

# **PRABUDDHA BHARATA** *or* **AWAKENED INDIA**



**DECEMBER  
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Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896**

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

DECEMBER 2003

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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!

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No. 12

## ↔ Traditional Wisdom ↔

### DETACHMENT

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।  
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ॥

Non-attachment, non-identification of oneself with children, wife, home and the like, constant even-mindedness amid desirable and undesirable events[—are among what is declared to be knowledge]. (*Bhagavadgita*, 13.9)

As one who is standing by the brink of a deep well is always careful lest he should fall into it, even so should one living in the world be always on his guard against its temptations. He who has once fallen into the well of the world, so full of temptations, can hardly come out of it uninjured and stainless. (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 138)

Such is the fascination of money that if you are too much involved in it, you will not be able to resist its attraction. You may think that any moment you may leave your money behind. No, my child, never harbour any such foolish thought. Through a tiny loophole the attachment to money will enter into your mind and then strangle you gradually, without your knowing about it. Always remember Sri Ramakrishna's saying that money is at the root of all disasters you see in the world. Money can lure one's mind into other temptations. Beware! (Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi)

If a man throws aside the vanities of the world we hear him called mad. But such men are the salt of the earth. Out of such madness have come the powers that have moved this world of ours, and out of such madness alone will come the powers of the future that are going to move the world. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4.171)

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## ∞ This Month ∞

**The Devotee's Attitude**, this month's editorial, discusses how a true devotee looks upon the world, others and work.

Excerpts from 'The Way to Avoid Misery', an article by Sri A B Shetty, and a news item are featured this month under **Prabudha Bharata—100 Years Ago**.

The importance of constantly remembering God, the state of the highest perfection from which there is no return to transmigratory existence, the necessity of wholehearted devotion to Purusha to attain Him, how the Brahmā the Creator is part of the world-plan—Swami Atulanandaji discusses all this in **Reflections on the Bhagavadgīta**, commenting on verses 14 to 21 of the eighth chapter of the *Gīta*.

**Prapañcasāra: A Brief Study** by Swami Harshanandaji is a chapter-wise summary of this important tantra literature. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and President of the Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore, the author is a well-known speaker and writer, with a number of books to his credit in Sanskrit, English and Kannada.

The UNESCO and the Government of India organized an international ministerial conference on 'Dialogue among Civilizations: Quest for New Perspectives' at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, on 9-10 July 2003. Swami Jitmanandaji was a special invitee for its first session on 'Spirituality and Ethics' on 10 July, chaired by Sir James R Mancham KBE, Founding President, The Republic of Seychelles. In **Spirituality and Ethics**, the text of Swami Jitmanandaji's speech at the session, he underlines the supremacy of the Spirit and the need for the acceptance of all

religions. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a former editor of this journal, the author is President of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot. A well-known writer and speaker, he has a number of books to his credit.

That man is divine is the main melody of Swami Vivekananda's teachings. **The Divine Touch in Swami Vivekananda's Poetry** by Pranabananda Bandyopadhyay is a learned appraisal of Swamiji's poems, with stress on the divine aspect. The author is from Howrah, West Bengal.

Underlining the fact that freedom is the goal of all religions, Dr Tapati Chakravartty discusses in **Different Pathways to Salvation** the four paths to perfection called yogas. The author is from Dhanbad, Jharkhand, and holds a doctorate in philosophy.

**Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition** by Swami Premeshanandaji features the author's comments on sutras 16 to 38 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.

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

**Glimpses of Holy Lives** features incidents from the lives of two saints: Sant Ganeshnath and Sena the barber.

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# The Devotee's Attitude

## EDITORIAL

The twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavadgīta* describes some qualities a devotee of God can gainfully cultivate on his path to spiritual progress. In the last editorial we discussed some of these, which describe a true devotee's mental make-up. How such a devotee is disposed towards others, his attitude towards the world and how he looks upon work—these we take up for discussion now.

### Doesn't Afflict, Doesn't Get Afflicted

A devotee is not afflicted by others, nor is he a source of affliction to others. The *Gīta* uses the word *udvega*, which means affliction, disturbance or perturbation. Learning to offer his pleasure and pain to the object of his love, God, a devotee is not unduly perturbed in any situation. Again, since he does not take sides in an issue, having no axe to grind himself, he is never a cause of perturbation in others. Of course, if some people do not understand him he does not lose his sleep over it. Instead of trying to be good and pleasing to everyone, he tries to keep his mind on God. Bhavanath, Sri Ramakrishna's devotee, once said to him, 'I feel disturbed if I have a misunderstanding with someone. I feel that in that case I am not able to love all.' The Master replied, 'Try at the outset to talk to him and establish a friendly relationship with him. If you fail in spite of your efforts, then don't give it another thought. Take refuge in God. Meditate on Him. There is no use in giving up God and feeling depressed from thinking about others.'<sup>1</sup>

### Not Hateful, but Friendly and Compassionate

A person can be anything but a true devotee if he hates others. He does not hate any-

one, not to speak of followers of other faiths. He believes in the Vedic dictum '*Ekam sat, vip-rā bahudhā vadanti*, Truth is one; sages call it by various names.' We are not talking of subscribers to a faith, but a devotee whose goal is to cultivate devotion for his Beloved. He believes in the possibility of the same Truth manifesting through different divine forms to suit different mental temperaments.

There is what is called *iṣṭa-niṣṭhā*, devotion to one's Chosen Ideal. The devotee intensifies his devotion to his ideal to the exclusion of all other forms. That signifies his special relationship with his ideal. Sri Ramakrishna describes this devotion with an everyday example: 'Do you know what devotion to one ideal is like? It is like the attitude of a daughter-in-law in the family. She serves all the members of the family—her brothers-in-law, her father-in-law, husband and so forth—bringing them water to wash their feet, fetching their towels, arranging their seats, and the like; but with her husband she has a special relationship.'<sup>2</sup>

Devotion to one ideal need not mean hatred of others. In fact, that will be sheer fanaticism, which is not even remotely related to real devotion. A true devotee steers clear of this evil and, by his true devotion and acceptance of all faiths as true, stands out from a subscriber to a creed or a believer in a faith.

Sri Ramakrishna lived and preached the harmony of all religions. He realized the same divinity not only through different paths of Hinduism, but through Christianity and Islam as well. Only earnestness and sincerity he advocated on the part of the aspirant, irrespective of the religion to which he belonged or the form he worshipped. Sri Ramakrishna assures that even if a devotee apparently strayed, God would put him on the right path, provided he

is sincere. Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna's foremost disciple, proclaimed the truth of harmony of religions all over the world. His famous definition of religion is eternally true; nay, religion cannot be better defined:

Each soul is potentially divine.

*The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.*

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. *Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.*<sup>3</sup> [Emphasis added]

The secondary details are useful only as long as they conduce to the primary aim of manifestation of divinity, which implies transformation of character. However, when these details become an end in themselves, religion recedes to the background giving way to everything else, including politics. Swamiji's observation about the character-development aspect of religion is most topical: 'Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God.'<sup>4</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi practised and taught that there is no caste among devotees of God. Sri Ramakrishna's disciples—sannyasins and householders—were from all castes, from different backgrounds and of different mental make-ups. If Swami Vivekananda was the foremost among them in spiritual and intellectual powers, there was also Swami Adbhutananda (Latu

Maharaj), who could not read and write even as much as Sri Ramakrishna did. But Sri Ramakrishna trained them all according to their temperaments, and each one of them achieved the acme of spiritual experience. Devotees of God thus form their own casteless caste. They relish each other's company deriving an inexplicable sense-transcendent joy. Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi across the world bear testimony to this fact.

It may be that a devotee does not socialize with others, but he is friendly with everyone. His apparent indifference in some cases is born of his keenness to avoid gossip and to better utilize his time. He empathizes with the sufferings of others and does what he can to help them. If direct help is not possible, he serves them by his sincere prayers.

### Forgiving and Forbearing

A devotee does not nurse grievances against anyone. He tries to cultivate *titikṣā*, forbearance. In the words of Sri Shankaracharya, '*Titikṣā* means suffering all afflictions without caring for their redress, being free at the same time from anxiety or lamentation on that score.'<sup>5</sup> An incident from Sri Ramakrishna's life illustrates the point: Chandra Halder, Mathur's family priest in the Kalighat temple, was jealous of Mathur's devotion to Sri Ramakrishna.

Wishing to monopolize the rich man's favour, he was alarmed to find a competitor in the field.

He determined to put a stop to it. One day Sri Ramakrishna lay in an outer room of Mathur's Jaun Bazar house in a half-conscious state, when the priest suddenly came in. There was no one near by. The man pushed the Master several times and said, 'Well, tell me how you hypnotised Mathur Babu.' Sri Ramakrishna kept silent, for he had not the power to speak then. The priest getting no answer to his repeated queries was exasperated and kicked the Master thrice before he went away. Sri Ramakrishna knew what

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the consequences would be if the matter were reported to Mathur. So he kept it to himself.<sup>6</sup>

### Friends and Foes Alike

A true devotee has no friends or foes. But if someone nurses ill feelings towards him for any reason, he does not reciprocate with hard feelings. If the devotee is a householder, he can 'hiss' so that others do not take advantage of him, but he is not expected to harm them: he does not 'bite'.<sup>7</sup> A devotee believes that Parvati is his mother, Shiva his father, devotees of God his friends and the entire world his home.<sup>8</sup>

### Equipoise in Praise and Blame

It is human to crave for appreciation and be piqued by criticism. Reactions to praise and blame arise from the mind. A true devotee believes that any high points in his life are due to God and does not take credit for them himself. He learns to distance his true Self from his body and mind by repeatedly offering everything to God. Praise and blame thus cease to affect him. They do not touch his ego, which does not remain 'unripe' anymore. His 'ripe' ego strengthens his feeling that he is a servant of God or part of Him.

### Attitude towards the World

The world consists of pairs of opposites, called *dvandvas*: pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, heat and cold, praise and blame, gain and loss, victory and defeat, and so on. Human nature is to get attached to the pleasant and have aversion to the painful. But it is an unpleasant and uncomfortable fact that if we get attached to one the other comes uninvited; it is a package deal. A bhakta, however, has a clear conception of the God-soul-universe triad and is able to see the world in perspective. Not all problems in the world have solutions; nor do they have rational explanations.

From the non-dual perspective, the world is but a dream that will break on the dawn of Self-knowledge. Considering that it is sublated on Self-realization, it is not eternal. It is also a source of misery, since worldly pleasure is of the rajasic variety, which is like nectar in the beginning (due to the contact of the sense organs with their objects), but poison at the end, when one stands sapped of all energies.<sup>9</sup> The devotee appreciates that the finite world can give no lasting happiness, which is possible only in the Infinite, God. Worldly pleasure is thus only pain for him. He learns to remain unaffected by either, offering everything to his Beloved.

The devotee accepts certain inevitabilities in the world, looking upon the world cinema as God's play. He understands that the only utility of this world to strengthen him spiritually. Every incident, his every experience, is grist to his mill. He uses them to turn to God. In the words of Swamiji, the world is nothing more than 'a grand moral gymnasium wherein we have all to take exercise so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually'.<sup>10</sup> The world continues to be as kinky as a dog's curly tail. All attempts to straighten it only end up in straightening ourselves.

A devotee does not pay much attention to the auspicious or the inauspicious. He remains unaffected by them. He is firmly convinced that true dependence on God will lead him on the right way. The following incident from Swami Yatiswaranandaji's life sets the perspective clear on auspiciousness:

Once in August 1929 I went to Belur Math on some work. Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivananda) was then the President of the Order.

***A devotee does not pay much attention to the auspicious or the inauspicious. He remains unaffected by them. He is firmly convinced that true dependence on God will lead him on the right way.***

He was very much interested in the work at Madras. Whenever I went to Belur Math he used to ask me to go back to Madras soon so that the Mission's work there might not suffer. But this time I wanted to stay at Belur Math for a little longer. So when Mahapurush Maharaj as usual asked me when I was going back, I told him that the following few days were inauspicious. Actually I did not care either for auspiciousness or inauspiciousness. It was only an excuse to remain in the spiritual atmosphere of Belur Math a few days more. Mahapurush Maharaj's advice to me on this occasion should be an eye-opener to all of us:

Mahapurushji: '... But you are men of action. It won't do for you to look for auspicious days. Those who have nothing to do can afford to consult the almanac at every step. The Master also used to say, "Only those who believe in such things are affected by them; other are not." Besides, you are devotees of the Mother. She is protecting you under all conditions and will always do so. If one takes the name of the Lord and starts on a journey, one will not come to grief. By the strength of His name even distress is transformed into a blessing.'

Saying this he sang:

Whoever starts upon a journey  
Taking the name of Mother Durgā,  
Śiva with His almighty trident  
Surely will protect him.<sup>11</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna lived as Mother Kali's child all through his life. In reply to a question from a devotee whether God really had the power to bestow grace, he taught how to surrender to God:

The effect of karma wears away if one takes refuge in God. I prayed to the Divine Mother with a flower in my hand: 'Here, Mother, take Thy sin; here, take Thy virtue. I don't want either of

these; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy dharma; here, take Thy adharma. I don't want any of Thy dharma or adharma; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy knowledge; here, take Thy ignorance. I don't want any of Thy knowledge or ignorance; give me only real bhakti. Here, Mother, take Thy purity; here, take Thy impurity. Give me only real bhakti.<sup>12</sup>

A devotee is not elated on getting what is desirable, nor does he hate what is undesirable. He is detached from both, offering them both to God. Sri Krishna teaches in the *Gīta* to offer everything—what we do, eat or offer in a sacrifice, whatever gifts we make, austerities we perform—to Him. That can free us from the bondage of karma, bearing good and evil results.<sup>13</sup>

### Attitude towards Work

None can remain for a moment without work; for the gunas born of Prakriti make everyone act, even in spite of themselves, says Sri Krishna in the *Gīta*. (3.5) Even the bare maintenance of the body will be impossible without work. (3.8) Only a man of Self-realization has no duty to speak of. (3.17) So everyone has to work, with the body or the mind or both, as determined by one's karma. Work being something inescapable, the Lord advises us to work without attachment, offering the fruits to God.

Sri Krishna describes a devotee dear to Him as a *dakṣa*. (12.16) The word means one who is prompt, resourceful, efficient and dextrous. Sri Shankaracharya interprets *dakṣa* as one who is able to promptly and rightly understand duties as they present themselves before him. Two things become clear from this: (1) Efficiency in work and devotion to God are perfectly compatible; (2) Procrastination, indifference to work in the name of devotion or a sloppy work habit under the cloak of

**(1) Efficiency in work and devotion to God are perfectly compatible; (2) Procrastination, indifference to work in the name of devotion or a sloppy work habit under the cloak of spirituality—these have nothing to do with devotion.**



spirituality—these have nothing to do with devotion. If anything, they only steep one more and more in *tamas*, inertia.

A person not attentive to work fails in his attempts at meditation too, for it is the same mind that is behind both. A devotee may not initiate any selfish project (*sarvārambha-parityāgi*), but he does his share of work looking upon it as the highest worship of his Beloved. He considers himself an instrument in the hands of God. Says Swami Ramakrishnanandaji, the embodiment of devotion to Sri Ramakrishna:

The true devotee ... never thinks of himself. He is so full of the thought of God that his own self is forgotten. This body is only an instrument and an instrument really has no existence of its own, for it is wholly dependent on the one who uses it. Suppose a pen were conscious, it could say, 'I have written hundreds of letters', but actually it has done nothing, for the one who holds it has written the letters. So because we are conscious we think we are doing all these things, whereas, in reality we are as much an instrument in the hands of a Higher Power as the pen is in our hands and He makes all things possible.<sup>14</sup>

Till one reaches such a stage of surrender and becomes free of attachment to one's body-mind-based little self, the saner course will be to do one's duty as one best can, without yielding to despondency and philosophizing as Arjuna did before the Kurushetra war. And, incidentally, it is good to remember both Sri Krishna's<sup>15</sup> and Swamiji's<sup>16</sup> teaching that selfless work is a stand-alone path to God-realization. It is needless to say what a powerful tool it can become when coupled with devotion to God.

\* \* \*

The traits of a devotee dear to the Lord enumerated in the *Gīta* describe his attitude towards himself, toward others, towards the world and towards work. These qualities of a devotee par excellence are for aspirants to emulate on the path to perfection. \*

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2. *Gospel*, 229.
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.124.
4. *Ibid.*, 5.409.
5. *Vivekachudamani*, 24.
6. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), 87.
7. See Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the snake and the brahmachari. —*Gospel*, 85.
8. *Mātā me pārvati devī*  
*pitā devo mahēśvaraḥ;*  
*Bāndhavāḥ śivabhaktāśca*  
*svadeśo bhuvanatrayam.*  
— Sri Shankaracharya, *Annapūrṇā Stotra*, 12.
9. *Gīta*, 18.38.
10. *CW*, 1.80.
11. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Bangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1989), 342-3.
12. *Gospel*, 817.
13. *Gīta*, 9.27-8.
14. Sister Devamata, *Days in an Indian Monastery* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2003), 27.
15. *Gīta*, 3.20.
16. *CW*, 1.124.

