

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

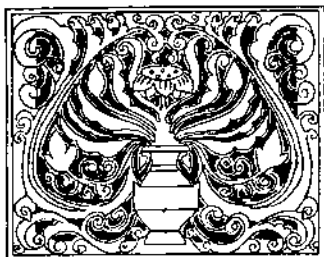


**FEBRUARY  
2004**


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



**VOL. 109**  
**ISSN 0032-6178**



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**PRABUDDHA  
BHARATA**

FEBRUARY 2004

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Internet edition at: [www.advaitaonline.com](http://www.advaitaonline.com)

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**Cover:** Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother's temple at Jayrambati seen today and a period photograph in the foreground. The sacred village where Mother was born for the good of all Her children in 1853.

उत्तिष्ठत  
जाग्रत  
प्राप्य  
वरान्निबोधत ।

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 109

FEBRUARY 2004

No. 2

❧ Traditional Wisdom ❧

## DETACHMENT

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत्सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।  
अपि सर्व जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव वाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥

(*Nachiketas to Yama:*) But, O Death, these (pleasures) endure only till tomorrow. Moreover, they exhaust the vigour of the senses. Even the longest life is short indeed. Keep your horses, dances and songs for yourself. (*Katha Upanishad*, 1.1.26)

When paper is wetted with oil, it cannot be written upon. So the soul stained by the oil of vice and luxury is unfit for spiritual devotion. But when the paper wetted with oil is overlaid with chalk, it may be written upon; so when such a soul is 'chalked' over with renunciation, it becomes fit again for spiritual progress. (*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 171)

What is there in the worldly life? How attached people are to it! See how many are born out of one person, and how his attention and energy are dissipated! Is it possible for a person to attain spiritual greatness under such conditions? Have you not seen crabs? The mother crab peeps out from her hole every so often, and then goes back. She struggles hard to be free, but fails. Why is this so? Because of her attention to her numerous young ones living in the hole. This attraction draws her back in spite of her efforts. So it is with those who are immersed in worldly life. (Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi)

At present we are like prisoners. We may get a glimpse of freedom now and then, but the world falls upon us when we are off our guard and drags us back once more into our prison cells. As soon as a man finds out, however, that these little pleasures of the flesh are nothing compared with the infinite pleasures of the Spirit, he wants to renounce; not for the sake of renunciation, but because he has found something higher. (Swami Ramakrishnananda)

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## ☪ This Month ☪

**Focusing the Mind**, this month's editorial, discusses the process of perception, the importance of concentration of mind, the process of mind control and some aids to concentration.

**Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago** features a letter to the editor from the New York Vedanta Society, detailing its activities. Also featured are some interesting clippings from 'News and Notes'.

Commenting on verses 22 to 28 of the eighth chapter and verses 1 to 4 of the ninth chapter of the *Gita* in his **Reflections on the Bhagavadgita**, Swami Atulanandaji discusses Purusha's attainability only with one-pointed devotion, the paths of return and non-return for the yogis and introduction to the sovereign knowledge and sovereign mystery.

In Indian philosophy religion is not divorced from philosophy. **Yoga Darshana** by Swami Siddhinathanandaji is a thought-provoking introduction to one of the important systems of Indian philosophy. Summarizing the four chapters of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the author underlines the need to follow the spiritual path as a lifelong discipline. A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a former head of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kozhikode, the author is a well-known speaker and writer in English and Malayalam.

**Buddhism in Contemporary China** by Dr Alan Hunter is an absorbing portrayal of the religious revival in China, with special reference to Buddhism. The article also contains authentic information on Hindu scriptures translated into Chinese, details of the

author's visit to Buddhist temples in China, and helpful information, including photographs, for a prospective pilgrim to the Buddhist shrines in China. Senior Lecturer in Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University, UK, the author visits India and China frequently.

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

**Glimpses of Holy Lives** features incidents from the lives of two saints: Meyporul Nayanar, one of the sixty-three Tamil Shaiva saints, and Jyoti Pant, the unlearned brahmin who merited God's grace.

**Swami Trigunatitananda to Swami Saradananda** contains excerpts from an unpublished letter dated 19 June 1903, recently discovered among Swami Saradanandaji's papers in Udbodhan Office, Kolkata. The letter vividly portrays among other things the challenge of the Vedanta work in the West and Swami Trigunatitanandaji's attempts at inculcation of monastic values among those under his care. We are grateful to the editor of *Udbodhan* for making the letter available for publication.

**Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition** by Swami Premeshanandaji features the author's comments on sutras 39 to 55 of the second chapter, 'Sādhanā Pāda'. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, translator of the original Bengali notes, is a former Professor of Statistics from Calcutta University.



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# Focusing the Mind

## EDITORIAL

Arjuna, the ace archer of the *Mahabharata*, was his guru Drona's dearest student. Arjuna's steadfastness and devotion to the art made his guru proud of him. It was his exemplary skill in archery that won him Draupadi in marriage. He had to shoot an arrow at a revolving target above, looking at its reflection in a pool below. The entire assembly watching him with bated breath, Arjuna successfully hit the target.

A man was fishing on the bank of a river. A passerby asked him the way to a destination. The man did not respond. Disgusted at the lack of response even after a couple of more calls, the passerby left the place. Shortly, the man got up from his seat, hurried behind the passerby and asked him what he wanted. The passerby was irritated at the man's funny behaviour and chided him for his earlier indifference. The man asked his pardon and said, 'Sir, when you called me I was busy fishing. The fish was about to get hooked to the bait. A little distraction and it would have slipped from the hook.' That was Sri Ramakrishna's parable to stress the importance of one-pointedness in spiritual life.

Students or businessmen, executives or housewives, scientists or recluses—who will not be happy with a little more concentration? If only our mind could settle on what we want, when we want! But concentration is not something that we can have for the asking; it calls for work.

### Concentration on External Objects

No one finds it difficult to concentrate on external objects. Our five sense organs—ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose—present before us an array of sense objects. Life in the world centres round enjoyment of these objects. Our

whole being is drawn to what we believe to be a source of happiness. Again, it is not difficult to concentrate on a thought leading to some sense enjoyment. Sense enjoyment, incidentally, is not restricted to the physical level. Objects are enjoyed in dream also, when the gross body does not exist for the dreamer. Daydreams too fall in the same category.

A student need not be told to concentrate on his sports activity. Usually, that happens spontaneously; he does not think of studies while playing. But, concentration on studies is a different matter. Many unrelated thoughts crowd an undisciplined mind. An executive with an administrative problem before him, a researcher with an important project in hand, or a homemaker busy with her household chores—all need concentration. The recluse too attempts to concentrate and meditate on his chosen ideal or his inner Self. His concentration, however, is of a different variety.

In any case, concentration plays an important part in life and accounts for difference between the successful and the also-rans. Concentration is the only method of acquiring knowledge, according to Swami Vivekananda:

Even the lowest shoemaker, if he gives more concentration, will make black shoes better; the cook with concentration will cook a meal all the better. In making money, or in worshipping God, or in doing anything, the stronger the power of concentration, the better will that thing be done. This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature, and lets out floods of light. This, the power of concentration, is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Extolling concentration, Swamiiji also said that if he had the option to do his education all over again he would prefer learning the art of con-

centration to mere collection of data.

### The Process of Perception

Why is concentration difficult? Is there any way we can improve it? A study of how we perceive will help us better appreciate the problem. How do we perceive things? The 'I' gets connected to the mind, the mind to the sense organ, the sense organ to its sense object and thus results perception. If I see an object, the 'I'—an entity different from the mind—gets hooked to my mind, the mind to the sense organ eye, and the eye to the object of perception. In all perceptions—hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell—mind is the common link. It is the internal organ and called the king of all organs.<sup>2</sup>

What happens when a student attempts to concentrate on a book? The student's 'I' is connected to his mind, which is connected to the book through the eye, and ideas begin to register in his mind. This is not a continuous process though. In a few minutes, with his eyes and the book still wide open, his mind has drifted somewhere, maybe towards some future or past event, or it has hooked itself to some mental images. His 'I-mind-organ-object' perception chain has snapped suddenly, midway at the mind. The severed 'I-mind' part of the chain drifted somewhere. The poor 'eye-book' part is left without the 'I-mind' part to enliven it. It is a while before the student realizes that he—rather the 'I'—had gone on an excursion spree with the mind. With determination he tries again to focus on the book and restore the severed link. Evidently, the mind is the weakest link in the perception chain, ready to snap any moment. The perception chain is stable in proportion to the strength of mind. It is this strength of mind that is called will power.

### The 'I' in the Perception Chain

Now let us analyse the 'I' in the perception chain. I try to concentrate my mind on something. The 'I' that tries to fix the mind on

the object is evidently something different from the mind. Usually, the mind has its own pet agenda and successfully thwarts our every attempt at concentration, every attempt at carrying out our resolutions. Vedanta has a technical name for the 'I' that is different from the unruly mind: buddhi. Buddhi is an important mental faculty and a powerful tool to discipline the mind. Buddhi is also the seat of will power.

