions are so relevant and beneficial even today.

Swami Tanmayanandaji has done a great service to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda family, spread all over the world, by rendering an English version of the book. Now the book will be accessible to many more, and more people will have the chance to know Mother more intimately.

The book also has a map showing the route Mother walked from Jayrambati to Dakshineswar. This helps one to be with Mother mentally while she is treading the path to meet Thakur. Several appendices have been added at the end, featuring the following: a family tree, a chronology of events of Mother's life, a note on Bhanu Pisi, Mother's childhood friend in Jayrambati, and some sayings of the sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna on Mother. Several photographs adorn the pages of this book: Mother, her different homes, her companions, Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples who looked after Mother. A glossary has been added to make the understanding of technical Bengali terms easy for non-Bengali readers. The quality of the cover and the print are excellent.

At the end, I would like to point out some printing mistakes and inadvertent errors in translation that might cause confusion. It was Golap Ma and not Gopal Ma who went to Vrindaban with Mother. (96) Instead of 'After the passing away of her mother' (104), it should be 'After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna'. In place of 'This lady will be your hold for living in this world' (122) it should be 'The child in the womb of this lady will be your hold for living in this world.' This child was Radhu. It should be Ashutosh Mitra and not Ashok Mitra on 145. In place of 'My younger sister-in-law' (152) it should be 'younger daughter-in-law', be-

cause Shivram was Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, and Mother referred to his wife as 'chhoto bau'. On 163, instead of 'uncle of Radhu's father-in-law', it should be 'brother of Radhu's father-in-law'. Again, on 179 it should be 'brothers of Mother' and not 'uncles of Mother'. In the incident described on 200, in place of 'thunderbolt' it should be 'a big boat'. This confusion is due to two very similar Bengali words: *bajra* and *bajarā*. The first means a thunderbolt while the second a big pleasure boat. On 214, instead of 'coolie' and '*balu*' it should be '*kalu*', which is the name of a caste in Bengal. The incident described on 238 refers to Bhupendranath Pramanik and not Bhupendranath Bhowmik. On 249 we read 'Baburam Maharaj told Mahapurush Maharaj, "Tarakda, see how Mother has fed the boy?"' The original text is '*Tarakda, dekhecho ki kore chheletake kheye diyechhe Ma?*' which should translate as 'Tarakda, did you see how Mother has [spiritually] overwhelmed the boy?', implying that the boy was totally engrossed in Mother. On 276 it should be '*tasar* (coarse silk) sari' instead of 'cotton sari'. Describing Mother's sense of humour, it is written that when Mother was given barley-milk while she was ill, after 'taking just a portion of it, and the vessel in hand, [she] said laughingly, "Today I do not have any attraction for prasada." Hearing this, the devotees took the vessel inside and shared the content among themselves.' (294-5) But Mother actually said, 'How come, no one has attraction for prasada today.' Similarly, 'Even the devotees were not spared from trouble' (342) causes some confusion. Following the original, it should be 'On top of it there was no end of visiting devotees'.

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The Divine Life of Sri Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath. C Varadarajan. Kinkar Rameshananda, C/o C Varadarajan, Flat No 103, Leelam Residency, 8-4-135 Barkatpura, Hyderabad 500 027. 1999. iii + 87 pp. Rs 60.

The author has sincerely tried to present in this book the life and message of his spiritual master Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji. There are twenty chapters, including an introduction.

In the introduction, the concept of the summum

bonum of life is defined in terms of God as the only good to be attained. The subsequent five chapters deal with a brief biographical sketch of the master. The author has narrated many interesting episodes in the life of his master as a divine incarnation.

The chapter entitled 'His Philosophy' says that the master emphasized the personal and impersonal aspects of God, which are valid and valuable. The knowledge of their unity arises as the sadhaka attains perfection. 'Interaction with Contemporary Saints' is a chapter dealing with brief accounts of the master's meeting with a large number of saints like Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj of Rishikesh, Anandamayee Ma and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The master met a number of contemporary saints, which resulted in mutual respect and reverence.

The author has taken special care to include important colour photographs of his master and other saints. The book is useful to both spiritual aspirants and the general reader alike.

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Svetasvatara Upanishad. Swami Vedananda. Swami Vedananda, 10 Kalyan Nagar, Gaddi Annaram, Hyderabad 500 060. 2001. 240 pp. Rs 60.

Pointing out the uniqueness of this Upanishad, R D Ranade, the celebrated author of *The Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, says that 'it was written at the time of the parting of the ways between the Vedantic, the Sankhya and the Yoga Schools of Thought.' This 'explains why we have not in the Svetasvatara cut-and-dry doctrines about Nature and God and their interrelation,' says Ranade and declares that this Upanishad is 'the *locus classicus* [of] the roots of the Yoga systems.' Indeed, the text blends in a unique way the two paths of saguna and nirguna, bhakti and jnana.

This commentary has its own singular significance. And this significance extends to both the commentary and its composition, its very compilation. To begin with, this is a commentary by Swami Bhaskarsharanandaji who was, as Swami Prabuddhanandaji, head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, in his short but illuminating Foreword, says, 'one of the respected and scholarly monks of the Ramakrishna Order'. Bhaskarsharanandaji was a disciple of Mahapurush Maha-

raj, (Swami Shivanandaji) and was directed by his guru himself into this field. As Vedanandaji notes in his Preface, 'Swami Bhaskarashwarananda had the unique opportunity of studying and discussing the Sastras with Mahapurushji, his guru.' And Shivanandaji himself asked his disciple, early in the twenties, 'to hold classes on the Vedantic scriptures at the Bhubaneshwar Math and himself sat in those classes to encourage the disciple'.