**B**ondage is not outside. It is within. Bondage is in one's own mind, but it mistakenly appears to be outside. One can understand this clearly when one's mind becomes pure through good karma and God's grace. But intellectual understanding is not enough to get rid of bondage. It is through the grace of the guru and intense self-effort that one becomes free from bondage.

—Swami Turiyananda



December 1903

### The Way to Avoid Misery

**E**verything of the universe must be covered with the Lord Himself; thus giving up the attachment to transitory things, live and enjoy your life, but do not covet anything of the world. —*Ishavasya Upanishad*.

Life is a struggle—a struggle to avoid misery. The eternal sigh of mankind is for happiness. It is the cherished hope of every living being, the ultimate goal which all aspire to reach one day or other. The goal is the same, but how different are the roads which men tread in search of it! The savage seek happiness in the satisfaction of physical desires, the civilized in riches and love, the philosopher in wisdom, and the religious devotee in prayer and contemplation. Caesar sought her in conquest; Antony through love; and Croesus through riches. Did any of them succeed in their quest? Most assuredly not. For happiness, as has been said, is only a phantom of which we hear so much and see so little; whose promises are constantly given and constantly broken, but, as constantly believed, that cheats us with the sound and refuses the substance, and lures with the blossom instead of giving the fruit.

It will be asked why it is so. The question of happiness without misery is absurd in itself. For by asking this question we take it for granted that happiness is absolute. Happiness and misery, like good and evil or light and darkness or any such other pairs of opposites, are correlatives and the one can be distinguished only by contrast with the other. The ideas of these pairs of opposites are inseparable in thought. One is possible only through the existence of the other. We cannot conceive of light without darkness. We cannot sing the glories of pleasure unless we are stung by the sharp arrows of pain. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'Life without death, and happiness without misery, are contradictions, and neither can be true because both of them are manifestations of the same thing.'

Must we then leave the world? Is man then doomed to swing like a pendulum betwixt a smile and a tear for evermore? The first lesson we must learn in this connection is that desires can never be satisfied by their enjoyment. With the attainment of one object of our desire our aspiration rises to another. The acquisition of one object only begets a thirst for more. As long as one yearning of our heart remains unfulfilled, we can never be happy. The truth that *desire is the cause of suffering* is as old as the world. Prince Siddhartha, the Lord of Compassion, discovered this under the memorable Bo-tree centuries ago. Thousands of our forefathers, who before us crossed through life's stormy main and buffeted its waves of pain and misery, learnt this lesson. But it never comes home to us unless we ourselves taste of the bitter cup.

The next question that awaits solution at our hands is, how can the deluded soul of man cease to be attracted by worldly objects? How can the desire for the gratification of senses be banished? The way is by realizing that the pleasures they give us is impermanent, that indulgence in them invariably brings disgust, disease and suffering on its heels. Says Mrs Annie Besant, 'Argument would not do it, reasoning would not do it, but when men have had the experience, when men have gratified their taste to the full, when they have become gluttonous, presently they will find that they have made their bodies miserable, their lives one long suffering, that diseases result from the gratification they have experienced, that the gratification brings pain as a result; then they will no longer desire to grat

ify themselves in that way and the root of desire will be cut away. ... You can only get rid of it by gradually realizing through experience the knowledge that the gratification of all desire which is not going upwards is a womb of pain and brings forth woe as a child. ... Hence is pain, mis-called an evil, one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon man in order to turn him from the transitory and fix him upon the eternal; for only by pain can we possibly learn, only out of disgust with the world will arise those inward aspirations which shall at last be gratified in the vision of Truth Divine.' If there be anything which we highly value or tenderly love, we must, following the advice of Epictetus, estimate at the same time its true nature. Is it wealth? Remember that it may be lost. Is it some possession? Remember that it may be destroyed. Is it wife or child? Remember that they may die. If our desires are fixed on any of the transient objects of this earth, if we run mad after such passing shadows, we are sure to be plunged deep in the gulf of disappointment. Yet it is by passing through the flaming furnace of this life that we can be purged of our desires. It is the way by which we can weaken our attachment to things of this world and transfer our desire from the transitory to the permanent that knows no change, no death.

But we are apt to be misunderstood when we talk of non-attachment to earthly objects, giving up of desires, etc. Do we mean that one should sit idle at his home or go to the woods and jungles to meditate on Parabrahman? Is this called renunciation? Does this make a sannyasin? Certainly not. Read the *Gīta*. What is the central lesson which the divine Lord Sri Krishna teaches in it? It is not to cease from performing action but to do one's duty without attachment and without desire for its fruits. It is this which makes the true yogi:

'Arjuna, shaking off attachment and being the same in success and failure, do thy work, established in yoga. Preservation of the equanimity of mind is called yoga.' (*Gīta*, 2.48)

True sannyasa means the giving up of desire and not of action. ... 'To live in the world and not be of it' is the truest renunciation as Swami Vivekananda truly remarks. So long as a man is swayed hither and thither by his senses, so long as he is lured by earthly objects, he can never hope to free himself from the yoke of misery. Whereas a man who is unattached to this world, who discharges his duties, indifferent to the results, who is neither elated by success nor cast down by failure, who has centred his mind on the permanent, will ever be blissful. No storm of circumstances can ever break the serene calmness of his mind. No cloud of disaster can ever mar the sunshine of his happiness. Such a soul has found a safe harbour to rest in this stormy ocean of samsara. The waves of sorrow may dash against it, the tempest of misfortune may blow against it, the overwhelming tide of passions may sweep over it, yet it will remain changeless, firm and immovable as the Himalayas, for it has identified itself not with the passing shadows but with the changeless and eternal Self. Happy the soul which has found its true nature. Nothing on earth can disturb its peace. Nothing can injure it.

—A B Shetty

## Glass Factory

**M**r N B Wagle, the well-known enterprising Maratha young man, who has returned from England after studying the art of glass-making there, contemplates devoting his energies in establishing an important branch of industry, namely glass-making, in this country. He has made up his mind to establish a glass factory somewhere in Chota Nagpore, where there are advantages of cheap labour, fuel and suitable land. He is under a confirmed impression that if he can secure help from the Government, he can compete with the Austrian and Belgian low-grade products. An estimate of a lakh of rupees has been made for the purpose, which Mr Wagle has got an assurance of raising in England if it cannot be raised in India.

—From 'News and Notes'

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# Reflections on the *Bhagavadgita*

SWAMI ATULANANDA

## Chapter 8 (continued)

**14. I am easily attainable by that even steadfast yogi who remembers Me daily and constantly, with a single mind, O son of Pritha.**

**H**e who thinks of Me, the supreme Lord, daily and constantly, not for a few days or a few weeks, but uninterruptedly throughout life, to that yogi who is ever steadfast in thought, I am easily accessible. Therefore we must always be at it, if we want to succeed. We must always call the Lord to mind and not allow other thoughts to interfere. We must always try to live in the presence of God. It is not sufficient to think of God on Sundays and then forget Him all the rest of the week. To attain God, to reach Him, to enjoy His blessed company, we must be steadfast in our devotion and with a pure and single mind we must call on Him as often as possible. And for the successful yogi it is possible to think of God at all times. Nothing can interfere with that state of communion between God and His devotee. But how to reach that state? There is a song by the Hindu poet Ramprasad, where

the mind is called upon to worship always the Divine Mother of the universe:

Worship the Mother, O my mind, in whatever way you like. Never forget to sing Her praise. When you lie down to rest, think that you are prostrating before the Mother. And when you lie down to sleep, think that you are meditating on Her. When you eat, offer the food to Her. Whatever sound you hear, think that it comes from Her. Recognize Her as the Soul of all beings.

If we live thus, we will always remember God.

But we may ask, is it after all worthwhile to go through so much trouble, for, indeed, it is no small matter to think of God always. Yes, the reward is the very highest that can come to man. It means freedom from samsara, liberation from all bondage. Listen to what Sri Krishna says:

**15. Reaching the highest perfection and having attained Me, the great-souled ones are no more subject to rebirth, the ever-changing abode of misery.**

**T**hat state is called the highest perfection. Is then perfection possible for man? Yes it is, according to Vedanta. Imperfection is ignorance, in all its phases of egotism and selfishness. When that ignorance is removed then egotism and selfishness also depart and then man becomes perfect. Love of God brings light and wisdom and perfection. The children of God, those who love Him and know Him as their own Mother—they become perfect. Love purges the soul of all impurity. And in the clean soul resides God. God works through

such a soul. God becomes the very Soul of such a soul, and that is perfection. 'Reaching the highest perfection the soul attains Me,' says Sri Krishna. 'And having attained Me, the Lord of the universe, Ishvara, having reached My being, they are no more subject to birth.'

Birth is the cause of all suffering. The body is the seat of pain; it is the great disease we want to get rid of. It is part of nature, ephemeral, subject to all kinds of trouble. We think that no happiness is possible without this body. Therefore we are so attached to it.

We cannot think of ourselves as Spirit, because we live too much in the senses. And therefore we want to be born on this earth again and again. But the yogi, the spiritual person, knows that he is the Spirit, and the body is only an instrument necessary on this gross, material plane. He knows that this earth is not the only place where the soul can enjoy. Rather it is an inferior place. There are spheres of much greater happiness, and there the soul lives in a subtle body. So the yogi is not attached to this life. To depart from here does not mean too much to him. This is not the only life as we are so apt to think! Thousands of times we have had bodies and perhaps we will have other bodies thousands of times again. Why then be so desperately attached to this particular life?

That is the attitude of the yogi. But he goes still farther. In due course he realizes that even subtle bodies are not eternal and are not necessary at all for the highest enjoyment. He finds that happiness is the natural condition of the soul, its very nature. The soul is potentially divine. It does not depend on any vehicle, gross or subtle, for its happiness. As long as the soul is attached to a certain body, so long it can enjoy only through that medium. But the medium diminishes the original joy. It is joy filtered. And in the process it loses! If *this* is realized, then rebirth becomes unattractive. Then there is no desire to be born again on earth. Then the soul longs for its true abode, it longs to live its life in full, not hampered by any medium. Then begins *mumukshutva*, longing for liberation. Then arise in the soul pure desires, which point Godward. Then the soul longs for Truth. And through devotion and wisdom it reaches that state of perfection spoken of in this verse: 'Reaching the highest perfection and having attained Me, the great-souled ones are no

more subject to rebirth, the ever-changing abode of misery.' Only the Highest can give us the highest. Unless we take refuge in the Highest, we cannot expect the highest results. Devotion and aspiration for the Highest alone saves us from rebirth. The supreme Spirit alone can give us mukti, freedom. 'That who-soever believeth in Him, should not perish but have *eternal* life.'<sup>1</sup>

Sri Krishna declares in the next verse that reaching any other being or state but Himself necessitates rebirth, reincarnation. Not that the Lord is partial and liberates His devotees because He is pleased with their submission to Him and sends back the rest because He is (well, let us say) jealous of other deities. No, it

***The yogi, the spiritual person, knows that he is the Spirit, and the body is only an instrument necessary on this gross, material plane. He knows that this earth is not the only place where the soul can enjoy. Rather it is an inferior place. There are spheres of much greater happiness, and there the soul lives in a subtle body. So the yogi is not attached to this life.***

is simply a statement of facts, and then facts and laws are unalterable. Spirit goes to Spirit, and in Truth attains moksha. And they attain moksha not because they worship *Him*, but because they worship Spirit and Truth. There is only *one* Truth and God is that Spirit and that Truth. *Therefore* they go to him; they love in Spirit, live in Truth. 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *Him* in spirit and in truth.'<sup>2</sup> They have risen beyond matter, beyond all other gods, beyond anything that is manifestation. They have united with Him from whom other deities and all else is but a manifestation, a phase of being. They have made one big jump and have landed in

the Land of Glory. Why should they come back? How can they? Having tasted honey,

can they go back to molasses?

**16. All the worlds, O Arjuna, including the realm of Brahmā, are subject to return. But after attaining Me, O son of Kunti, there is no rebirth.**

Everything is subject to time, the all-destroyer. And time means change, coming and going, birth and death, creation and destruction. Therefore, where time rules there is *no* rest. All the spheres, all the worlds, or lokas, are subject to time. Heaven will pass away and earth will pass away. But *One* will remain eternally. That is the Deity, the Spirit. Time cannot attack Him. He snatches high and low, strong and weak, young and old, but (though he has a thousand arms) time cannot

have gone to Him. Only by leaving behind desires and attachments, can we go to God. We must desire Him and Him alone. It is only then that we come to rest and it is only then that we can taste immortality. Only in *Him* is salvation. 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'<sup>3</sup> 'He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'<sup>4</sup> Only the man of renunciation gets freedom. 'No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'<sup>5</sup>

***And how can we renounce the little self? By loving God, by transferring our love from our selves to God. Wisdom makes us the best of renouncers. The jnani knows that God is his real Self. He loves God, his real, stainless, eternal Self and that love makes him forget more and more the little ego.***

reach up to the Spirit. God is beyond time, space and causation. He is never subject to change, and in Him alone we find rest. In Him alone is our true home, our resting place, the end of our journey. In other spheres we live and enjoy for thousands of years, but it comes to an end. We reach those worlds or heavens through good karma, by worshipping some deity. All actions proceed from desire that brings us the enjoyment of higher spheres, that makes us perform such acts as will take us there. And as those good deeds are numbered, so also the result of those deeds, our abode in some heaven, must come to an end.

But when one has attained Him, says the Lord, there is no rebirth. Those who attain the Spirit are desireless. Otherwise, they could not

But Vedanta teaches a very beautiful and easy renunciation. Vedanta does not say, seek your own salvation and let everyone else go to the dogs. It does not teach abandoning of wife and children and making all kinds of disturbances in society. No, what good shall that do? That breeds only egotism. Vedanta says, love everyone as a manifestation of God. Greet everyone as Narayana. Love the poorest, the sick and the weak. Love all, because Narayana stands before you. Renounce your own ease and comfort when Narayana needs your help. Penetrate behind the veil; see God in all. Love, love, and never hate! That is the great renunciation. That is practical Vedanta. Renounce hatred and selfishness, love of ease and comfort, and envy and jealousy. Those who want to be renouncers, let them renounce these evil tendencies. Then if they like to throw away their money let them do so (but always without hurting others). But true renunciation goes deeper than giving up of wealth and position.

The little self, the ego, must be renounced first of all. And *then* very little else matters, whether you live in a house or in a cave, whether your hat costs 50 cents or 50 dollars. That is the spirit of Vedanta.

And how can we renounce the little self? By loving God, by transferring our love from our selves to God. Wisdom makes us the best of renouncers. The jnani knows that God is his real Self. He loves God, his real, stainless, eternal Self and that love makes him forget more and more the little ego. We *must* love ourselves. We cannot help it. We indulge in big talk, but look closely and see whom you love. Examine your wonderful deeds of unselfishness and self-sacrifice. Do not delude yourself. There *is* a hidden motive. The little 'I' comes in *somewhere*. It may be hidden from the eyes of the world, but we can easily discover it if we have a mind to do so. Therefore know yourself. See that the little 'I' is only a reflection of the Self, of God. Then we will love the Self.

**17. Those who know Brahmā's day to last a thousand yugas, and his night (also) a thousand yugas—they know (the true measure of) day and night.**

**W**e may think that when we go to Brahmaloaka, the heaven of the Creator, then we are quite safe and secure from returning to this earth. But even Brahmā goes to rest and then his world runs into chaos and we are thrown off. It is true, his life extends over many ages. We can hardly comprehend the period of his existence, but there is an end even to that. One day of Brahmā is said to last four thousand million years and his life is one hundred of his years, but what of that? Even that will come to an end much sooner than we expect, because time is a relative idea. The greater the enjoyment, the more we lose sight of time. To an insect human life must seem inconceivably long. But to us, the human life seems none too long. *Now*, in Brahmaloaka life

And that is pure love, for that Self is as much *you* as *I*. That is the Atman. My Atman is not different from *your* Atman. It is one and the same Atman, one and the same Self, one and the same God. Loving *That*, I love myself, you and all that lives. I love the universal Spirit and thereby I am drawn to the Spirit and away from littleness, from matter, from worldliness, from filth and impurity. 'That which is Universal is Blissfulness itself. There is no blissfulness in that which is little. That which is little is perishable. Inquire of the Universal. That is thy real Self,' declares the *Chandogya Upanishad*.<sup>6</sup> Where there is love of God, there is no desire. 'Where there is Rama, there is no kama; where there is kama, there Rama is not' is a Hindu saying. Where God is, there is no desire; where desire is, there is no God.

So in God alone is salvation. Even the world of the creator, Brahmā, comes to an end, as stated in the next verse.

will perhaps seem very moderate in duration.