### Are We Really Free?

As long as the mind is not disciplined, it continues to act as our enemy.<sup>3</sup> Unaware of this, we keep listening to this mind, erroneously thinking that we are free—free to act and think as we like. But it is not we but our mind and the senses that are free. We helplessly follow them and labour under the delusion of freedom. This delusion persists as long as we do not attempt to discipline the mind.

We saw that the mind does not find it difficult to concentrate on an object or idea leading to sense enjoyment. That is because, like water and electricity, the mind too follows the path of least resistance. Our mind and senses are constitutionally directed outside.<sup>4</sup> The mind does not pose any problem as long as the enjoyment-oriented perception chain is not snapped. It begins its non-cooperation movement only when its natural course is threatened and it is made to dwell on some noble idea or a task demanding concentration. Swamiji explains what is real freedom:

Free! We who cannot for a moment govern our own minds, nay, cannot hold our minds on a subject, focus it on a point to the exclusion of everything else for a moment! Yet we call ourselves free. Think of it! We cannot do as we know we ought to do even for a very short space of time. Some sense-desire will crop up, and immediately we obey it. Our conscience smites us for such weakness, but again and again we do it, we are always doing it. We cannot live up to a high standard of life, try as we will. The ghosts of past thoughts, past lives, hold us down. All the misery of the world is

caused by this slavery to the senses. Our inability to rise above the sense-life—the striving for physical pleasures—is the cause of all the horrors and miseries in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Real freedom thus means freedom *from* (the hold of) the senses, not freedom *for* the senses. That explains why concentration is an uphill task.

### Mind Discipline Calls for Work

Like water, mind too finds its own level. Water flows of its own accord from a higher to a lower level. But raising it to a higher level involves work—either lifting buckets of it manually or installing a pump, which converts electrical energy to mechanical energy and lifts water to the desired level. Even so with the mind: by its very nature it runs towards sense enjoyment, gross or subtle. Making it listen to us and focusing it on what *we* want, call for work. Work here implies disciplining the mind, making it follow a set routine, not letting it flit here and there or letting it brood on useless things. And who disciplines the mind? It is buddhi, the 'I' in us that is helplessly taken for a ride by the undisciplined mind. In fact, as long as we willingly participate in this mind-senses-prompted ride, buddhi lies dormant; it does not become discernible.

### The Chariot Allegory

The *Katha Upanishad* (1.3.3-9) explains the human system with the help of an example: Imagine yourself to be the master of a chariot; your body is the chariot; buddhi (the decision-making faculty and the seat of discrimination) is the charioteer; manas (loosely translated as mind, the deliberative faculty in man that examines the pros and cons of various options) is equivalent to the reins; the sense organs are the horses drawing the chariot; and the sense objects, the road on which the horses move.

The 'I'-buddhi-manas-senses complex is called the enjoyer—the experiencer of pleasure and pain in the 'misery-go-round' of life. If the horses are not broken (the senses are not

controlled) and the charioteer is asleep (the faculty of discrimination is dull), the chariot does not reach its destination (the goal of human life is not attained). The chariot just follows the horses, possibly straying into a ditch and spelling the master's death. (Despite being blessed with a human birth, if a man does not struggle for his liberation he is verily a suicide, says Sri Shankara.<sup>6</sup>)

If, on the other hand, the horses are broken (the mind and the senses are controlled) and the charioteer (buddhi) is wide awake, the chariot reaches the destination chosen by the master; human life reaches its goal of God-realization, or Self-realization.

Shorn of technicalities, the above discussion can be summed up as follows: The more awakened the buddhi, the more disciplined become the mind and the senses and the greater are the chances of attaining the goal of life.

### External and Internal Concentration

It will be useful to note at this stage an important distinction between concentration on external objects and a yogi's internal concentration on God. Concentration on external objects like a book or a project in hand involves the entire perception chain: 'I'-buddhi-mind-organ-object. But inner concentration involves snapping of the perception chain at the buddhi level. Detached from the hold of the mind and the senses, a pure buddhi attempts to focus itself on its source, the Atman. This is again what internal renunciation is all about, without which no spiritual endeavour can become fruitful. Such a detached and awakened buddhi is not easily taken for a ride by the mind, for the mind itself is too disciplined and chastened to attempt such a ride.