What a disciple the revered Swami proved to be! Right from 1927, when he founded the Nagpur Math, he took classes (perhaps after a few years) on the scriptures and inspired countless seekers by his meticulously scholarly and deeply intuitive exposition. Among those who kept notes were the late Swami Shivatattwanandaji and the present author Swami Vedanandaji. 'It has become possible to write this book,' says Vedanandaji, 'since I was fortunate to study the Upanishads and other Sastras under Swami Bhaskarashwaranandaji for eighteen years, grasping his subtle and deep thoughts on the Vedanta philosophy'.

Coming as it does from a disciple of one of the direct disciples of the Great Master, this is no ordinary explicatory, largely cerebral, gloss on Shankara's commentary. Deeply rooted in the practical, pragmatic Vedantic tradition gloriously exemplified in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Bhaskarashwaranandaji offers a comprehensive map of consciousness and its transformation. The explanation tackles some of the subtlest (often too abstruse) insights with ease and, what is more, with clarity. Every verse is explained in detail and depth and what struck me was the gentle though underlying current of practical insights for sadhana that abound in the commentary.

As Vedanandaji rightly says, the revered Swami's forte was to see 'invariably a psychological sequence in the unfoldment of spiritual thought in each mantra or verse of the Upanishad and [bring] new light on Sankara's commentary.' From this perspective, several nuggets of nourishing inwardness can be easily identified. For instance, the teasing conundrum of the temporal and the eter-

nal—lila and nitya—is explained with luminous clarity. Says Bhaskarashwaranandaji, 'You and your sadhana are His lila, manifestations. The Absolute takes your form in lila and is doing the sadhana as it were. The sadhana is also His lila and not yours. After knowing this to be the truth, dynamic sadhana (and not merely sitting quiet) with that consciousness is required, in order to make this an experience in life.'

It is this practical Vedanta (or Advaita) bhakti that is the cornerstone of the commentary. As Vedanandaji rightly observes, this accounts for Bhaskarashwaranandaji's 'unique way of explaining the consciousness of ignorance and the consciousness of knowledge'. This was 'his approach to teaching the truths of Vedanta and his entire teaching seems to center around this method'.

This book is literally a labour of love and devotion. Vedanandaji has put together what must have been random notes into a coherent, clear and, above all, an illuminating commentary. (Perhaps, his own scientific and technical background as an engineer provided the author with the needed analytical methodology). In short, for followers of practical Vedanta (revivified by Ramakrishna), this commentary is an indispensable book of constant reference. I do hope it receives the support it richly deserves. I look forward to more such volumes by Bhaskarashwaranandaji from Vedanandaji.

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Books Received

Hymn to Goddess Durga: Sri Mahishasuramardini Stotram. *Trans. Dr S Ramarathnam.* Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. 2002. 30 pp. Rs 8.

Glimpses of the Glorious Past: The Best of Bhavan's Journal 1954-2003. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Munshi Marg, Mumbai 400 007. E-mail: brbhavan@bom7.vsnl.net.in.

Mrs Karl Marx is said to have observed, at the end of a rather long and bleak life, how much better it would have been if dear Karl had made some capital instead of writing so much about it.

—Harold Macmillan

❧ Reports ❧

Organized. A camp to serve pilgrims; by Ramakrishna Math, Rajahmundry; at the Godavari Pushkaram bathing festival; from 30 July to 10 August 2003. During the 12 days,

Speaker, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly; at Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad; on 3 August.



Students' felicitation at Porbandar centre

the camp served buttermilk to 10,000 and cooked food to 4,000 devotees, and milk to 1,000 children, daily. Medical facilities were also available for pilgrims.

Opened. The newly built monks' quarters; by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Mission Swasthya Seva Kendra, Dhaleswar, Agartala; on 31 July. Thousands of devotees attended the function.

Distributed. Prizes to winners of the annual cultural competitions; by Mr Prestone Tyngsong, Minister for Arts and Culture, Meghalaya; at Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong; on 2 August.

Inaugurated. A week-long national youth convention; by Sri Keshari Nath Tripathi,

Felicited. 114 distinguished students of Porbandar district; by Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Porbandar; on 9 August. In addition to a shield and a certificate of honour, each student received a photograph and books of Swami Vivekananda. Presiding over the function, Sri Kailashpati Mishra, Governor of Gujarat, exhorted the youngsters to read Vivekananda's books, develop their character and fulfil Swamiji's dream of a glorious India.

Laid. Foundation stone for the new Probationers' Training Centre building; by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Belur Math; on 19 August (Krishna Janmashtami day).

Awarded. The newly instituted Verrier Alwin Award for outstanding contribution in the field of community work; by the Pappum Pare district administration; to Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, Itanagar; on 29 August. The prize included a citation, a shawl and Rs 20,000.

Secured. 1st and 3rd positions; by students of the school run by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji; at the Meghalaya state-level science exhibition competition; in August.

Opportunity knocks only once, but temptation leans on the doorbell.