So Vedanta always warns against the idea of going to heaven as not being the final end, but as so much time lost on the road to immortality. For we are sure to return to earth

***We must remember that Brahma, called the Creator, is not the maker of the plan of the world-scheme. He himself is included in that plan. He only carries out the plan. What is super-sensuous in the divine Mind, Brahma makes that perceptible.***

again, when our good karma is exhausted. Only the greatest jnanis do not come back even from Brahmaloaka. They get mukti when Brahmā gets free, after one hundred of his years. Then another Brahmā is appointed. Some jnanis go to Brahmaloaka because they

are not yet perfect when they depart from here. In Brahmāloka they continue their practices in a fine, subtle body. These jnanis have no earthly desires. There is nothing to draw them back to earth. Therefore they get free from there. But those who go there through karma must return to earth.

We must remember that Brahmā, called the Creator, is not the maker of the plan of the world-scheme. *He himself is included in that plan.* He only carries out the plan. What is super-sensuous in the divine Mind, Brahmā makes that perceptible. The world-scheme is eternal, but Brahmā has an end when another

soul takes his place and *he* becomes free. The plan of the world is revealed to Brahmā during his meditation. First in him arises the desire to create. Then he sits in deep meditation and the world-plan is revealed to him. And according to that he creates. The future universe is already there. But it is involved, unmanifest. Then Brahmā sets the wheel of samsara going and gradually everything evolves again.

Now, what is meant by the day and night of Brahmā? What happens in Brahmā's day and what during his night? The answer follows.

**18. At the approach of (Brahmā's) day, all manifestations proceed from the unmanifest state, and at the approach of the night they merge into that same state, called the unmanifest.**

**T**hese last two verses signify the evolution and involution of cosmic Energy, represented by Brahmā's day and night. As we go to sleep and become unconscious of the external world, so does Brahmā also go to sleep. Then all becomes chaos and the world comes to an end. But when Brahmā wakes up, evolution begins again. The universe was not annihilated during Brahmā's sleep, but in the process of involution everything goes back to its finer state. It becomes finer and finer until it is no more perceivable. But everything remains

in the germ state, to come out again in the process of evolution. This process of evolution and involution, according to some, takes place with the entire Cosmos, while others hold that it refers to one solar system at a time, each solar system getting its turn.

That everything in nature works according to law and not in a haphazard way as some believe, and that everyone reaps the fruit of his own sowing, no more and no less, is made clear in the next verse, where Sri Krishna says:

**19. O Partha, the same multitude of beings being born again and again, merge in spite of themselves (into the unmanifest) at the approach of night and again manifest at the approach of day.**

**W**e see here what Vedānta teaches regarding creation. It is not creation out of nothing, but projection from the unmanifest into the manifest state, and back again: evolution and involution. The same mass of manifestation, which we call the universe, existed in the preceding kalpa, or age, came into being at the coming of Brahmā's day and is dissolved again at the coming of night. This is an eternal process all beings are forced to follow in spite of themselves, but according to their own karma. This universe rises up and subsides, like billows on the

ocean. Nothing is lost. As it sinks down, so it rises again. This occurs to entire nature, and all that is subject to nature must follow suit. As long as we are under maya, we follow this process. Our egotism, our likes and dislikes, our fear of the unknown, our false consciousness of separation from the Spirit—all these form themselves into the endless stream of cause and effect, which flows on irresistibly. The wise alone perceive this evil, and they wish not for conditioned existence. They want to go beyond involution and evolution. They want to be free from the laws of nature.



We must remember that this going and coming is said of the *jiva*, not the Spirit. The Spirit comes in contact with matter and then comes into existence as the *jiva*, the individual soul. It is this *jiva* that lives in a body and then

departs and is born again, but never the Spirit.

But if the entire universe is subject to involution and evolution, is there then no way out? Are we to be slaves through all eternity? There is a way out. We read in the next verse:

**20. But beyond *this* unmanifest, there is another unmanifest, eternal Existence, That which is not destroyed even when all beings are destroyed.**

The entire universe becomes unmanifest at the time of *pralaya*, or destruction, as we have seen. But, says the Lord, there is another Unmanifest far beyond and superior to this unmanifest state of the universe. That is the eternal Existence, the supreme, Parabrahman, God the Absolute, which never manifests. That supreme Being is never destroyed because it is beyond time, space and causation, beyond the world-scheme. It is the Purusha. The first mentioned unmanifest is *avidyā* (Prakriti) itself, the cause of the universe. The two extremes look alike. Both are unmanifest, but the one is Spirit and the other, matter in its finest state. The Spirit is unmanifest because it is not perceptible by any sense or faculty. Yet it is totally unlike and unrelated to the unconscious material cause of the universe, which will manifest in time like the seed, which contains the tree. The tree is not manifest, but it is

there in the seed, ready to come out. The universe becomes unmanifest but it remains in seed form ready to come out again. But this higher Unmanifest, the Purusha, will never manifest. It will never be caught in the net of time, space and causation.

The mind of the sage and the mind of the child are alike, simple and pure. But while the saint's will always remain so, the child's mind will become a man's mind with all its duplicity, impurity, passions, anger and fear. There is a difference of day and night.

'I know this mighty Purusha, sun-like, beyond darkness. Knowing Him and Him only one crosses over death; there is no other path at all to go. Than whom naught is greater or less, than whom none more subtle or vast, like a tree He stands silent in shining space, in solitude. By Him, the Purusha, all this is filled.'<sup>7</sup> And now the next verse:

**21. That which has been called the Unmanifest and Imperishable, has been described as the goal Supreme. That is my highest state, having attained which there is no return.**

That is the Purusha, beyond manifest and unmanifest, by whom the whole universe is filled. That is the highest Goal. Evolution ends in *That*. He who has reached That is no longer subject to rebirth. He has crossed the sea of *samsara*. He has reached immortality, nirvana. This is not a state of existence; it is Existence itself, Consciousness itself, the highest Deity.

We will see in the next verse by what

means that Highest may be attained.

(To be continued)

#### References

1. *John*, 3.15.
2. *Ibid.*, 4.24.
3. *Luke*, 14.33.
4. *Matthew*, 10.39.
5. *Luke*, 16.13.
6. *Chandogya Upanishad*, 7.23.1.
7. *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 3.8-9.

Why do you pay so much attention to the fruits of action? Go on doing your work. In this world an employer pays his employees. Will not God give you anything if you work for Him?

—Swami Turiyananda

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# Prapañcasāra: A Brief Study

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

## Introduction

The tantras are a special class of literature dealing mainly with the *upāsana* aspect—meditation and rituals—of Hinduism. One of the earliest and pre-eminent of these tantras is the *Prapañcasāra* or *Prapañcasāra-tantra*, attributed to Ādi Śaṅkara (788-820 AD). On this work there is a well-known commentary called *Vivarana* by Padmapāda, one of the four chief disciples of Śaṅkara and the first pontiff of the Śāradāmaṭha at Dvāraka (in Gujarat).

Whether this work dealing with mantras, yantras and *upāsana*s of the various deities of the Hindu pantheon is a genuine composition of the famous Śaṅkara or someone else's, passed on as his, there is no doubt that it is the handiwork of a great genius.

The work has 2470 verses distributed among 36 *paṭalas*, or chapters, dealing with various topics such as creation and dissolution, development of the human embryo and birth, letters of the alphabet, *bijākṣaras*, or seed-letters, *dīkṣā*, or initiation, as also the mantras and rituals connected with the various deities.

A brief summary of this treatise may now be attempted here:

## Chapter 1 (104 verses)

It starts with the questions of Brahmā, Vishnu and Rudra put to Lord Narayana. Narayana replies that they were brought forth by Akshara (the eternal Imperishable, or Brahman). He then proceeds to describe the process of creation beginning with Purusha (soul) and Prakriti (matter).

A detailed description of the concept of time starting with *lava* (a split-second) right up to the life of the four-faced Brahmā (which is

equal to 17,280 million human years) has also been given here.

## Chapter 2 (67 verses)

The development of the embryo within the mother's womb and certain other topics of Ayurveda are dealt with in this chapter.

Another subject discussed here is that of *bhāvas*, or sounds, and several aspects of the kundalini.

## Chapter 3 (75 verses)

The main theme of this chapter is the letters of the alphabet classified as *saumya* (lunar), *saura* (solar) and *āgneya* (fiery).

How these letters are uttered by the working of air, first through the sushumna canal and then through the vocal organ is also described.

Incidentally, the names of 50 *ośadhīs* (herbs) like *candana* (sandal), *aguru* (fragrant aloe) and *karpūra* (camphor) have also been mentioned here.

## Chapter 4 (76 verses)

This chapter deals mainly with the *bijākṣara* (seed-letter) *hrīm*, variously called *nāda*, *prāṇa*, *jīva*, *ghoṣa* and so on.

It is identified with the *devatā* (goddess) Bhuvaneśvari, also known as Kuṇḍalī.

The *hamsa* mantra (*so'ham hamsaḥ*), also called *Mahāvākya*, too, finds a mention here.

## Chapter 5 (70 verses)

Henceforward, this work deals mostly with rituals, normal to such tantric works.

The topics dealt with here are: *dīkṣā* (initiation), mantra (sacred formula), *vāstumāṇḍala* and *vāstudevatā* as also *vāstubali* (rites connected with the Vāstupuruṣa, a cosmic deity), and

erection of a *mandapa* (a small structure, a shed) for purposes of *dikṣā*.

### Chapter 6 (125 verses)

The topics included in this chapter are the rishi (seer), *chandas* (metre) and *devatā* (deity) of a mantra; *nyāsas* (six or five); worship of the deity; establishing of the *kumbha* (pot); *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā* (infusing life into the image or symbol); the *upacāras* (special modes of offering); homa (fire-sacrifice); offering unto Brahman; *praṇāma* (obeisance).

### Chapter 7 (70 verses)

This chapter deals with the rules of *sadhana* concerning Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech.

For her mantra, Brahmā is the rishi, Gayatri is the *chandas* and Sarasvatī herself is the *devatā*.

The *dhyāna-śloka* describes her form for meditation as having three eyes and of transparent brilliance. She is white in colour and holds a rosary, a pot of nectar and a book in three hands, the fourth showing the *cintā-mudrā* (the pose of knowledge, or wisdom).

Her nine attendant deities (shaktis) include the goddesses Medhā (understanding), Prabhā (radiance) and Smṛti (memory).

Other details concerning japa and homa are also given.

### Chapter 8 (60 verses)

The first part of this chapter deals with *prāṇāgni-homa*. In the *mūlādhāra-cakra* (where the kundalini is resting) five homa *kuṇḍas* (pits for sacrificial fires) are imagined to exist and offerings of the letters of the alphabet are to be poured into them.

The second part deals with the worship of Sarasvatī, which includes the steps like *nyāsa* (ritual purification of limbs), puja as also a beautiful hymn on her.

### Chapter 9 (44 verses)

This chapter is devoted to the worship of

the goddess Tripurā. She is called Tripurā since she is the creatrix of the *trimūrtis* Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheshvara. She is also the three Vedas and existed even before creation, filling all space. Her *bijas* (seed-letters) are *aim* and *klīm*.

Other items dealt with are the *dhyāna-śloka* (hymn of meditation), her attendant goddesses like Vāmā and a *cakra* (diagram). The effects of worshipping her are also described.

### Chapter 10 (69 verses)

Worship of Mūlaprakṛti (known as Bhuvaneśvari or Bhuvaneśi) along with her mantra, homa, *abhīṣeka* (ritual bath) and japa as also other allied subjects are discussed here.

The *dhyāna-śloka* describes her form with *pāśa* (noose) and *aṅkuśa* (goad) in two hands and exhibiting the *abhaya-* and *varada-* (protection-offering and boon-giving) *mudrās* in the other two hands.

### Chapter 11 (70 verses)

The same topic is continued here with some additional information about her yantra, Gayatri mantra and attendant goddesses. There is also a long hymn addressed to her towards the end.

### Chapter 12 (65 verses)

In this chapter, a detailed exposition of the worship of Śrī, or Lakṣmī, is given. For her mantra, Bhṛgu is the rishi, Nivṛt is the *chandas* and Śrī is the *devatā*, or deity.

The *dhyāna-śloka* describes her as holding two lotuses in her two upper hands whereas the two lower hands exhibit the *abhaya-* and *varada-mudrās*. Two elephants are also pouring *ghṛta* (ghee) from two pots.

After describing japa and homa, the text gives how her nine shaktis (or aspects) are to be invoked round her *pīṭha* (seat).

She is also described as Ramā and 32 shaktis like Bhārati, Pārvaṭi and Cāndri are enumerated.

Her worship leads to the attainment of

purity, bodily perfection, beauty and intelligence.

### Chapter 13 (90 verses)

Dealing with the goddess Tripuṭā, this section gives the rishi, *chandās* and *devatā* as Varāha, Nivṛt and Dharāṇi.

The japa of her mantra has to be done twelve lakh times.

The other topics discussed are the mantra of the goddess Tvaritā, yantras (mystic geometrical diagrams of deities) with ten and twelve lines, mantra of the deity Nityā and associated rites.

### Chapter 14 (88 verses)

This chapter deals exclusively with the goddess Durgā including her several aspects and shaktis.

Aspects of Durgā are Vanadurgā and Śūlinīdurgā.

Mantras of all these aspects and their methods of *puraścaraṇa* (ceremonial repetition) are also given.

It is specially mentioned here that supplication to Durgā as Vindhyavāsini can eradicate the effects of all kinds of poisons like those of snakes, scorpions, rats and dogs.

### Chapter 15 (65 verses)

This chapter concerns Sūrya or the Sun-god and his four-lettered mantra.

Aja (Brahmā) is the rishi for this mantra whereas Gayatri is the *chandās*. Bhuvaneśi, an aspect of the Divine Mother, is the *devatā*.

As in other cases, here also the *dhyāna-śloka*, *nyāsas*, homa and other rituals have been described.

### Chapter 16 (65 verses)

This chapter deals with the mantra of Chandra, or Soma (the Moon), his worship and his nine shaktis like Rohiṇi, Kṛttikā, Revatī and Bharāṇi.

It also gives the mantra of Agni and his nine shaktis such as Pitā, Śvetā, Dhūmrā, Ruci-

rā and Jvālīni.

### Chapter 17 (78 verses)

This section deals with Mahāgaṇapati.

The mantra is a long one with twenty-eight letters. Its rishi is Gaṇaka, the *chandās* is Nivṛt and the deity is Mahāgaṇapati.

The *dhyāna śloka* describes him along with his shakti (who is wearing shining ornaments and holding a lotus in her hand). He has ten arms holding pomegranate fruit, mace, discus, noose, his own tusk and so on.

He has nine shaktis like Tivrā, Jvālīni, Ugrā, Kāmarūpiṇi and others.

Other mantras including a Gaṇeṣa-gāyatrī are also given.

### Chapter 18 (54 verses)

This is devoted to Manmatha (Cupid), the god of love. For his mantra, Sammohana is the rishi, Gayatri is the *chandās* and Manobhāva is the deity. He has eight shaktis to assist him, like Mohani, Trāsi and Ākarṣiṇi. Two mantras are given. The first is of a single letter. The second, called *mūla* mantra, has fifty letters. A mantra of Ratividya (Kāma's consort) consisting of thirty-two letters is also indicated. This section gives a long mantra of Sri Krishna (of eighteen letters) and the ways of using it.

### Chapter 19 (64 verses)

The subjects dealt with in this chapter are Praṇava (Oṅkāra), meditation on Vishnu, the four *vyūhas* of Vishnu, details concerning yoga like yama and niyama, five states of consciousness, different states of yoga and yoga *siddhis* like *animā* (capacity to become small like an atom). Methods of *utkrānti* (leaving the body through its various parts), entering into others' bodies and returning are also described towards the end.

### Chapter 20 (61 verses)

The *aṣṭākṣari* mantra the famous eight-lettered mantra of Nārāyaṇa is the main sub-

ject here. Of this mantra, Sādhya-nārāyaṇa is the rishi, Gayatri is the *chandas* and Paramatman is the *devatā*.

Apart from giving the names of the ten avatars—which list omits Buddha but includes Balarama—some aspects of rituals like *arcana* (worship) and japa are also dealt with at the end.

### Chapter 21 (60 verses)

This chapter deals with the twelve yantras of the twelve *rāsīs* (signs of the zodiac). Bhānu (or the Sun) when associated with these twelve *rāsīs* has twelve different names such as Dhātā, Aryamā, Mitra, Vivasvān and Pūṣā.

Towards the end, a beautiful hymn addressed to Vishnu is also given.

### Chapter 22 (58 verses)

The *dvādaśākṣari* (twelve-lettered) mantra of Lord Vāsudeva is the subject of this section. Prajāpati is the rishi whereas Gayatri is the *chandas*. Vishnu is the *devatā*.

It is to be repeated twelve lakh times and is capable of giving moksha, or liberation.

Three kinds of *nyāsas*—*samhāra-nyāsa*, *śṛṣṭi-nyāsa* and *sthiti-nyāsa*—leading to the destruction of *doṣas* (faults) and the creation of good, as also the attainment of peace are also given.

Incidentally, the mantra of Sudarśana (Lord Vishnu's discus) and some associated rituals are also given.

### Chapter 23 (72 verses)

This chapter deals with the Puruoshottama aspect of Lord Vishnu. The names of his twelve aspects like Satyātman, Acyutātman and Apratirūpa associated with twelve parts of the body for their ceremonial purification are also given.