Parenthetically it may be said that according to Patanjali's eightfold Yoga concentration (*dhāraṇā*) is preceded by moral disciplines, posture, *prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the mind and the senses from the objects). Attempts at meditation without the preliminary steps may mean nothing more

than some therapeutic effect for the practitioner.

### Some Aids to Concentration

*Faith in oneself:* Mind discipline is a great challenge. Mind control is nothing short of attempting to change the course of a river.<sup>7</sup> The task becomes simpler to the extent we identify ourselves with buddhi and try to anchor ourselves in our true Self, the Atman. Minus this faith in ourselves, no faith in God can be meaningful.<sup>8</sup>

*Attitude towards work:* Work can be a great spiritual discipline if during work we can observe the workings of our mind. The mind has an inherent tendency to flit across thoughts. The motion becomes perceptible especially when we do repetitive work. Such an observation can strengthen the 'witness attitude' towards the mind and facilitate the awakening of buddhi.

Swamiji tells us the secret of work: 'When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being.'<sup>9</sup> Surely, putting this into practice involves struggle. But that is natural, since elevating the mind calls for work.

*Ensuring the quality of sensory input:* What we take in through our five sense organs leave their subtle impressions on our mind. More bad impressions make the task of mind discipline that much more difficult. The nobler the impressions, the less fierce the struggle with the mind.

*Following a fixed daily routine:* Sticking on to a daily routine can minimize the gyrations of an unruly mind. The mind presents all sorts of difficulties when made to follow a routine. It has revelled in brooding on several options, letting us do nothing. A strict routine does not afford it that luxury. Not letting the mind brood—this one discipline is a potent tool for mind control.

Again, the mind likes to follow the First Law of Motion: it prefers to continue to be in a state of rest unless acted upon by an external force. The mind gets jammed sometimes, especially when it faces discipline. Patient prodding of the mind and disciplining it with an awakened buddhi is the right external force to get rid of its inertia and make it behave.

*Prayer:* Prayer can easily gather a dispersed mind. It is a potent means to withdraw the senses from their objects, and internalize and focus the mind on the object of worship.

\* \* \*

Concentration of mind does not happen spontaneously. Indeed, it is a great challenge and calls for discipline. It is buddhi, the discriminative faculty and the seat of will power, with which we discipline the mind and sharpen its focus. All attempts at mind control involve buddhi. That is what Sri Krishna means by 'Let a man raise himself by his own self.'<sup>10</sup> Nothing can be more challenging than mind control. The rewards are also equally great, for, in Swamiji's words, '... the power of concentration is the only key to the treasure-house of knowledge.'

\*

### References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.391.
2. *Bhagavadgita*, 10.22.
3. *Ibid.*, 6.6.
4. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.1.1.
5. *Gita*, 6.30.
6. *Vivekachudamani*, 4.
7. Sri Shankaracharya on the *Katha Upanishad*, 2.1.1.
8. For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see 'Faith in God versus Faith in Oneself', May 2002 editorial.
9. *CW*, 1.71.
10. *Gita*, 6.5.

Conscious is when you're aware of something and conscience is when you wish you weren't.



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# Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago

February 1904

## A Correspondence

27 November 1903

From New York Vedanta Society, New York  
To the Editor, Prabuddha Bharata

Dear Sir,

Especial interest has been attached this year to the opening of the winter classes and lectures because of the coming of another swami to aid in the work. For the outside observer this is the most tangible proof yet given of the growth and permanency of the Vedanta movement in New York; a strong feeling also prevails in the Society itself that the step marks a new period in its development. Few, however, beyond those who have watched the organization from the beginning can appreciate through what vicissitudes it has passed and what an inexhaustible store of determination, courage and perseverance it has needed to bring it to its present condition. People in India assume that in America all undertakings must be easy because of the country's great material resources, but they do not see that these very resources constitute a serious obstacle in any purely spiritual cause. The churches so far recognize this that with few exceptions they have adopted a policy of compromise in order to hold their congregations and receive from them the required support. A religion, on the contrary, which, like the Vedanta, attempts no compromise, but boldly preaches practical renunciation and non-attachment, must necessarily find a limited number of followers at the outset and these will inevitably be among the thinking class than among the rich.

The Vedanta Society has therefore had to make its way slowly; but this very struggle has undoubtedly meant added vigour, and today every member has good reason to feel that the seed sown by Swami Vivekananda has through Swami Abhedananda's tireless care and devotion sprung up into a sturdy deep-rooted plant. The reports, indeed, read at the regular business meeting held on the first of the month, showed a better financial condition, a longer membership list and a fuller corps of active workers than ever before in the history of the movement.

The attendance at the Sunday lectures has also been excellent, and keen interest has been manifested in the subjects which represent a departure from those usually treated. In order to clear up the confusion existing in most Western minds concerning the different religions and religious teachers of the East and their relation to Vedanta, Swami Abhedananda through November and December is giving the following course:

### **November**

Dualistic Vedanta, the Bhakti-Yoga; Devotion and Love; Krishna, the Hindu Christ, and His Teachings; Worship of Krishna in India; Worship of Buddha.

### **December**

Lamaism in Tibet; Teachings of Buddha and Vedanta; Idol Worship among Hindus and Christians; Worship of Christ and Christmas.

Swami Nirmalananda arrived on last Wednesday after a continuous passage from Bombay to New York by way of Naples. He has already won the sympathy of all those who have met him and everyone is confident that he will prove an invaluable addition to the work in this country. Swami Abhedananda has also returned from his five months in Europe, full of new power and strength, and all things point to a season exceptionally rich in results.

LG

### Birthday Anniversaries

The birthday anniversary of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated at the Vivekananda Society, Colombo, Ceylon; the Vivekananda Town Hall, Dharmapuri, Madras; Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras; the Ramakrishna Mission, Bangalore, Mysore; the Vivekananda Society, Calcutta; and the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Benares. Feeding the poor formed the general feature of the ceremony. We beg to be excused for our inability to publish all the correspondence for want of space.

The seventy-first birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on 21 February at the Belur Math, Bengal, and the Ramakrishna Math, Cattle Kernan, Triplicane, Madras. The programme for the occasion at Madras was:

1. Puja and Bhajanam, 7 am to 10 am.
2. Entertaining friends and the poor (10,000), 10 am to 3 pm.
3. Harikatha, 3 pm to 5 pm.
4. An address upon 'Sri Ramakrishna and His Teachings', 5 pm to 7 pm.
5. Aratrikam and distribution of Prasadam, 7 pm to 7.30 pm.

### Hairsprings Valuable than Gold

The value of hairsprings when finished and placed in watches is enormous in proportion to the material from which they are made. A ton of gold is worth about £ 125,583. A ton of steel made up into hairsprings when in watches is worth about £ 1,576,258—more than twelve and a half times the value of pure gold.

### Mechanization

With the assistance of the latest machines, a piece of leather can be transformed into boots in thirty-four minutes, in which time it passes through the hands of sixty-three people and fifteen machines.

### Metal Fatigue

Metals get tired like living beings. Telegraph wires are better conductors on Monday than on Saturday on account of their Sunday rest, and a rest of three weeks adds to the conductivity of a wire.

### Strange Rainstorms

In the Colorado desert they have rainstorms during which not a single drop of water touches the earth. The rain can be seen falling from the clouds high above the desert, but when the water reaches the strata of high, dry air beneath the clouds it is entirely absorbed before falling half of the distance to the ground.

—from 'News and Notes'

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# Reflections on the Bhagavadgita

SWAMI ATULANANDA

## Chapter 8 (continued)

**22. O son of Pritha, that supreme Purusha, in whom all beings abide and by whom all this is pervaded, can be attained by wholehearted and exclusive devotion to Him.**

We find the same idea expressed in the *New Testament* in 'That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said. For we are also His offspring.'<sup>1</sup> We find the same teaching in all religions, the voice of God calling to His devotees, calling to all creation, 'Come unto Me.' There the way is shown how to reach the supreme Self, beyond whom naught exists; that Spirit, in whom all beings abide as the effect abides in the cause, and by whom the whole world is pervaded as the Knower of all. *That* within us that feels that it knows is a mere reflection of the supreme Spirit. How can we reach that Spirit? By wholehearted and exclusive devotion to Him, by that supreme devotion which realizes 'I am not different from Him.' The whole universe would be emptiness were it not for the supreme Spirit. And I am not different from Him. 'For we are His offspring, in Him we live and move and have our being.' He is the container and also the contained. But not like water in a jar, not only external—no, all-pervading. 'Just as birds in the home-tree nest, in just the selfsame way does all this nestle in the Self Supreme.'<sup>2</sup> 'He who knows that imperishable Being, bright, shadowless, bodyless, colourless, pure—verily he attains the Supreme, the undecaying Purusha. O my good friend, he who knows the

Atman becomes all-knowing, becomes all. He who knows that imperishable Being, wherein rests the intelligent self (buddhi), the gods, the pranas and the elements—he becomes all-knowing and enters into all.'<sup>3</sup>

This is the saguna Brahman, Purusha reflected in maya. Nirguna Brahman is unqualified. Then there is no world, no beings, only One-without-a-second, no knower, no cognizer, One and One alone. That will come later.