The rishi, *chandas* and *devatā* are, respectively, Jaimini, Jagatī and Purushottama.

Other mantras mentioned are those of the Sudarśana-cakra (discus), Pāñcajanya-śaṅkha (conch), Kaumodaki-gadā (mace), Ga-

ruḍa (the eagle-mount) and so on.

The Gayatri mantra of Vishnu as Trailokyamohana (one who enchants all the three worlds) as also the description of his extremely bewitching form are given towards the end.

### Chapter 24 (48 verses)

The mantras, meditation and worship of Śrīkara (Lord Vishnu, who produces wealth) and Mahāvarāha (the Great Boar incarnation of Vishnu) are the subject matter of this section.

### Chapter 25 (58 verses)

Meditation and worship of Nṛsimha (Man Lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu) are the main topics here.

Nārada or Prajāpati is said to be its rishi whereas Anuṣṭubh is the *chandas*; and the *devatā* is Nṛsimha.

He can be worshipped in two aspects: *prasanna* (benign) and *krūra* (fearsome).

Garuḍa mantra and Nṛsimha yantra are the other topics dealt with.

### Chapter 26 (66 verses)

It deals with *viṣṇu-pāñjara-yantra*, which affords protection to the devotee. A mantra of sixteen letters (of Vāsudeva), other mantras related to weapons like the Sudarśana-cakra and Śārṅga-dhanus (bow) are also given.

A mantra that integrates the *loka* of the *Bhagavadgīta* (11.36) describing the Lord's *viśvarūpa* (Cosmic Form) is also given with all the allied instructions.

### Chapter 27 (73 verses)

This chapter is concerned with the *prāsāda* mantra, a mantra of Lord Shiva that helps the *sādhaka* to get what he wants by pleasing the Lord.

Vāmadeva is the rishi of this mantra. The *chandas* is Pañkti. Īśa (Shiva) is the *devatā*.

The *dhyāna śloka* describes him as Pañcavakra, having five faces. These five faces, or

aspects, are Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īṣāna.

There is also an exquisite hymn on Shiva (verses 55 to 64).

### Chapter 28 (55 verses)

Dakṣiṇāmūrti, an important aspect of Shiva, is the subject matter of this chapter. He is described as sitting under a *vatavrkṣa* (banyan tree), white in complexion, with matted hair ornamented by the crescent moon. He has four hands, holding the *paraśu* (battle-axe) and the *mṛga* (deer) in two hands. The third is showing the *jñāna-mudrā* (posture of giving spiritual wisdom) and the last rests on his knee.

For his mantra—a long one of eighteen letters—Śuka is the rishi, Anuṣṭubh is the *chandas* and Dakṣiṇāmūrti-Rudra is the *devatā*.

The rest of the chapter deals with the connected rituals.

### Chapter 29 (46 verses)

Umeśa and Ardhanārīśvara are the two aspects of Lord Shiva dealt with here.

Their descriptions are given in the respective *dhyāna ślokas*. So also the rules for their japa and homa.

Ardhanārīśvara can be propitiated for various purposes such as *puṣṭikarma* (nourishment), *śāntikarma* (offsetting the evil effects of inauspicious planets and so on) and even *ākaraṣaṇa* (attracting others) as also *vaśīkaraṇa* (gaining control over others).

The mantra of Caṇḍeśvara, a fierce aspect of Lord Shiva is also given, along with his Gayatri.

### Chapter 30 (73 verses)

The special subject of this chapter is the famous Gayatri mantra, along with the Praṇava (Om), the three *vyāhrtis*, the seven *vyāhrtis* and the *gāyatrī-śiras*.

The three *vyāhrtis* are *bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *svah* or *suvaḥ*.

The seven *vyāhrtis* are *bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *su-*

*vaḥ*, *mahaḥ*, *janaḥ*, *tapah* and *satyam*.

The *gāyatrī-śiras* is 'om āpo jyoti raso'mṛtam brahma bhūr-bhuvas-suvar-om'.

A detailed meaning and significance of all these is also described.

### Chapter 31 (103 verses)

This section gives the *triṣṭubh* mantra of the goddess Kātyāyanī (an aspect of Pārvatī, or Durgā). Actually, it comprises the first four lines of the 'Durgā Sūkta', which is a part of the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (2.1-7).

Marici-Kāśyapa is the rishi of this mantra. Triṣṭubh (a Vedic metre of eleven letters in each of the four lines) is the metre, whereas Jātavedas-Agni is the *devatā*.

Apart from the dhyana of the goddess Kātyāyanī, this section also gives the names of her nine shaktis like Jayā, Vijayā, Bhadrakālī and Durgā.

As a part of the puja of the deity, names of some more goddesses like Jāgatā, Vedagarbhā, Tapanī and Dahanarūpiṇī, associated with the letters of the mantra, are also given.

An interesting point made out here is that the repetition of the mantra (*jātavedase sunavāma* and so on) in the reverse order makes it an *astra*, or weapon, capable of destroying all the defects in the ritualistic process undertaken.

Divisions of the *nakṣatras* into three groups (*daiva*, *āsura* and *mānuṣa*) and certain magical rites like *stambhana* (arresting), *vaśīkaraṇa* (subjugating others) and *ākaraṣaṇa* (attracting someone to oneself)—these are the other topics dealt with.

### Chapter 32 (64 verses)

This section deals with the *lavāṇa* mantra, related to the goddesses Rātri, Durgā and Bhadrakālī. Aṅgiras is the rishi and the metres are Anuṣṭubh and Triṣṭubh.

The *dhyāna-śloka* of the Kātyāyanī form of Durgā describes her with three eyes and four arms holding *cakra* (discus), *śaṅkha* (conch), *asi* (sword) and *śūla* (spear).

Some magical rites like *māraṇa* (killing

enemies) and *vaśikaraṇa* (controlling a person whom we want) are also described.

### Chapter 33 (72 verses)

The *anuṣṭubh* mantra of thirty-two letters is dealt with here. Vasiṣṭha is the rishi, Rudra is the *devatā* and Anuṣṭubh itself is the *chandās*. A detailed description of Rudra is given by the *dhyāna-śloka*. His thirty-two shaktis such as Ramā, Rākā, Sārā, Umā, Śāntā and Amoghā are mentioned too. There is also the mention of a mantra of 100 letters (*śatākṣara* mantra), formed by combining the letters of the three metres—Gayatri, Triṣṭubh and Anuṣṭubh. Its repetition gives longevity.

### Chapter 34 (77 verses)

This chapter deals with a number of rites that can bring about the following results: longevity, cure of fever, controlling the minds of others, attracting others to oneself, conquering of enemies and so on.

### Chapter 35 (22 verses)

*Prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*, or infusing life into an image or a yantra, is the subject matter here. Prāṇa, or life-force, is considered as a deity and her description is given in a *dhyāna-śloka*. She has three eyes. She is seated on a lotus situated in a boat. She is holding in her hands *pāśa* (noose), *ikṣu-kodaṇḍa* and *pañca-bāṇas* (bow of sugarcane, with five arrows) as also *aṅkuṣa* (goad) and *asṛk-kapāla* (skull-cup with blood). Her companions are Mṛtā, Vaivasvatā, Prāṇalā, Ākṛṣya and others.

### Chapter 36 (63 verses)

This concluding chapter starts with the condemnation of a person who does not have a son or sons, the reasons for it and the remedies like the performance of a yajna (sacrifice).

It also describes the qualifications of a guru (spiritual preceptor, especially the one who gives a mantra and gets all the rituals per-

formed) such as competence in this science, capacity to bless or chastise, conquest of the six enemies like lust, deep knowledge of the scriptures, being devoted to the worship of God, infinite patience, compassion towards the disciples and the capacity of good speech in order to teach well.

The disciple too must deserve the guru's grace by cultivating the following virtues: humility, devotion to the guru as if he is God Himself, service to him, observing truth and celibacy strictly, control in eating, sleep and speech, deep interest in studies, absence of calumny and so on.

Why this work is called *Prapañcasāra* is explained at the end. It is the *sāra* (essence) of the *prapañca* (the world). The treatise ends with a prayer to God as *parīpūrṇa-tejas* (Overflowing, or Perfect, Light).

### Conclusion

The *Prapañcasāra* is a difficult work to understand since it contains an esoteric spiritual science. Such sciences used to be taught privately in the seclusion of forest monasteries or academies. That is why they were either in the form of sutras (aphorisms) or couched in an apparently unintelligible language. Only those who could unearth their special terms or symbols could understand them.

Though the *Vivaraṇa* of Padmapāda does throw light on the many aspects of this work, it still leaves much unsaid or unexplained, especially in the field of the various mantras. Since the tradition that these mantras were to be transmitted directly and secretly by the guru to the disciple was still very strong (and inviolable) during his time, Padmapāda must have played it safe by strictly following it. However, the work *Prapañcasāra-sārasaṅgraha* of Girvāṇendra Sarasvatī has untied the knots in many places and has made it easier to understand and follow. \*

You can buy flattery, but envy must be earned.

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# Spirituality and Ethics

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

**W**e are here from different places to discuss spirituality and ethics as essential dimensions of civilization and to find out new perspectives for our civilization out of these two.

Our world civilization is a huge orchestral harmony where every single tune from all the various instruments have contributed to create the mighty harmony of this global civilization. Every tune is important and indispensable.

## The Science of Spirituality

French love for aesthetics, Russian humanism, British love of human dignity and valour, American spirit of human freedom, Japanese spirit of nationalism, Chinese spirit of pragmatic wisdom and India's spirituality—all these and many more national traits have contributed to this grand harmony of our world civilization. And this has been enriched by Islamic brotherhood, Christian charity, Buddhist love for peace in nirvana, African dynamism and excellence in the field of sports and music, and finally modern scientific explorations that have revolutionized our world views.

What is the meaning of the word *spirituality*? Spirit means non-physical. Anything physical in this universe is limited. Even the vast cosmos with a hundred thousand galaxies spread over a super space of twenty-six dimensions, according to John A Wheeler, is a finite reality. Its radius, according to Einstein's calculation is  $10^{32}$  light years. Anything non-physical is, therefore, infinite.

In the Gospel according to St John Jesus says, 'I am the Spirit, and he that worshippeth me as spirit worshippeth me in truth.'<sup>1</sup> The physical Christ died on the Golgotha, the

mount of skulls, at the age of 33. The non-physical Christ, spans two millennia, and is alive in the heart of one-third of the world population.

Nearly 5000 years ago the seers or rishis of India intuitively discovered that inside the finite lurks the Infinite. This universe had, in all probability, sprung from an infinitely small black hole, maybe with a diameter of  $10^{-32}$  cm. How many universes lurk within the bodies of our children, which contain billions and billions of molecules, atoms and subatomic particles!

The Upanishads described that in the finite physical body of man is hidden infinite power, infinite excellence, infinite and, therefore, deathless life, infinite Knowledge and Bliss. We call it Sat-chit-ananda. Today science admits this. According to Nobel physicist Erwin Schrodinger and others, particle physics and quantum physics have come to the conclusion that the infinite is contained in the finite, the universal in the individual, which Indians expressed as 'Atman (the individual Self) = Brahman (the universal Self)'. The entire Indian culture was devoted to the art and science of manifesting the Infinite inside the finite, the non-physical Spirit inside the physical body, and this is called the science of spirituality.

## Man is Spirit

Dear brothers and sisters, please remember that this fundamental thought of man as Spirit is at the foundation of all major religions. 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' says the Bible. In the Koran (18.50) we find that Allah asked all the angels to bow down at the feet of Adam, the first man. All angels bowed except one. Allah cursed this disobedient an-



gel, who was known as Satan or fiery devil (Jin Shaytan). What is the message of this Koranic story? A Satan is he who fails to offer a super-angelic respect to man. Sufi Islam says '*Ana'l Haqq*, I am the Truth.' Man is the greatest of all living beings according to Indian philosophy, because by the practice of the science of spirituality he can manifest the divinity within.

### What is Civilization?

Here comes a paramount question. What is civilization? The Vedic culture had declared that to realize or manifest the infinite Divinity within us is the goal of life. What is civilization? Swami Vivekananda, the greatest exponent of India's Vedanta philosophy in modern times, declared at Harvard University that civilization is the manifestation of divinity in man.

The foundation of civilization is something deeper than mere material excellence and consumerist bliss. In spite of external excellence, Greece and Rome faded as civilizations. If you think that civilization is consumerism, I am afraid you are mistaken. Sweden, the richest country of the world, has the largest number of suicides. I was in Hollywood on 18 January 2000 and that day's *Los Angeles Times* declared in its cover page that twenty-one percent of America's younger generation was insane. Do we want such a civilization? When we declare materialistic consumerism as the goal of civilization, we must also write in brackets that we are inviting early death of our children.

### Offering the Other Cheek?

Friends, after the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center, history has changed forever. Everyone has realized the tremendous destructive power of even the best of men under the spell of fundamentalist hatred. The five youths who led this attack had their own cause. They read Koran throughout the night, fasted and prayed to Allah and then went to please Allah by destroying non-be-

lievers. They were assured of a heaven, which, of course, is non-verifiable.

A friend told me that Christ taught them to bring peace by offering the left cheek when the right cheek is struck. I only answered him that the followers of Christ in the USA should then have offered two more towers to Osama bin Laden to destroy. Did they do that? No. At a distance of some 8000 miles, America powdered Afghanistan. Why did it happen? Christ would have forgiven his enemy. Buddha would have forgiven. You would also have probably forgiven, probably a simple common man like a cabbie, too, would have forgiven. But—and there is a but—history does not forgive. There is a thing called 'vengeance of history'. Friends, let us not resort to fundamentalism, or we will invite the vengeance of history.

Fundamentalism is based on a wrong understanding of reality and probably a fatal ignorance of a basic truth of religions. Mr Chairman Sir, this little distance between your chair and my podium, an electron can cover in an infinite number of ways. It is known today as the Multiple History Theory, first discovered by Nobel physicist Richard Feynman. If this short distance may be covered in an infinite number of ways, what about God? God is infinite and there must be infinite ways for human beings to reach the infinite God.

### Acceptance of All Religions

Indians realized some five thousand years ago that the Truth is One; sages call it by various names (*Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadan-tī*). This truth is the very basis of India's traditional acceptance of the plurality of religions. But it is Sri Ramakrishna, the spiritual teacher of modern Hinduism, who first put it into practice in a historic way. Being a Hindu he practised Sufi Islam and Christianity, especially the idea of Christ on the lap of Madonna. And following him, for the last hundred years, we have been celebrating Christmas, observing birthdays of Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Na-

nak, reading the Koran and singing Sufi songs in the temples of the Ramakrishna Order.

Brothers and sisters, this is a new perspective India can offer to world civilization. Today we not only tolerate, but accept other religions. We not only accept, but celebrate your religions in our temples. This is a new, much-needed perspective for today's global civilization.

### 'Truth Does Not Pay Homage to Society'

The question of ethics has come. What is ethics? Ethics stands for the feelings, emotions and values based on the unity of souls. Why should I show compassion, love and respect to you? Because you and I are fundamentally interconnected. Ask a newborn baby's mother to carry a kilogram of weight. She cannot do that. Yet all the time she carries a 3-kg weight, her own baby. How is it possible? Because only a few days ago the baby was inside her. All her compassion, love and sacrifice for the baby comes from the fundamental unity of the mother and the baby. The basic unity of entire humanity is expressed repeatedly in our Vedanta literature. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgita*, 'I have interpenetrated this whole universe like a thread connecting the pearls in a string.'<sup>2</sup>

This unity of existence is today verified by modern science. In Princeton when I asked the great physicist John A Wheeler, what was the greatest discovery of science, he said that confirmation of the fundamental unity of existence—through the experimental verification of Bell's theorem by Alain Aspect in France in 1986 and earlier by David Bohm in London in 1972 and Clauser and Freedman in the USA in 1972—was the greatest discovery of science.

Scientific truths are universal. They are applicable to all: Christians, Muslims, Buddhists—to everyone. No one can deny universal truths. Suppose someone climbs to the twentieth floor of a building and says, 'I don't believe in the law of gravitation. I will walk on

air outside the window.' What happens to him? Death. 'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die,' said Swami Vivekananda.<sup>3</sup>

The moment we violate this fundamental unity of all life, we violate ethics. Macbeth realized after murdering his sleeping guest Duncan that he had murdered his own sleep forever and said, 'Macbeth does murder sleep: the innocent sleep ... Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

So long ethics was the basis of civilization. Today this holistic ethics backed by the discovery of science, has become the connecting link between all civilizations.