Saguna Brahman means conditioned Brahman, and nirguna Brahman means unconditioned. The contemplation of nirguna Brahman is only for the highest jnanis, who have realized the distinction between the Real and the unreal. Otherwise there is the danger of mistaking the *avyakta*, the unmanifest universe, for unconditioned Brahman. And that would lead to tamasic conditions. And it is said that ultimately that may lead to *prakritilaya* or absorption in nature, almost the starting point of spiritual evolution. Sri Krishna recommends contemplation of Ishvara, or saguna Brahman, manifest in the universe, Brahman viewed as the source and guide of the universe, the all-pervading, self-conscious supreme Lord, immanent in every part of the universe.

We have now come to a very difficult part, where the paths are described of those who depart from here never again to return, and of those who go but do come back again to this mortal sphere.

**23. O prince of the Bharata race, now I shall tell thee of the time (path) travelling in**

which the yogis return, and also of that taking which they do not return.

**24. Fire, light, daytime, the fortnight of waxing moon, the six months of the sun's northern course—departing at such time, the knowers of Brahman go to Brahman.**

**25. Smoke, night-time, the fortnight of waning moon, the six months of the sun's southern course—the yogi departing at such time and attaining the lunar light returns.**

The Lord describes here how and when jnana yogis and karma yogis depart from this world. The two paths described are the *devayana* and the *pitriyana*, the path of the gods and the path of the ancestors, by which the souls of the dead travel to the other world. The exact meaning, however, is not very clear. Some are inclined to think that each step means a sphere. Agni, fire, is the name of one sphere, light the name of the next and so on. While others take it to mean a state of consciousness, still others think that a state of gradual development of illumination and renunciation is meant by the light path and increasing ignorance and attachment by the dark path. It is difficult to know which is right.

At the time of death, it is said, the souls are guided by divinities to their temporary celestial abodes. These divinities are the god of fire and the god of light, the god presiding over the fortnight of waning moon and so on.

Those who, after hearing from sacred authority what Brahman is, engage in worship of Brahman, will go by the path of light and in course of time reach Brahmaloka. And at the end of the kalpa they will get mukti. This is for those who have not quite realized the Absolute in this life, but who are trying for that, and who leave the body before succeeding in the attempt. To know that Absolute, time, space and causation must go. For those who have gone beyond time and space, there can be no going or coming, here or there, this or that. These ideas are within ourselves. What we see in the external is the projection from inside. Mukti is not a question of going, but of realizing and becoming. It is a state of consciousness; it is replacement of false consciousness by true consciousness. It all depends on our

thinking. The moment we realize that we are eternal, time is conquered; the moment we realize that we are omnipresent, space is annihilated; the moment that we realize that we are changeless, we rise beyond mortality. These are all perceptions, experiences. We can perceive; we can experience eternity even during life in the body. We can see omnipresence even now, here on earth. These experiences are called states of samadhi.

But when we think that we are bodies, there must be going and coming, time and space. The body idea is called avidya, or ignorance. That is maya, so difficult to understand. We keep ourselves bound by wrong thinking. We are all in the same position in which Vishnu was when he incarnated as a sow. He had entered a sow's body and was living happily in that body. And when Shiva told him that he was Vishnu and asked him why he had forgotten himself, he did not believe it nor did he care. He was satisfied with this little pig family. Then, Shiva killed the sow's body and Vishnu assumed his heavenly form. Then he wondered at his own folly, how he could ever have been satisfied with that pig life.

We do not know any better, so we are satisfied with this limited human life. And some of us want to be gods. Yes, we can be gods, too, by performing good deeds. Then we will enjoy a god body and god powers and god pleasures. But what of that, says Vedanta. Gods also must die. That is not the highest. The highest is immortality. That immortal spark is in us. When we long for that alone, when all our desires are directed to know *That*, then when the body goes, we will enter into the Immortal, because no other desire is there. The emptiness of life is seen. 'He comes into *Me*.'



There is no return to earth for one who has no desires.

Those who have realized their identity with Brahman in samadhi attain immediate liberation. They do not have to go to any place or to return from anywhere, nor are they in the least concerned with time or season, light or darkness. They identify themselves with Brahman, and as such they are bodiless, free from body-consciousness, even during their life.

There was a king in India (in olden times) named Janaka. Though ruling his kingdom, this king was a true jnani. He realized at all times that he was the Spirit. And he was not in the least attached to this world. He ruled because it was his duty. But otherwise he cared not to possess anything. This king showed in his life at every instance that he was the Spirit and not body and therefore he was called Videha, 'the bodiless'. And really these jnanis do not care in the least for their body. The realization that they are the Spirit has become so strong that the body is to them what a dress or a coat is to us. They may keep it neat and clean and in good health if they please, but they are not troubled about it. There is a shloka in Sanskrit which reads, 'In ditch or in river, in churchyard or in field, wherever the leaf may fall, what is that to the tree? Like the destruction of a leaf, a flower or a fruit, is the destruction of the body, senses, mind and all. The Atman stays always in the ever-blissful state. He remains like the tree.' This is said of the *jivanmuktas*, those who are free even during their lifetime.

The *jivanmuktas* do not identify themselves with the body; to them body is like a shadow that follows them and moves of its own momentum. Such yogis have reached the ocean of nectar. 'Just as flowing rivers disappear in the ocean, quitting their names and forms, even so the sage, freed from name and form, goes to the shining Purusha, who is greater than the greatest.'<sup>4</sup>

To reach that state requires long and sin-

cere practice. Once Swami Turiyanandaji told me an experience he had in his youth. He was then practising this Vedantic idea of bodilessness. He was always repeating 'So'ham, so'ham; I am the Spirit, I am He.' One morning while taking his daily bath in the river, he saw a crocodile but a little distance off. Following his first impulse, he swam to the shore and was about to run to safety, when he suddenly remembered his 'I am He.' Then he stopped. 'What am I doing?' He thought. 'Day and night I repeat that I am the Spirit and now I run to save my life. How can I die? I am the Spirit. Why should I care then for my body? That is not living the truth, I am a hypocrite.' And then he went back into the water and finished his ablutions in the usual way, without hastening in the least. And when he was ready and left the water, the crocodile disappeared. These are the great souls, the mahatmas, the salt of the earth. Of such it is said, 'Sometimes naked, sometimes like mad, now as a scholar, again like a fool. Here a rebel, there a saint, thus they appear on the earth, the Paramahamsas.'

Then, there is the path of the ignorant. But we will not speak of that now. We will carry with us that beautiful picture of the Paramahamsas, the free souls.

It is in the course of His answer to Arjuna's last question that Sri Krishna speaks of the two paths by which souls go after death. The question was this: How can one go to the Lord when departing from this world? It is the life-to-come after this life that we are all so very anxious about. That secret, that profound mystery, is a mighty power in this world. And it has given birth to all the religions and philosophies existing today.

First we must understand that this life is not all of our existence. We must understand that when we close our career on earth, only one page of the book of life is finished. Much has gone before we came to this page and much is to follow. The soul is eternal and it is studying this book of life. When the study is

finished, when the contents of this book are mastered, then it is laid aside as having served its purpose. That means liberation. We have experienced all there is to be experienced and the soul returns to its eternal abode of Peace. The play is over. We have played our part; we have done our share; we have enjoyed it (notwithstanding the hard knocks and bruises) and now the soul becomes a spectator. That is the first thing to understand.

Next, Sri Krishna says, there are two paths for the soul to travel by after death. One path means simply a temporary rest. We are tired and are sent to the bench. We must stop our play for a while to gather new strength, to rest our tired limbs. Then when the call comes we have to go back and mix once more in the game. Many are like that. They are anxious to go back. But others have had enough. They have outgrown this play stage. They have found something superior, far greater than knocking about on the field of play. They do not wish to return. They go by another path. They leave the playgrounds and go to the Lord.

Knowing this, we can choose for ourselves which way to go. If we want the world, its pleasures and its sorrows (for we have to accept both, if we want the one), then we must perform good deeds, live a righteous life and we will travel by the dark path, which in time will lead us back to our playground. That path goes in a circle. But do we want God? Then go by the straight path, the path of Light. It ends in the ocean of Bliss, entering which we shall never desire to return. That will be the end of our play. So Arjuna, if you want to go to the Lord, if you have had enough of the world-play, go by the path of Light. That is the path

by which the jnanis go, the yogis, the great souls.

The other path is the path of darkness. 'Smoke, night-time, the fortnight of the waning moon .... Departing by that path the yogi returns.' These souls will be guided by diverse spirits to different spheres. It is the path of the karmis, who perform good deeds in order that they may enjoy heaven after death. After enjoying their reward in heaven they will be born again.