### Some Practical Programmes

Today's earlier speaker, our friend from Senegal, Olabiyi Babalola J Yai, who heads the UNESCO racism cell, wanted to know of some practical down-to-earth programmes based on spirituality and science. For the last 100 years Indians have adopted a new programme based on practical spirituality. We are slowly turning our schools into temples where every student, irrespective of colour, religion, or nationality, is being treated as a god or goddess whom teachers worship with knowledge. We have started developing our hospitals, where in a similar manner doctors worship the living God—the patients—with medicines and surgery. Slowly this attitude of serving human beings as gods is entering into many sectors of India's national life, including industries and administration. This new perspective is India's offer to global civilization. \*

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# The Divine Touch in Swami Vivekananda's Poetry

PRANABANANDA BANDYOPADHYAY

4 July 2002 marked the completion of one hundred years of the passing away of Swami Vivekananda. So long as he lived, he himself became a 'phenomenon'.<sup>1</sup> Even a century after he shuffled off his mortal coil, his ideas and ideals are still worth their weight in gold. He was not a sannyasin in the ordinary sense of the term. Through the constant storm and flash of conflicting forces, he realized his innate prowess, his divine power to immolate himself and by self-immolation to galvanize others to tread on his line. He hewed out a way for Indians, then submerged in the quagmire of sloth and despondency, and goaded them to the realization of the freedom of the soul.

## Swami Vivekananda's Writings

His lectures and writings are distinguished not only by soul-inspiring utterances, but also by their 'beauty of splendid formlessness',<sup>2</sup> that is by their artistic excellence. It is a beauty that betrays the innermost realization of the Divinity within. It is a beauty that is unembellished and simple, shining in effulgence, both silvery and golden.

Swamiji's English poems betoken both the silvery and the golden lights. For, as Sri Aurobindo said, 'Poetry uttered with the spiritual clarity may be compared to sunlight, poetry uttered with the mystical veil to moonlight.'<sup>3</sup> Swamiji's poetry reveals both the sunlight and the moonlight. But it is sunlight splendid and sparkling; it is moonlight pure and serene.

## The Uniqueness of His Poems

Having 'a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling

flashes back as a new organ of knowledge',<sup>4</sup> Swami Vivekananda possessed in abundant measure 'that synthetic and magical power'<sup>5</sup> of imagination and that organic sensibility to bring his whole soul into activity for creating poetry of the highest order both in content and in form. Religious poetry, however, is imbued with the spiritual fervour of realization. It is poetry that contains the sublime truth of the end and purpose of life. It is poetry inspired by God-realization.

## 'In Search of God'

Swamiji never yearned to become a great poet. Since he was a true sannyasin, all earthly temptations fled from him, as it were. He wrote his poem 'In Search of God' on 4 September 1893, conveying his 'heartfelt gratitude'<sup>6</sup> to Prof John Henry Wright for giving him a letter of introduction to the president of the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. In this poem Swamiji has uttered many an eternal truth in a language couched in sublime poetry. When the heart is sincere, when the feeling is perfect, it ventilates itself without any spuriousness of tone and temper and in a rhythm best suited for the purpose. Swamiji's observations in the poem have chosen a medium which betokens majesty and grandeur, and yet is soft and simple and suave as an innocent flower. It is fraught with gusto, but bereft of pomposity and vehemence. Written in dominant iambic metre, the poem gives vent to Swamiji's inquest of God in a triangular motion, as it were: the outside world, his own soul inhering in his body, and then the presence of God in everything. Swamiji was not, as he says, at first feeling the presence of God in

the sacred scriptures, the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. But he searched for Him in every creed and clime, over hill and dale, and in groans and wails. But in vain. God was gone. But it was as though his bewailings and earnest veracity of vehement quest received at last the gentle, soft and soothing voice of God. The moment he heard His voice, the silent tremors of his heart rang in unison. Then he became very eager to search and find out where the voice came from. He looked round, before and behind him. At last he turned inward and explored the beatings of his own heart. All his soul was hushed in divine ecstasy and he was enthralled and entranced in celestial bliss. The illuminating realization dawned on him and the inmost core of his being opened up and started fluttering. He felt supremely that the kingdom of God was

***Swamiji's poetry is of the highest order—poetry exalted to the loftiest plane of grandeur and sublimity and yet expressed in the simplest language unadorned but shining in the radiance of the divine.***

within him. The eternal was encased and ensconced in the human breast. The involution of the universal into the particular was perceived by Swami Vivekananda now. But the resplendent eternity was not in any way shorn of its divine radiance by being lodged in the human breast. Rather it shone in grandeur and majesty flushing the whole being. The moment this was realized by him, Swamiji began to visualize the heavenly glow in everything. Hill and dale, high mount and vale seemed to be coalesced in the culminant glory of divinity. Every natural object seemed to be apparelled with a celestial glamour. The ambient light of the moon, the bright stars, the glorious sun—all derive their light and splendour from God. They shine as His sparks. The clear white dawn, the melting evening, the bil-

lowy-bosomed and boundless sea—all have their magnificent beauty from Him. They are but reflections of God. The beauties of nature, the songs of birds and everything else have their golden gaiety and purple splendour from Him.

### **God in Everything**

It is when this faith in Him is crystallized in his bosom that Swamiji receives His grace and benison. He realizes now the Divine presence in everything: in the mother's kiss, in the baby's sweet voice calling his mother 'mama', in all creeds of the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Elsewhere, Swamiji has said, 'We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.'<sup>7</sup> The chequered religious creeds sing the

paean of harmony in the One God who 'ever lives and loves'<sup>8</sup> and due to whom the whole creation moves. God is the 'Soul of souls/ In the rushing stream of life'.<sup>9</sup> This is really a God-poem, that is a poem inspired by divine frenzy, a poem absolutely

shorn of superfluous expressions and yet striking the tune of concordance in the pandemonium of discordant notes of the worldly phenomena. The poet's total self-surrender and genuflection to this God-realization has brought out this God-poem in frenzy, as he finishes off: 'Thou art my God./ My love, I am Thine, I am Thine.'<sup>10</sup>

### **Sublime, yet Earthy**

Swamiji's poetry is of the highest order—poetry exalted to the loftiest plane of grandeur and sublimity and yet expressed in the simplest language unadorned but shining in the radiance of the divine. Hazlitt spoke of gusto in artistic creation.<sup>11</sup> Swamiji's poetry reveals gusto that has the comprehensive spontaneity and ease of profound realization. Yet, it is curi-

ous to note that this great sannyasin could bubble with poetical effusiveness and emotional impetuosity and give vent to it in immortal lines of poetry. His poetry is attuned to a sublime pitch and yet it is feelingly earthy. As poetry of the earth it never loses sight of the sea of swelling sorrows and the harsh thunders of mortal existence and, above all, the 'fell death',<sup>12</sup> which pounces on one and all. But there it does not stop. As a great soul flying heavenward always and feeling continuous divine sparks, Swamiji transcended the 'prison of the actual'<sup>13</sup> and entered the portal of celestial bliss and siesta of spiritual Self-realization. He has spoken of the human aspiration to realize the Divine and the cosmic Energy at ceaseless work without interregnum in all spheres—terrestrial and supra-terrestrial.

#### 'I Am He'

This is not to say, of course, that Swamiji's poetry prompts us to escape from life. It inspires us to explore life in all its trials and tribulations, and in all its multitudinous ramifications. The exploration of the 'I' in the face of myriad forces in operation is the cynosure of Swamiji's poetry. By virtue of his beatific vision Swami Vivekananda could transmute sin, misery and superstition into blessedness. It is the vision of the Seer Blest not merely to see into the life of things like Wordsworth, the great meditative romantic poet, but also to realize the supreme Brahman in all things far apart from a mere pantheistic creed. For pantheism identifies God throughout the universe. Swamiji exhorts us to realize that 'I am He.'<sup>14</sup> In his beautiful poem 'The Song of the Free' he chants, 'Nor angel I, nor man, nor brute,/ Nor body, mind, nor he nor she,/ The books do stop in wonder mute/ To tell my nature: I am He.'<sup>15</sup>

It is not merely to say that mine is a super-

nature. It is our real nature, which is beyond the ken of human intelligence to conceive of and even beyond all human imagination to comprehend. Empirical knowledge cannot penetrate this arena of divine Wisdom. Even human wisdom fails to come within the pale of this supreme Being. It is Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute and Existence Absolute. It is silence in speech and speech in silence. (4.396) It is unspeakable, because all speech has been engulfed in it.

#### Effusive Radiance All Around

The beatific vision of Swami Vivekananda renders his poetry a glow incessantly with the note of sublimation. It does not have the

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Miltonic grandeur, but, then, it has the delicate flowing tune of the Ganges flowing from the lap of the pontifical Himalayas. It is, as though, a 'pause in sacred art', 'sweet rest in music'. (4.396) It is this all-engulfing realization which could visualize, on the one hand, the 'darkness vibrant, sonant' (4.384) of the dense destruction of Goddess Kali and, on the other, could 'look behind and after/ And find that all is right'. (6.441) Swamiji's poetry gives us the impression that poetry gives a reflected light. Not merely does it show the object, but it also throws an effusive radiance on all around the object. It is not at all a wordy expression, 'In my deepest sorrows/ There is a soul of

light.' (6.441)

### Ennobling Our Whole Being

The enkindling of divine Light is the prompting impulse of practical creation. It is light that chastens the whole being. It is light that illumines. Hazlitt says, 'Poetry is that fine particle within us that expands, rarefies, raises our whole being.'<sup>16</sup> Swamiji's poetry exalts and ennobles our whole being. It is attuned to the dictum of Sidney in his *Defence of Poetry*: 'The final end [of poetry] is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of.'<sup>17</sup> It is not enough to attach Wordsworthian wisdom to Swamiji's poetry to remain 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home'.<sup>18</sup> It is something more. Swamiji himself was quite aware of the pain and pleasure of life, the delight and dole of the world: 'Tossed to and fro, from wave to wave / in this seething, surging sea / Of passions strong and sorrows deep, / grief *is*, and joy *to be*.'<sup>19</sup>

Against the vain and fleeting pleasures of life, the twists and turns of fortune, one thing stands out quite clear: the firm conviction of the brave heart that 'no good is e'er undone.'<sup>20</sup>

Life's road is painful and dreary. But to hew out a way through rocks and stones is what the good and the wise undertake. The dualities of life are never shunned by them. On the contrary, they reach the One—through the double. So long as creation remains, the wheel of grief and loss will be forever, and human individuals, the common masses, will be ground by its churning wheels. But the poet yearns for 'those shores / where strifes for ever cease; / Beyond all sorrows, beyond tears, / beyond e'en earthly bliss; ...' (6.177)

### Zooming Man to His Eternal Glory

Elsewhere Swamiji says, 'Ours is away beyond, and still beyond; beyond the senses, beyond space, and beyond time, away, away beyond, till nothing of this world is left and the universe itself becomes like a drop in the tran-

scendent ocean of the glory of the soul.' (3.180) This aspiration of the human heart not merely seeks for eternal peace concomitant with death, the like of which we come across is Keatsian poetry, or even Shelleyan. It is far wider. Its longing is to realize the infinite Existence of perpetual bliss and happiness. It is most astounding to note that while the world of strife is minified in importance by the poet Swami Vivekananda, the worship of 'the living God / And His infinite reflections with which the world is full' (8.169) has been maxified to the extreme. There has never been any other poet who has zoomed man to such heights of eternal glory. The sannyasin whose mentor perceived in the idol the presence of the living Mother, felt the ubiquitous presence of God in every living creature. The path of the body is strewn with thorns. But the path of the soul is studded with stars. The two worlds can meet only through 'Eternal Love and Service Free'. The essential point is this: 'The softest breath of truth drives back to / Primal nothingness' (4.388-9) both the sweet and noxious flowers which but make the unthreaded garlands of karma.

### Death and Peace

Yearning as he did for eternal peace on the lap of the Mother, Swamiji intensely realized 'Who dares misery love, / And hug the form of Death, / Dance in destruction's dance, / To him the Mother comes.' (4.384) Poetically and yet philosophically he sang like a philomel what peace meant for him: 'It is sweet rest in music; / And pause in sacred art; / The silence between speaking; / Between two fits of passion— / *It* is the calm of heart.' (4.396) Peace, for Swamiji, is a state where all the discordances are drowned in the sweetest concord; it is a state of joy never spoken, of grief unfelt and profound, of immortal life un-lived, of eternal death unmourned. He gives his longing the final expression: 'It is death between two lives, / And lull between two storms, / The void whence rose creation, /

And that where it returns.' (4.396)

Swamiji's concept of death and peace has a deep-seated spiritual realization of the dance of destruction in the midst of ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement. Thus Swamiji's poetry is all strung to the sublimest tune, as it gives vent to his 'Eternal faith in Self, in all/ The sight Divine in great in small; ...' (7.526) His poetry bears the delicacy of touch like 'the softest flower's sweetest feel'. (7.526) It is the kind of poetry that 'comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word; it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.'<sup>21</sup> Swamiji's poetry can best be expounded in terms of the Aurobindonian concept of poetical creation. Sri Aurobindo has laid down three essentials for writing poetry: (1) 'emotional sincerity and poetical feeling'; (2) 'a mastery over language and a faculty of rhythm'; and (3) 'the power of inspiration, the creative energy'.<sup>22</sup> Swamiji's poetry bubbles with the creative afflatus as it gives the earth its due share and paradise its equal importance. For the poet in him was imbued with spiritual self-realization of the unity of existence in the midst of diversity. Yet, there is a kind of austerity in his poetry, a kind of *atma-samyama*.<sup>23</sup> His is an utterance which betokens the deepest spiritual reality and in which we feel 'a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth'.<sup>24</sup> This is undoubtedly poetry which becomes 'a faithfully unfaithful reflection (of life) which always amounts to a transformation'.<sup>25</sup> This transformation is effected by what Sri Aurobindo beautifully terms as 'mantric' utterance. Swamiji's poetic vision was enriched and supplemented by not just a critical or intellectual or even philosophic view of life, but 'a soul-view, a seizing by the

inner sense'. (31)

### Grace and Delicacy

In the ultimate analysis, then, Swamiji's poetry bears the ineffable stamp of *integritas* (integrity), *consonantia* (coherence) and *claritas* (radiance).<sup>26</sup> In his beautiful and remarkable essay 'What Is Poetry?' Leigh Hunt lays down that the best poet is he 'whose verse exhibits the greatest amount of strength, sweetness, straightforwardness, unsuperfluousness, variety and oneness'.<sup>27</sup> Strength being 'the muscle of verse',<sup>28</sup> Swamiji's poems 'The Song of the Sannyasin' and 'To the Awakened India' have the masculine vigour and the pontifical solemnity of tone and rhythm. Oneness, in Swamiji's poetry, means 'metrical and moral

***Straightforwardness is nothing but 'the flow of words in their natural order'. With what ease and comfort does Swami Vivekananda gush out from the profoundest depths of spiritual realization the mantric utterances that sound like incantations of the most exalted kind!***

consistency'. (328) Sweetness, in Leigh Hunt's words, is 'the smoothness of grace and delicacy'. (332) Swamiji's poetry abounds in grace and delicacy. Straightforwardness is nothing but 'the flow of words in their natural order'. (333) With what ease and comfort does Swami Vivekananda gush out from the profoundest depths of spiritual realization the mantric utterances that sound like incantations of the most exalted kind! 'Unsuperfluousness,' says Hunt, 'is rather a matter of style in general than of the sound and order of words.' (336) Hunt brings in the metaphor of a shrine in order to illustrate the point quite clearly, and says, 'the smallest marble shrine, of exquisite workmanship, outvalues all that the architect ever chipped away.' (337) Swamiji has not

used any word in superfluity of what is needed to erect the edifice of a poem. In 'No One to Blame' Swamiji says: 'I dream of pleasure without pain,/ It never, never came;/ No one but me to blame.'<sup>29</sup>

'Variety in versification consists in whatsoever can be done for the prevention of monotony, by diversity of stops and cadences, distribution of emphasis, and retardation and acceleration of time; ...'<sup>30</sup> Swamiji had the ear of genius. He knew how best to commingle sensibility with imagination, sound with sense, poetical passion with musical pause and cadence.

\* \* \*

In fine, Swamiji's poetry bears the hallmark of adequateness, effectivity, illumination of language, inspiredness and inevitability, that is, a speech overwhelmingly sheer, pure, and true, the quintessential essence of convincingly perfect utterance.<sup>31</sup> All the poems emanated from the depth of 'luminous gnosis'<sup>32</sup> of cosmic imagination 'in which thought sublimates into a translucidity of light and vision, feeling passes beyond itself into sheer spiritual ecstasy and the word rarefies into a pure voice out of the silence.'<sup>33</sup> \*

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'I must do something' will always solve more problems than 'Something must be done.'



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# Different Pathways to Salvation

DR TAPATI CHAKRAVARTTY

In its own way every religion tries to satisfy the inner soul of its followers, and its principles and practices are never meant for any particular group of people. No religion in its origin is sectarian in nature. Their message is universal.

## Freedom, the Common Goal

Regarding human destiny too, religions seem to share a more or less common belief. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism—all believe that the final destiny of man is salvation or moksha. According to all religions, moksha essentially means release from the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth on its negative side and attainment of a state of spiritual freedom, eternity and immortality on its positive side. However, what man aims to attain as his final destiny is definitely the divine Abode, a place of immortal, eternal and spiritual existence in utter proximity to God. It is a state of permanent communion with God.

## Paths to Perfection

Methods of Self-realization are varied and many, but the important ones are raja yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga and bhakti yoga. All these yogas lead to the oneness of the soul with God. Only, one has to pool and gather one's internal resources fully to achieve godliness and eternal salvation. Everyone can realize communion and oneness with God. What Jesus Christ, Mohammed and Buddha realized can be attained by anyone who follows these yoga paths.

Raja yoga is realization through one's control of mind; jnana yoga is the same goal achieved through knowledge; karma yoga through selfless work; and bhakti yoga through love of God. Irrespective of the paths

followed one achieves the same realization of oneness with God. According to Swami Vivekananda, 'If there has been one experience in this world in any particular branch of knowledge, it absolutely follows that the experience has been possible millions of times before and will be repeated eternally. Uniformity is the rigorous law of nature, what once happened can happen always.'<sup>1</sup>

## Raja Yoga: The Path of Control of Mind.

Raja yoga owes its origin to the seer Patanjali. Raja yoga is a method for the realization of divinity through control of mind. It consists in physical and mental disciplines leading to concentration and samadhi. It is also a practical and scientifically-worked-out method of attaining salvation. It is called the king of all yogas because it is the most direct method aiming at the quickest realization of God.

Raja-Yoga is divided into eight steps. The first is Yama—non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gifts. Next is Niyama—cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study, and self-surrender to God. Then comes Asana, or posture; Pranayama, or control of Prana; Pratyahara, or restraint of the senses from their objects; Dharana, or fixing the mind on a spot; Dhyana, or meditation; and Samadhi, or superconsciousness.<sup>2</sup>

The eight steps of raja yoga range from the control of the body to that of the mind. According to this discipline, in the highest step, called samadhi, the mind becomes extinct and the soul realizes joy and identity with the Supreme. The soul then realizes eternal freedom, bliss and truth.

## Jnana Yoga: The Path of Discrimination

Jnana yoga is the path to Self-realization

through discriminative knowledge. By the process of discrimination and non-alignment with the cosmos, mind and ego, the soul realizes its union with the Infinite.

Says Sri Ramakrishna, 'What is jñānayaoga? The jñāni seeks to realize Brahman. He discriminates, saying, "Not this, not this". He discriminates, saying, "Brahman is real and the universe is illusory." He discriminates between the Real and the unreal. As he comes to the end of discrimination, he goes into samādhi and attains the knowledge of Brahman.'<sup>3</sup>

The discipline of jnana yoga is twofold: withdrawal from everything that is material and objective, and meditation upon the true nature of the Self. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'The Jnani is a tremendous rationalist; he denies everything. He tells himself day and night, "There are no beliefs, no sacred words, no heaven, no hell, no creed, no church—there is only Atman."<sup>4</sup>

The jnana yogi realizes that gods and deities of different religions are manifestations of the one Reality. The Ishvara the Hindu worships, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Yahweh of the Jews—are all manifestations of the one Absolute. It is the same Brahman that manifests itself in different forms. To a perfected and realized person, religions are of no significance. The rationalist seeker practises tolerance and universal acceptance of all religions.

There are two states of realization: embodied salvation (*jīvan mukti*) and disembodied salvation (*videha mukti*). When the aspirant after jnana realizes his separateness from body, mind, life and becomes free from all bondage, he realizes freedom. This is the state of embodied salvation, in which one retains life, body and mind, but the soul has detached itself from them and has become free. Then finally, the soul leaves the body and realizes the disembodied state of consciousness and bliss.

### **Karma Yoga: The Path of Selfless Action**

It is one of the four yogas to realize man's

destiny or the Soul's immortality. For a modern individual dynamically active and socially awakened, this path is the most suitable for realization of Truth.

Karma yoga is the discipline of practising the spirit of detachment while working in the world. In Swamiji's words, 'a man must be active in order to pass through activity to perfect calmness. Inactivity should be avoided by all means. Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical; and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will calmness come.'<sup>5</sup>

Karma yoga is the path of detached action for the good of others. Service rendered with unselfishness and detachment is both moral and spiritual. Thus social activities in the right spirit are good for mankind, and the individual is able to experience sense-transcendent joy.

There are two paths, *pravṛitti* and *nivṛitti*. *Pravṛitti* means action revolving towards 'I' and 'mine'. *Nivṛitti*, on the other hand, signifies going away from the little self. The essence of *nivṛitti* is entire self-abnegation.

Thus, karma yoga is attaining perfection through unselfish work. To become a Buddha or a Christ or a God-man on earth and to realize the ultimate oneness with God is to attain perfection. If one realizes eternal identity with Him by means of detached ethical works, one achieves the summum bonum of life and becomes one with the supreme Reality.

### **Bhakti Yoga : The Path of Love of God**

Bhakti is intense devotion to God in order to realize Him. Lord Krishna says, 'Even if a very wicked person worships Me with unswerving devotion, he must be regarded as righteous, for he has rightly resolved. He soon becomes righteous and attains eternal peace. O son of Kunti, proclaim it boldly that My devotee never perishes.'<sup>6</sup>

Devotion finds expression in one's worship, prayer, music, repetition of God's name and performance of rituals. A devotee prays

for his oneness with God. The invocation of the divine name is a part of the spiritual movement of bhakti. The Hindu japa, the Buddhist *buddhanusmriti* and the Muslim *dhikr* refer to the invocation of the divine name. The devotee does not worship for worldly desires, but for love of God.

Moreover, internal purity is more essential than the external practices of religious rituals and sacraments. For the development of such a perfect form of devotion the aspirant has to have renunciation, universal love, self-surrender and love of God.

If one takes refuge in Him and bows down before Him, one achieves the fruit of ceaseless devotion, namely mukti, or freedom. Being in love with the Divine the devotee cannot attend to the vanities of the world.

As Swami Vivekananda says, 'Where Rama is, there is no room for any desire—where desire is, there is no room for Rama; these never coexist—like light and darkness they are never together.'<sup>7</sup>

### Perfection: Realization of God within

The realization of the ultimate Reality is possible only through a life of austerity and self-control. If religion has not saved us from crimes and cruelties, it is because we stop with the observance of rites and acceptance of dogmas and do not work for purification of the soul, for the transformation of our being. Sin is not the essence of human nature. It is distur-

bance or corruption of it. In average human beings God-consciousness is darkened, enfeebled and imperfectly developed.

What is called yoga is a discipline by which we silence the clamour of the senses and suppress the forms of the intellect and awaken the spiritual in us. Spiritual vision is possible only for those who have understanding, compassion and love. As we need physical senses for the observation of the outer world we need an inner sense to perceive spiritual realities.

Every individual born into the world has the divine light within. A seed of the Divine dwells in the heart, capable of totally regenerating the individual. All of us can attain release from worldly bondage by whole-hearted trust in, and ordering our life around, the Spirit within. \*

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## The Difference

A mechanic was removing the cylinder heads from the motor of a car when he spotted the famous heart surgeon in his shop, who was waiting at the side for the service manager to come and have a look at his car.

The mechanic shouted across the garage, 'Hello Doctor! Please come over here for a minute.' A bit surprised, the famous surgeon walked over to the mechanic. The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and asked argumentatively, 'So Doctor, look at this. I also open hearts, take valves out, grind 'em, put in new parts, and when I finish, this will work as a new one. So how come you get the big money, when you and me are doing basically the same work?' The doctor leaned over and whispered to the mechanic, 'Try to do it when the engine is running.'

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# Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

(Translated by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee)

## Chapter 2 (continued)

### 16. *Heyam duḥkham-anāgatam.*

The misery that is not yet come [karma that is waiting to bear fruit in the future] is to be avoided. [This is what Patanjali means (2.10) when he says that samskaras are to be controlled by resolving them into their causal state.]

### 17. *Drasṭadr̥ṣyayoḥ saṁyogo heya-hetuḥ.*

The cause of that which is to be avoided is the junction of the seer [the Self, or Purusha] and the seen [the whole of nature ranging from (subtle) mind to gross matter].

*Comment:* We have suffered this misery for a very long time. It is no use thinking about what has already happened. We have to try so that we can avoid suffering misery any further. The cause of this misery is that I, who am

of the essence of Consciousness and merely the witness of all the activities of nature, have through delusion identified myself with what is seen.

### 18. *Prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti-śūlam bhūtendriyātmakam bhogāpavargārtham dṛṣyam.*

The experienced [that is nature] is composed of elements [gross and fine] and organs [the senses and the mind], is of the nature of illumination [sattva], action [rajas] and inertia [tamas], and is for the purpose of experience and release (of the experiencer).

### 19. *Viśeṣāviśeṣa-līṅga-mātrālīṅgāni guṇa-parvāṇi.*

The states of the qualities [gunas] are 'the defined' [represented by the gross elements, which we can sense], 'the undefined' [represented by the fine elements, or *tanmātras*, which cannot be sensed by ordinary men, but can be perceived by the yogis], 'the indicated only' [meaning buddhi, or the intellect, which is the first manifestation of nature] and 'the signless' [the unmanifested or *avyakta*].

*Comment:* All things in this universe—our mind, intellect and the senses—are born out of Prakriti, nature, which is constituted by the three gunas—sattva, rajas and tamas. Hence the whole of creation is made of the three gunas. At first, Prakriti exists in the form of a totally inactive inert entity. Cosmic intelli-

gence (Mahat) becomes manifest out of that. The five *tanmātras* are the fruits of the tree of buddhi and out of these is created this gross world. If one understands this thoroughly, one can easily see what an illusion this world is. When that happens, one tries to liberate oneself.

### 20. *Drasṭā dṛṣi-mātraḥ śuddho'pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ.*

The seer is intelligence [Consciousness] only, and though pure, sees [and appears to be happy and unhappy] through the colouring of the intellect [just as when a red flower is put near a piece of pure crystal, the crystal appears to be red].

21. *Tadartha eva dr̥śyasyātmā.*

The nature [the raison d'être] of the experienced [the manifestations of nature] is for [the sake of] him [Purusha].

*Comment:* Although I am nothing but pure Consciousness, yet I perceive this world. That is because I forget my real nature and identify myself with buddhi, which experiences the world. The day buddhi appeared be-

fore me, all the sports of nature taking place before it got reflected into it. As I looked at the intellect displaying these reflections, I lost myself in it. As a result, it seems to me that these sports of nature are taking place for my sake.<sup>1</sup>

22. *Kṛtārtham prati naṣṭam-apy-anāṣṭam tad-anya-sādhāraṇatvāt.*

Though destroyed for him whose goal has been gained, yet it [nature] is not destroyed, being common to others.

*Comment:* Among philosophers there are some (like the great sage Kapila) who say that every jiva, when freed from nescience, becomes perfect and exists as a separate entity. According to them there are infinite such jivas. There is another school of thought which reasons that if all the jivas are in essence identical with that one Brahman then liberation cannot come to them one by one. As soon as one jiva

becomes liberated, all jivas must become free. This doctrine is called *ekajīvanavāda*. But Maharshi Patanjali says, if some aspirant can remove the coverings of *avidyā* as well as *vidyā*, he will get identified with Brahman, which is one without a second; but those who remain within maya will continue to experience the state of bondage.

23. *Sva-svāmi-śaktyoḥ svarūpopalabdhi-hetuḥ samyogaḥ.*

Junction [of the Self and the body] is the cause of the realization [by oneself] of the nature of both the powers, [the power of] the experienced [Prakriti] and [that of] its Lord [Purusha].

24. *Tasya hetur-avidyā.*

Ignorance is its cause [of the junction].

25. *Tad-abhāvāt samyogābhāvo hānam tad-dṛśeḥ kaivalyam.*

There being absence of that (ignorance) there is absence of junction, which is the thing-to-be-avoided; that is the independence of the seer.

*Comment:* What is the purpose of this creation? What does the Creator gain by giving so much trouble to the jivas ?

We see this world as divided manifold and as full of varieties. But Brahman sees—as if It is Itself tilting, swaying and moving Its parts and limbs to experience Its own self. Hence in Its eyes this creation is nothing but a child's play.

The old mother of a landlord, who used to live in the country, came to see the town and put up at a courthouse of the estate. In front of that house there was a playground for boys. One day the old woman saw a group of boys taking a round-shaped thing and throwing it

towards another. As she saw how excited the boys were, she became scared and started shrieking. She entreated each and everybody in the house to put a stop to that game. Hearing the shrieks of the old woman, the other inmates of the house came and tried to explain to her that the round-shaped thing was only a leather ball, the struggle the boys were waging with such frenzy was nothing but a game, and no harm would come out of it. But, in spite of their repeated attempts to explain the thing, the old woman could not stand those frightening proceedings. She could not see any reason for frittering away one's energy in this aimless fashion. This business of creation, sustenance

and destruction, also appears to us like an act of terrible cruelty. That is why Swamiji (then Narendranath) said, 'The plan of the universe is devilish! I could have created a better world!'<sup>2</sup>

But, after washing their hands and feet at the end of a hard-fought game, the boys sit together in a relaxed mood to chat about it. Those who have seen that know how delightful the whole thing is to the players. In this game of creation also, when a player reaches the state of a *jivanmukta* (one liberated even

while living), he sees all the sorrows and sufferings of the past hundreds of thousands of births as mere play. Unless one plays the game one cannot appreciate the value of the state of repose at the end of the game. The play helps one to appreciate the value of repose and the repose calls for the play. When the individual self (*jivatman*) comes to know how immensely greater than this creation is Brahman, or one's own reality, then it no longer cares to look at the creation. It becomes immersed forever in the supreme Bliss that comes with liberation.

### 26. *Viveka-khyātīr-aviplavā hānopāyah.*

The means of destruction of ignorance is unbroken practice of discrimination [between the Real and the unreal, between Purusha and nature].

### 27. *Tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmih prajñā.*

His knowledge is of the sevenfold highest ground. [When it comes, it comes successively, in seven grades: (1) cessation of dissatisfaction regarding the knowledge gathered, (2) absence of all pains, (3) attainment of omniscience, (4) attainment of the end of all duty through discrimination, (5) freedom of the *citta*, (6) realization by the *citta* of its ability to melt itself into its causes when so desired, and (7) the realization that one is firmly established in one's Self, unrelated to the body and the mind.]

### 28. *Yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād-āsuddhi-kṣaye jñāna-dīptīr-āviveka-khyāteḥ.*

By the practice of the different parts of yoga the impurities being destroyed, knowledge becomes effulgent [culminating in the full development of] discrimination.

*Comment:* What is meant by covering of Consciousness? It means to become infatuated with the unreal (what is not Consciousness) without paying attention to the reality of one's conscious Self. Every day we see this happen around us. For example we see constantly how a mother totally shuns her own comfort and happiness and is ready to give up her life for the sake of her child. In this state of self-forgetfulness we remain just as we were before. If we can somehow get rid of the delusion, we immediately realize that our true Self remains intact. As we refine our intelligence (*buddhi*) more and more, we acquire the

power to comprehend that our real and imaginary selves are diametrically opposite things. That is what is called discrimination, or *viveka* (*viveka* derives from the Sanskrit root *vic*, which means 'to separate').

It takes a long time for this *viveka* to become fully developed. Patanjali says that there are seven stages in the ultimate development of *viveka*. As one practises according to the procedure prescribed by him, full manifestation of knowledge (not the knowledge of Brahman) takes place and this develops *viveka* completely. It is then that the seeker attains liberation.

### 29. *Yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhyo'ṣṭāṅgāni.*

*Yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi* are the eight limbs of yoga.

### 30. *Ahimsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ.*

Non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving [of gifts] are called *yama*.

31. *Ete jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānavacchinnāḥ sārvaḥauma-mahāvratam.*

Unbroken by time, place, purpose and caste rules, these are (universal) great vows.

32. *Śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ.*

Internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God are the *niyamas*.

*Comment:* Spiritual science reached its culmination in India. Our scriptures contain wonderful truths about life and the world. Because the Vedic religion has now waned, these now appear to be as unreal as the cock-and-bull stories of the *Arabian Nights*. Those who now study and teach ancient scriptures, deliberate upon spiritual science just like any other empirical science. When we go through the writings or hear the talks of learned scriptural experts, it becomes clear that they deal with spiritual science with the same attitude as that with which people read a book on geography or travel, or consult a map. Even talking with spiritual aspirants, it appears that some of them cultivate the science as a means of livelihood and some do it as a pastime or to earn credit by expounding it before others.

In this world every form of knowledge decays unless it is practised, cultivated and handed down along a line of successive generations of teachers. The only way to preserve knowledge is through a sect or school. All kinds of knowledge on earth are preserved through sects. In India, for a long time, the tradition of preserving the knowledge of Brahman has been almost extinct. True, thanks to the efforts of great saints like Shankara, Ramanuja and Chaitanya, these appear to have some semblance of existence. But at present none of the religious sects is very well organized, well regulated and well governed.

To propagate any kind of knowledge in the world, it is imperative that people should feel the need for cultivating, disseminating and preserving that knowledge. Further, not all kinds of attainment can be acquired in one single life. Can everybody be taught the art of

music? The capacity for music shows itself only in those who have practised music in their earlier births. This applies in the case of every form of learning. But at present the science which deals with the mysteries of human existence is generally unknown. As such the ideal of having a society conducive to the spiritual strivings of a soul across a succession of births looks like an empty dream. However, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna has demonstrated to us all aspects of spiritual science (*parā vidyā*), by himself undergoing all the corresponding disciplines. And Swamiji has preached those in forms that are intelligible to everybody. Hence if some soul, engrossed in the contemplation of that science and endowed with favourable impressions, is born as a human being, it will be easier for it to proceed along the spiritual path now than at earlier times.

Every science has two aspects: theory and practice, or what we call *sādhyā* and *sādhana*. All knowledge about *sādhyā*, or the theoretical side of spiritual science, has been fully explained in books like the Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgīta*. The practical side representing methods of *sadhana* was successively expounded in various forms in many scriptures until it reached its culmination in the *Yoga Sutras* (raja yoga) of Maharshi Patanjali. If one follows the method clearly prescribed in this book, one is sure to attain perfection in human life and also reach the state that transcends this life, that is attain liberation. Many sorts of ideas related to knowledge have been preached in this world, but no science as wonderful as this eightfold science of yoga was preached.

In the science of yoga, the methodology of spiritual practice has been divided into eight component parts and has been explained exactly along scientific lines. To control the beastly instincts inherent in man, the first step prescribed in the *aṣṭāṅga* (eightfold) yoga is *yama*. This means to get rid of the beastly tendency, impelled by which an animal does not stop at anything to protect its own life.

Ahimsa, or non-killing, means to root out from the mind the tendency to harm others for the sake of self-protection or selfish gain. In order that people may lead their lives in society, it is essential that members of the society should have fully amicable relations among themselves.

Unless people are firmly established in satya, or truthfulness, absolute mutual trust and amity would be impossible.

Then comes *asteya*, or non-stealing. Taking unjustly something belonging to another for one's own benefit, whets one's greed and gives rise to an intense feeling of mutual suspicion in society. He who unjustly takes others' things always suffers from a sense of insecurity because of the guilt generated by that theft. One cannot proceed along the spiritual path with such a perturbed mind. In this connection we may recall the incident in which Mathur Babu's wife picked some pot-herb from a plot of land belonging to another partner of the estate and how Sri Ramakrishna reacted to it.

As regards brahmacharya, or continence, its other name is 'The Great Vow'. It is the greatest of all the vows that a human being can observe. That is because, to perform any task, first and foremost, one has to stop the frittering away of the energy that is inherent in oneself (atma shakti). Unless one practises continence, there is wastage of vital energy and one cannot achieve success even in worldly tasks. To practise continence, one has to root out from one's mind all types of exciting causes. That is why this is also termed 'conservation

of energy'.

So far as *aparigraha*, or non-receiving of gifts, is concerned, let alone the practice of yoga, even living in a civilized society enjoins one not to accept gifts from others. If somebody makes a present to a self-respecting person and he accepts that, he cannot rest until he is able to give in return something equally or more valuable to the donor. In ancient society there used to be very strict rules about *aparigraha*. Even brahmins, who according to the scriptures are entitled to receive gifts, never accepted anything from others, except from quarters that are prescribed in the scriptures. We find in *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* some evidence as to how careful Sri Ramakrishna's father Khudiram Chattopadhyay was about not receiving gifts. In ancient times, the ideal prevalent in our country was that each person must bear the responsibility of his own life. If one accepts help from somebody else, the responsibility of the donor's life devolves on the recipient; that is the latter has to suffer punishment due to the sins of the former. Because the country was under foreign domination for a very long time, Indians, suffering as they were from privation and poverty, have lost their self-respect and become totally careless about *aparigraha*. Whenever they get an opportunity, they fulfil their desires with others' money without any hesitation. Truly, at present this is a serious handicap in the spiritual life of an Indian.

Maharshi Patanjali affirms that for the development of human personality the observation of the above five great vows is indispensable.

We now take up the next five vows that have to be observed in the path of yoga. To maintain *śauca*, or purity of the body and the mind, is an essential part of the practice of yoga. All of us know how things having an association of purity about them help us during our daily worship. When after a bath we wear clean, washed clothes, our mind becomes so cheerful! As soon as we enter a temple, a sense



of purity takes possession of our mind. Ganges water, incense sticks and flowers in the shrine seem to create an atmosphere of purity there. The sense of purity in the mind is strengthened whenever we are exposed to something pure. As our real Self is the purest of all things, it follows that the purer we feel in our body and mind, the closer we will feel ourselves to God.

In every country cleanliness is considered as a sign of refinement. In Western countries it is said, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' To remain clean and pure one needs a keen power of observation and an ever-alert mind, and these are especially helpful for one's spiritual progress. Certainly, observing cleanliness is not same as suffering from washing mania. For the former, one has to understand the idea of purity clearly and then practise that both internally and externally. That becomes impossible if one loses one's reason. Unless the quality of *sattva* develops, one cannot really understand what is meant by purity. To use perfumes or scents on one's clothes, is an effect of the quality of *rajas*. Although it is better than the quality of *tamas*, it is something to be shunned by one endowed with *sattva*.

The second vow in this category is *santoṣa*, contentment. Contentment means to maintain serenity of mind under all conditions. If desires for various covetable objects keep the mind agitated, it leads to loss of energy. For the attainment of prosperity, one has to proceed with as much enthusiasm and perseverance as one can muster and then remain content with whatever is feasible within one's powers. My existence is not limited to that of this body; I can assume bodies an innumerable number of times to achieve the ultimate fruition of my life—if thinking thus one keeps one's mind steady and performs one's duties with full enthusiasm, one can lead a supremely peaceful life. It is this ideal which is called 'plain living and high thinking'. It does not impede our spiritual progress; rather,

since following it we can maintain a cool head, we can steadily and surely advance along the path towards fulfilment.

In India the entire country was consumed by the Buddhistic ideal of *sannyasa*. Indians failed to comprehend that to strive for contentment is not antithetical to the achievement of well-being in life. As a result, for the last several centuries they had been passing their life following the motto, 'It is enough if one manages to keep body and soul together somehow or other.' Let each stagnate where he is placed—this became the religion of our country. Although bad education is one of the reasons for this, the main reason is the thousands of years of slavery to foreign domination. For the last thousand years we were so placed that we could not think of anything beyond the preservation of our life.

In this context it may not be out of place to mention a funny incident that occurred one day in 1911. A friend and I became guests in the house of an educated old gentleman. We were having discussion with him on various topics relating to the conditions in the country. He evinced an attitude of contentment under all circumstances and quoted a then-current adage:

'Why call a roasted brinjal bad? After all it makes us happy by filling our stomach!'

Hearing this, my friend, who was influenced by radical ideas, protested sharply, 'Then, sir, why don't you eat ash? That also would fill the stomach all right.'

Before the agitation that followed the 1905 partition of Bengal, the one running theme that could be heard everywhere in Bengal was, 'Don't move your limbs at all; keep sitting at a place quietly.' That was then taken to be the 'practice of contentment'. But contentment is a state which represents a special manifestation of the quality of *sattva*. It is really a kind of serenity that finds expression in one's life when *sattva* develops in body and mind. The devotee is convinced that 'the One whose child I am is the Lord of this universe;

hence it is unbecoming of me to run from pillar to post and behave like a beggar. If I keep to the right path, my Father, the Lord Himself, would meet my needs.' That is real contentment.

We have already discussed mortification (*tapas*), study (*svādhyāya*) and worship of God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) at the beginning of this section.

### 33. *Vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam.*

To obstruct thoughts that are inimical to yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought.

### 34. *Vitarkā hiṃsādayaḥ kṛta-kāritānumoditā lobha-krodha-moha-pūrvakā mṛdu-madhya-dhimātrā duḥkhājñānānantaphalā iti pratipakṣa-bhāvanam.*

The obstructions to yoga are killing, falsehood and so on, whether committed, caused or approved [by oneself]; either through avarice, anger or delusion; whether slight, middling or great; and they result in infinite ignorance and misery. This is (the method of) thinking the contrary. [Remembering this will prevent you from doing wicked things.]

*Comment:* If any doubt arises at any point in course of practising *yama* and *niyama*, one must deliberate on it with utmost care. A slight error in the observation of these vows may result in a terrible downfall and hence in-

evitable suffering. Although to practise these disciplines one has to endure some trouble and inconvenience, a little consideration makes it amply clear that such practice will lead to happiness in life.

### 35. *Ahiṃsā-pratiṣṭhāyām tat-sannidhau vaira-tyāgaḥ.*

Non-killing being established [in a person], in his presence all enmities cease (in others).

### 36. *Satya-pratiṣṭhāyām kriyā-phalāśrayatvam.*

By the establishment of truthfulness [whatever the yogi says becomes truth and] the yogi gets the power of attaining for himself and others the fruits of work without the works.

### 37. *Asteya-pratiṣṭhāyām sarva-ratnopasthānam.*

By the establishment of non-stealing all wealth comes to the yogi.

### 38. *Brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyām vīrya-lābhaḥ.*

By the establishment of continence energy is gained.

(To be continued)

## Notes and References

1. The interpretation of Swami Premeshanandaji here is distinctive. In his 'Raja-Yoga' Swami Vivekananda presents the interpretation of the yogis, according to whom 'All the manifestations of nature are caused by nature itself,

but nature has no purpose in view, except to free the Purusha.' —Translator.

2. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 966.

Our wisdom comes from our experience, and our experience comes from our foolishness.

—Sacha Guitry

# Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

Only a person without a wife is entitled to renunciation (*continued*)

तस्मात्फलविशुद्धाङ्गी संन्यासं संहितात्मनाम् ।  
अग्निवर्णं विनिष्क्रम्य वानप्रस्थं प्रपद्यते ॥६॥

6. Therefore, among those who are [always deeply] concerned about their own welfare, one whose mind has been purified by the [surrendering of one's] fruits [of righteous action to the Lord] should take to [the life of] renunciation [of all actions].<sup>1</sup> [On the other hand, those who have not developed such purity of mind should, on completion of a life of celibate studentship, that is *brahmacarya āśrama*] go forth to the [next stage of a householder, that is *gārhasthya āśrama*, characterized by] the colour of sacred fire [and thence to] the stage of a forest ascetic, that is *vānaprastha āśrama*.<sup>2</sup>

लोकवद्भार्यया सक्तो वनं गच्छति संयतः ।

7. The self-controlled ascetic retires to the forest (as a *vānaprastha*) along with his wife just like an ordinary person of the world [as if] he were attached [to his wife].<sup>3</sup>

Renunciation (*sannyāsa*) considered essential for the cessation of rebirth

जन्मनिवृत्त्यर्थं संन्यासपरिग्रहः

संत्यक्त्वा संसृतिसुखमनुतिष्ठति किं मुघा ॥७॥  
किं वा दुःखमनुस्मृत्य भोगास्त्यजति चोच्छ्रितान् ।  
गर्भवासभयाद्भूतः शीतोष्णाभ्यां तथैव च ।  
गुहां प्रवेष्टुमिच्छामि परं पदमनामयम् ॥८॥ इति ॥

7-8. Giving up the pleasures of worldly life, for what purpose does he (*sannyāsin*) follow (undergo) [the life of a mendicant monk] in vain? And, what, after all, is that misery, contemplating which he [decides to] abandon [such] a profusion of [pleasures arising from a variety of] enjoyments?

[Having been questioned thus, he replies:] 'I am terrified at the fearful [prospect of] the [miserable] life in the [mother's] womb as well as the [sufferings of the dual throng like] cold-heat. [Therefore, longing for the ultimate Freedom,] I am desirous of entering into the cave[-shelter] of the supreme State of [blessedness] free from the disease [of worldliness, that is duality]. Thus [saying, he embraces *sannyāsa*, the life of complete renunciation].<sup>4</sup>

## Notes

1. Since a person with a wife has no right to renunciation, only those of the forest ascetics (those belonging to the *vānaprastha āśrama*, engaged in actions with the sole intention of worshipping God through them) who have attained purity of mind by the grace flowing from God, pleased with the offering of the fruits of such actions, and who have given up a wife, should take recourse to the renunciation of all work. —Upaniṣad Brahmayogin's commentary.

2. On the other hand, those who have not developed this kind of purity of mind should take to the householder's life (*gārhaṣṭhya āśrama*) from the life of a celibate student (*brahmacarya āśrama*) for the sake of purity of mind through the performance of actions enjoined in the *śruti* and *smṛti*. Since such performance involves use of the sacred fire, the householder's life itself has been called 'the colour of fire'. Thence, he moves on to the *vānaprastha āśrama*, which engenders the purity of mind necessary for embarking upon a life of renunciation, characterized by solitary wandering about without any kind of physical or mental support, in a state of complete abandonment or dependence on God (*pārvīrājya*). —Upaniṣad Brahmayogin's commentary.
3. The idea is that the forest ascetic (*vānaprastha*) may retire to the forest along with his wife, who is needed only to help him in the performance of his religious rites and worship (*upāsana*). He may appear to others to be attached to his wife like worldly people, but in matter of fact, he is unattached and self-restrained. He lives with his wife with absolute self-control and needs her only as *saha-dharmiṇī*, one who goes along with him, shoulder to shoulder, in the discharge of the obligations of his stage of life (*āśrama*) and in the performance of his *upāsana*, religious rites and ceremonies.
4. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives an eloquent commentary on this passage, which is full of the fire of renunciation. Doubts normally arise in the minds of worldly persons who see promising young men, capable of enjoyment in the world, taking to the path of *sannyāsa*. They wonder why such boys become *sannyāsins*. The answer is that they are terrified at the prospect of going through the cycle of repeated birth and death. This is being explained further. The worldly people wonder if these young men are not wasting their lives, taking to a *sannyāsins*' life in vain, giving up for nothing the tremendous pleasures that *samsāra*, or worldly life, could offer them in the company of wives and children and all sorts of pleasurable objects of allurements. Being questioned thus, these men of *vairāgya* (dispassion for the world) say, 'These pleasurable objects have only the outward show of pleasure, but they are in fact a source of great misery. These pleasures are fleeting and evanescent, but have the effect of permanently damaging one's spiritual sensibilities and pushing one into the jaws of sure *janma-maraṇa* (birth-death) cycle—a near infinite series with all the attendant, untold sufferings. It is therefore most beneficial for one's spiritual health to renounce both externally and internally all the duties pertaining to the three *āśramas*, or stages of life, namely *brahmacarya-āśrama*, *gārhaṣṭhya-āśrama* and *vānaprastha-āśrama*, and take to the life of an all-renouncing monk, or *sannyāsins*.' With this perception, they tell their kith and kin (and wife, if married), 'I have fulfilled all my obligation towards you; now you also engage in spiritual practices and penance (*tapas*) and strive to enter into the world of Brahman (*brahmaloka*). Being terribly frightened at the prospect of having to enter into the mother's womb again and going through the same rigmarole of the dual throng—heat-cold, pain-pleasure, bad-good and so on—I am eager to enter the *sannyāsa-āśrama*, conducive to the attainment of the attributeless supreme Brahman through the spiritual *sādhana* leading to the highest realization.' Having explained his position to his kith and kin and enlightened them about his aspiration, he takes to the life of *sannyāsa* through a complete abandonment of his past life in the world along with his wife and others.

(To be continued)

**T**ry to practise remembrance of God and pray to Him wholeheartedly so that your mind dwells on Him then He will bestow His grace on you. Happiness and misery are inevitable in life. Human life will be fruitful if we have devotion to God; otherwise it is mere suffering.

—Swami Turiyananda

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# Glimpses of Holy Lives

## The Mind of a Devotee

**S**ant Ganeshnath was born in a small village near Ujjain. His parents were ardent devotees of Panduranga of Pandharpur, whose day began with worship of their chosen deity and closed with kirtan. As parents they were rather unusual, judged by normal standards. Ganeshnath's mother taught her young child bhajans and encouraged the toddler as he lisped after her and tried to imitate his elders dancing during kirtan; and rather than give his son merely a formal education, Ganeshnath's father preferred to inculcate in him spiritual values, especially detachment and renunciation.

Ganeshnath was still an adolescent, when both his parents died leaving him without a guide in the world. However, bhakti and vairagya—they were his chief inheritance—had already taken root in his pure heart and he was proof against worldly temptations. Giving up whatever material possessions he owned, he devoted all his time to devotional practices. Clad in just a loincloth, caring for neither sun nor rain, he began to spend his days in the forest outside the village, where he could uninhibitedly sing and dance in ecstatic love of God, and would only return to the village late in the evening, when he talked to the simple village folk about God and spiritual life. Finally, as his devotion and renunciation grew more and more, he felt an irresistible urge to move to Pandharpur to be near his beloved Panduranga.

### **Temptation**

As he progressed in sadhana at that holy place, Ganeshnath accumulated immense spiritual power. In his presence people would feel a sense of elevation, their minds would rise to a high plane where worldly cares had

no entry. Soon his spirituality became known across central India, and one day the great Maratha king Shivaji came to Pandharpur seeking his blessings. On reaching Ganeshnath's place, Shivaji found the saint engrossed in kirtan, totally oblivious to his surroundings. The king stood respectfully on one side and waited with folded hands until the kirtan ended. When Ganeshnath opened his eyes, Shivaji stepped forward and, placing his crown at the saint's feet, prostrated before him. Then he humbly invited Ganeshnath to spend the night at his camp and accept his hospitality.

It was just the kind of situation a devotee of God can do without. On this occasion, though, Shivaji's humility did not give Ganeshnath much choice and he had to consent, however reluctantly. On their way to the camp, Shivaji was puzzled to see Ganeshnath pick up a handful of small stones from the ground. 'They will help me remember Panduranga,' said Ganeshnath enigmatically.

At the camp, royal arrangements had been made for the guest's reception. The king's ministers welcomed Ganeshnath with great honour and Shivaji himself washed his feet with scented water. Rich dishes were offered to him on platters of gold and silver. The fragrance of incense hung in the air and sweet music played in the background. Banquet over, Shivaji and his courtiers spent the evening with Ganeshnath in spiritual talk, and when it was time to retire, Ganeshnath was led to a luxuriously appointed tent.

### **Introspection**

Throughout the day Ganeshnath had been feeling like a fish out of water. More than that, the extravagance of the whole affair sug-

gested something else to him: Why did he have to undergo these experiences when he did not want them? But then, was it not true that one only got what one wanted? So did he *really* not want to enjoy sense pleasures, or did a desire for them lurk beneath the surface?

The moment the thought crossed his subtle mind, Ganeshnath remembered the stones he had brought with him. Spreading them on the soft mattress, he sat on them and began analysing himself. He passed the night praying to Panduranga from the depths of his being: 'My Lord, wipe my heart clean, make me

pure and stainless. May I have undivided love for Thee.'

Next morning when Shivaji enquired Ganeshnath whether his stay at the camp had been comfortable, Ganeshnath expressed his sincere gratitude to the king for giving him a chance to remember God all night. The answer mystified Shivaji. Ganeshnath then narrated how he had spent the night, and explained the reason behind it. The story gave the king an inkling of how a devotee's mind worked. Offering profuse apologies he fell at the saint's feet. \*

### God S(h)aves

**S**ena was a royal barber in Vidarbha; he shaved the king. But he stood out from other barbers. When he did not have work in the palace he spent his time in singing bhajans and kirtans. He was also scrupulously regular in his morning puja and meditation on his Lord Panduranga.

One morning the king's messenger tapped his door. His wife answered the call: 'Why, he has gone out. Anything urgent?' Said the messenger, 'Yes, the king wants him immediately. Where is he?' 'I have no clue. Maybe he has gone out on an outside call,' said Sena's wife. The king's man left.

Like so many saints of his time, Sena led a God-centred life. He was home, but his wife had lied to the messenger so that Sena was not disturbed in his meditation.

The messenger returned to the palace and reported to the king. A mischievous official there said, 'Your Highness, that was a lie from the barber's wife. I know Sena never leaves home at this morning hour. He is busy with his puja and meditation.' The king flew into a rage and ordered his soldiers to drown Sena in the river.

Exactly then, Sena entered the palace with his equipment. The king was surprised, but pacified at Sena's arrival he cancelled his order. There was an oil-filled cup before the

king in which he could see the barber's reflection as he shaved him. Surprisingly, the reflection resembled the idols of Sri Krishna, with four arms! He looked again at Sena, but he was the same barber. Gazing again at the oil cup he saw the four-armed luminous Krishna with His lotus, mace, conch, chakra and all!

Pleased with Sena's work, the king presented him with riches and dismissed him. The barber went home, deposited the gift there and disappeared.

In the afternoon the king again sent for Sena. The barber hastened to the palace. He shaved and shampooed the king, but this time it was just Sena's image in the oil cup. Annoyed, the king asked Sena, 'How come you don't show me what you did this morning?' 'Your Highness?' asked a puzzled Sena. 'The reflection in the oil cup, I mean,' said the king. Sena could not get it this time either, but on careful questioning realized that Panduranga had shaved the king and saved his life. He prayed to his beloved Lord and by His grace the king saw again the Lord's image in the oil cup.

Sena's deep devotion and gratitude for his beloved Panduranga welled up in his abhangs. He taught everyone that to merit God's grace it is not necessary to retire into the forest. \*



# Reviews



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

**Pūjā and Saṁskāra.** *Musashi Tachikawa, Shoun Hino and Lalita Deodhar.* Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007. E-mail: [mlbd@vsnl.com](mailto:mlbd@vsnl.com). 2001. 177 pp (205 illus). Rs 495.

The Hindu way of life lays great stress on rituals and *saṁskāras*. These have their basis in the sacrificial religion of the Vedas. The Vedic sacrificial cult later gave rise to a variety of rituals, and the worship of fire was substituted with worship of iconic deities. Temples were built for various deities. Even so, the sacrificial rituals were observed and they formed a part of various *saṁskāras*.

The present volume deals with the sixteen *upacāras*, or modes of worshipping a deity, and with the sixteen *saṁskāras*, from birth to death, in the life of a Hindu brahmin. The worship of the Goddess is performed at the Chatuhsringi temple situated on a four-peaked hill adjoining the Ganeshkhind area of the University of Pune. The presiding deity is the same as the one described in the *Devi Bhagavata*. The daily worship is described here in two stages: (a) preliminaries performed by the priest, and (b) the main worship, beginning with *āvāhana* and ending with *mantra-puṣpa*. Each stage in the worship has been photographed and each mantra has been transliterated and translated into English. All sixteen *upacāras*, such as *āvāhana*, the offering of *āsana*, *pādya*, *arghya*, *ācamana* and *snāna* are aptly described along with photographs.

There are three appendices dealing with similar *pūjās* at the Nageshwara and Parvati Nandana temples in Pune. One of these appendices depicts a topographic map of Pune.

Part II of the book deals with *saṁskāras*, which are also sixteen in number. *Saṁskāra* rites are performed for an individual at important occasions in life, beginning with conception and ending with death. Nowadays just a few of these sixteen *saṁskāras* are left out, but there are certain brahmin families that value these *saṁskāras*. The study focuses on

a Hiranyakeshi brahmin family in Pune. This family is descended from the Taittiriya branch of the *Krishna Yajurveda*. Its surname is Nathu and it belongs to the Chitpavans of Konkan.

Of the sixteen *saṁskāras*, *upanayana* and *vivāha* are quite important and the rites are universal among brahmins. Photographs and citations of mantras make the study graphic.

The entire book is the product of a fine collaboration between three scholars and it has been thoughtfully laid out. The two Japanese scholars have chosen this area of study purposefully and have rendered a good service to both Japanese and Indian readers in understanding certain ethnic components of culture. The third author has the right expertise, being one of the Nathus; her own *vivāha saṁskāra* has come in handy in describing the tradition. The book will be a valuable addition to any research library.

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**Acting as a Way of Salvation—A Study of Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana.** *David L Haberman.* Motilal Banarsidass. 2001. xiv + 211 pp. Rs 295.

About 1300 years ago, Periyalwar (Vishnuchitta), who lived in Srivilliputtur, Tamil Nadu, visualized Krishna as a baby in the cradle, a toddler, a child asking for the moon and clapping his hands, a prankster who broke pots after gobbling up the butter and ghee stored in them, played with boys and girls on the banks of Yamuna. As Krishna's fingers flew over the stops of his bamboo flute, enchanting melodies mesmerized the flora and fauna in Vrindaban and held the cowherds and cowherdesses in thrall. From then on, the flute of Krishna has been calling us still. David Haberman is one who has heard the call.

In the East, Chaitanya became the fosterer of the Bhakti Movement. Inspired by him, the Gaudiya Vaishnavism of Bengal re-established Krishna-power in Vraja in northwestern Uttar Pradesh. Rupa Goswami, the theologian of the Chaitanya phenomenon, made use of Bharata's *natya* shastra to set up an elaborate methodology of devotional discipline in what is known as 'Raganuga Bhakti Sadhana'. In this replay of Krishna's times in one's heart, there is only one theme: Krishna. There is but one rasa: bhakti. Even when the rasalila is played by rasamandalis in Vraja during Janmashtami celebrations, there seem to be no onlookers. Everyone is a participant in the eternal drama.

David Haberman's thesis deals with the discipline of meditation upon Krishna's times, which helps the aspirant enter the changeless world of Vraja. Prior to the coming of Muslim power, Hinduism was helped by the political power of the Chakravartins. Avatars like Varaha and Narasimha were more popular at that time. But Muslim political power destroyed these temples and sought to annihilate Hinduism in a big way. To survive, Hinduism made a shift in focus. Krishna, the seemingly harmless, romantic cowherd, almost non-violent, became the popular deity. Bhakti for Krishna through which the aspirants sought to become the cowherdesses of Vrindaban (*ragatmika* bhakti) was fine-tuned to a science of self-perfection and self-transformation.

Can the spontaneous emotion of bhakti have a technique to be used as sadhana? Rupa Goswami laid down the rules that could help the aspirant in a definite manner. First, the aspirant must listen to stories of Krishna and his companions, then desire to assume for himself the role of one of the companions of Krishna. He should then prepare himself to take the part of acting out the role, for 'to obtain a goal one should imitate one who has already attained that goal'. It is not that this is just imitation. Actually this is 'putting oneself in the service of one of Vraja loka', and taking on the basic tenet of Vaishnavism, which is *kainkarya*.

Scholarly interior-stitching to get at the right meaning of terms used by Rupa Goswami and a presentation of comparatist critical statements make *Acting as a Way of Salvation* a connoisseur's delight. However, it is the scene we find after our entry into the Vraja enchantment that keeps us in thrall. One takes on the gopi identity (which gives us the *siddha-deha*), the eternally young girl glowing

with ornaments, serving Radha and Krishna in the Vrajaloka. Rupa Goswami's *siddha-rupa* describes him as the teenager Manjari wearing a garment patterned with the eyes of peacock feathers. She serves betel, and is married to Durmada.

The experiences of the sadhakas of *raganuga* bhakti make fascinating reading and Haberman recounts a few. There are detailed references to Rupa Kaviraja, whose works were effectively proscribed by a council of Gaudiya Vaishnavas held at Jaipur in 1727. Vishvanatha Chakravartin is considered authoritative by the sect. Such high-level condemnation and acceptance of commentators and practitioners of *raganuga* bhakti was necessary because the sadhana meant walking on a razor's edge. When men had to imagine themselves as female companions of Radha there were scriptural limits to such masking of their physical selves. Haberman's painstaking analysis of the sadhana in action is most welcome and it shows us how this is a living tradition in Vraja even today.

Haberman gives special importance to the explication of the *manjari* sadhana in which one assumes the role of a companion of Radha. This sadhaka calls for the worship of Krishna and Radha together as a two-in-one phenomenon, with the emphasis on Radha. 'Radha is raised from the position of a model bhakta or asraya to the position of an appropriate object of devotion, a visaya.' This is akin to the historical poetess Goda Devi being elevated to the position of Krishna's consort in the Ramanuja Darshana.

The setting up of 'god's room' (*thakur griha*) for personalized worship of Krishna and the eightfold Vrajalila, which are covered in the day-long worship of the Lord and Radha, are not mere doll's play!

'Interaction with the image is a way of pursuing the identity revealed by the guru, a means of enacting the given role. The thakur griha, then, constitutes a ritual stage on which the practitioners can physically act out their roles in the lila every day in their own homes. The dramatic process of *raganuga* thus underlies and informs the daily image worship of many Gaudiya Vaisnavas, providing a means to participate in the world of the Vraja-lila even for those who are unable to practice the more difficult meditative techniques.' (137)

Constantin Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* gives the thrumming *shruti* for Haberman's critical approach to the interior drama in the *raganuga*



method. He has also touched upon the vast meditative hymnology that has been inspired in this tradition. With further inputs in the appendix, notes, glossary and select bibliography, *Acting as a Way of Salvation* is definitely an instrument of light for the academic scholar as well as the lay devotee of the Krishna tradition.

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**In the Days of Great Peace: The Highest Yoga as Lived by Mouni Sadhu.** Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai 606 603. E-mail: [alagamma@md2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:alagamma@md2.vsnl.net.in). 2001. 223 pp. Rs 60.

First published in 1952, this volume is an invaluable addition to the spiritual literature of the world, especially its experiential dimension. The author uses the simplest language to highlight the immediacy of his days spent in the company of the great sage Sri Ramana Maharshi. The book has two Forewords, one by the famous Arthur Osborne and the other specially for the second edition of 1953 by Dr M Hafiz Syed, both illustrating the tremendous appeal that the volume continues to have half a century later.

The author depicts his 'realization' under numerous headings arranged in forty-nine chapters, a realization that he considers to be 'nothing more than the rising of our consciousness to the level of reality-spirit-self, which means transcending the so-called "normal" consciousness of the brain-mind or ego.' The book, he says, is his attempt to pass on the nuggets of his own realization to the readers, because experience is more important in this path than teaching, reading, study or analysis.

Mouni Sadhu's close interaction with the Maharshi comes alive in the pages of the volume. In the process we see the existential application of the

Maharshi's exhortation of attempting to experience realization *here and now*. Also the living presence of the sage and his lifestyle—more than his words or their interpretation put in the form of diary entries—add to the authenticity of the spiritual experience being described in the volume. As the author suggests, 'My purpose is to record ... the real experiences of an average man, who wanted to know for himself what the presence of a great Sage means and what its influence is. ... all theories, all acquired knowledge, falls into dust when one stands face to face with a perfect man. They become as superfluous as the complicated western dress with its collar and tie in the merciless heat of this part of India.'

Of the forty-nine chapters some which deserve specific mention are the ones entitled 'Tears', 'Love', 'God', 'My New Conception of Life' and 'Techniques of Meditation'. In all these the author repeatedly reminds us of the inadequacy of language to express the ineffable. But this is the only tool available to us for the transference of our experience to others and therefore we have to do the best within these limitations and this the author does marvellously. After a reading of the volume one can feel the serenity of tone which no words can exactly depict but which the author has managed to capture abundantly through his tone and style, thus making the title of the volume really apt. The great peace is the 'peace that passes understanding'.

At a time when varieties of distorted versions of the inner life of Indian sages is being penned by Western scholars under the guise of original research and novel interpretations, this volume is a reminder that not all the points of view coming from the West are so uni-dimensional. For this specific purpose the book gains in importance and deserves a close and serious reading.

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## Policy

A centipede consulted an owl about the pain it felt in its legs. Said the owl, 'You have far too many legs! If you became a mouse you would have only four legs and just 4% of the pain.' 'That's a great idea,' said the centipede. 'Now tell me how to become a mouse.' Said the irritated owl, 'Don't bother me with details of implementation. I only make the policy here.'

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## ❧ Reports ❧

**Organized.** A medical camp; by Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai; at Nasik Kumbha Mela; in August 2003. Nearly 7000 patients were treated at the camp.

**Inaugurated.** A hostel for boys of the centre's higher secondary school; by Sri K M Seth, Governor of Chattisgarh; at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur; on 5 September.

**Won.** The Arunachal Pradesh state award for teachers; by a teacher of the higher secondary school run by Ramakrishna Mission, Along. The award was presented at a function held in Itanagar on 5 September (Teachers' Day).

**Visited.** Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi; by Sri Ved Prakash Marwah, Governor of Jharkhand, and Sri Ramesh Singh Munda, Tribal Welfare Minister, Jharkhand; on 8 and 9 September, respectively. Sri Marwah distributed prizes to winners of various cultural competitions organized by the centre and Sri Munda inaugurated a 2-day ex-trainees' conference.

**Inaugurated.** A neuroscience unit; by Sri Vishnukant Shastri; Governor of Uttar Pradesh; at Vivekananda Polyclinic, Lucknow; on 17 September.

**Inaugurated.** The newly installed whole-body CT scanner, 2 deluxe cabins and a colour Doppler machine; by Sri V C Pande, Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Sri Nabam Rebia, Member of Rajya Sabha, and Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission,

respectively; at Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, Itanagar; on 16 September. Sri Gegong Apang, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, presided over the public meeting held on the occasion.

**Celebrated.** 75th anniversary of the Vedanta Society of Providence, Rhode Island, USA; on 20 and 21 September. A symposium on 'Vedanta in Practice' and an interfaith meeting were organized. A commemoration volume containing reminiscences of many long-standing devotees was also brought out. Nearly 250 friends and well-wishers of the Society participated in the 2-day celebration.

**Secured.** 1st and 3rd places; by students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar; at a state-level science seminar held in Ranchi by the Jharkhand Department of Human Resources Development in collaboration with Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, Kolkata; in September.

**Distributed.** 900 kg rice, 700 kg flattened rice, 500 kg potatoes, 500 kg jaggery, 250 kg pulses and 150 kg salt; to over 3000 people belonging to 635 families; by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Malda; in August. The families had lost their houses to a flood caused by erosion of the Ganga embankment.

**Distributed.** 3782 dhotis, 1891 saris, 18,910 kg rice and 9455 kg pulses; among 1891 tribal families in distress; by Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai; in Pune, Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra; in September.

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Only some of us can learn by others' mistakes. The rest of us have to be the others.