We know how light and darkness are often associated in our life and minds with moral good and evil. And it is therefore not strange that the idea should have arisen that after death the good are guided by bright spirits to realms of light, whereas the wicked are guided by spirits of darkness. Agni, fire, represents the dual nature of the world. Its flame is bright and light and stands for virtue and goodness, and smoke represents darkness or evil. Both are connected with fire and we can choose whichever we want. So also day and night, and waxing and waning moon may stand for good and evil.

Performance of religious and other ceremonies for the sake of duty alone leads gradually to liberation, proceeding from higher to higher spheres. When these ceremonies are performed with some special object in view, they secure residence in transitory celestial spheres where that object is attained. Doing that which is forbidden by sacred authority leads to abodes of suffering. Those who are devoid of faith, devotion and spiritual wisdom go to the land of the spirits and then return to earth. These are cosmic laws and as the cosmos is eternal so are its laws eternal. Sri Krishna says in the next verse:

**26. Verily these bright and dark paths of the world are considered eternal. One leads to non-return, by the other one returns.**

These paths, *devayana* and *pitriyana*, are part of samsara, and as samsara is eternal, so are these paths. *Devayana* is the path of light by which go those who seek for

wisdom. Its course is marked throughout by bright objects, while *pitriyana* is the path of darkness, the path of desire and ignorance, and its course is dark all the way. In the *Isha*

*Upanishad* we find a prayer where Agni (the god of light) is addressed by the departing soul: 'O Agni (Bright One)! Lead us by the good path. O God! Thou knowest all our

deeds, remove all evil from us.<sup>5</sup> We must know the two paths and then must live in such a way that we may go by the path of light. We read in the next verse:

**27. No yogi, O son of Pritha, is deluded after knowing these paths. Therefore, O Arjuna, be thou steadfast in yoga, at all times.**

When the yogi has realized in his meditation the distinction between the mortal, perishable body and the immortal Soul, then all thirst for physical life and pleasure vanishes. Then there is no more clinging to material things; the soul thirsts for freedom alone. Knowing that one of the paths leads to samsara, bondage, and the other to moksha, freedom, the yogi takes the path leading to liberation and rejects the other. He is no longer deluded by the thought that heaven is the highest goal and worshipping the gods would save him from rebirth. He knows the result of actions and he also knows that wisdom or love inspired by the highest motives and purest understanding alone leads to the supreme Spirit. Through the bright path he

will enter Bliss eternal. Then he is free. But should he *choose* to return to the world to help humanity, he can do so, *knowing the path*. He is then conscious of what he does. He is not forced back like others, by the dark path. Knowledge frees, desire binds.

Therefore, O Arjuna, be steadfast in yoga. Be a man, be your own master, be free. Rise above all bondage and then you can choose your own path. Then you will know what you are doing. You need not grope in the dark anymore.

It is through yoga that the highest is reached. By single-minded devotion to God alone, we reach the abode of peace. There is none greater than the yogi. Sri Krishna says in the next and last verse of this chapter:

**28. Whatever meritorious effect is declared (in the scriptures) to accrue from (the study of) the Vedas, (the performance of) sacrifices, (the practice of) austerities and gifts, having known *this*, the yogi rises above it all and attains to the primeval supreme Abode.**

Whatever fruit of merit is declared by the scriptures to be attainable when the Vedas are properly studied, when the sacrifices are performed in all their parts, when austerities are well practised—beyond all this multitude of fruits rises the yogi who rightly understands and follows the teaching imparted by the Lord in His answers to the seven questions of Arjuna. And the yogi then attains the highest abode of Ishvara, which existed even from the beginning. He attains Brahman, the cause of all, the Imperishable, nirvana, ever unaffected by the creation or destruction of the universe.

With this verse, the chapter ends. It is one of the most difficult chapters of the *Gita*. It teaches the highest love and devotion. The

first six chapters teach the law of karma and work without attachment to result. Here, the Lord teaches bhakti, work for love of God: 'Be My servant or be My friend or be My instrument, but you must do some work. Why speak of work always? Because I am Ishvara, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe. I am not nirguna. I want this world and I Myself have to work constantly, otherwise My creation would come to grief. Therefore you must help Me. Then everything will come to you. Whatever you would get from studying scriptures, practising austerities and all that, you will get through love. But do not be idle or foolish. Only be a little patient. Work and have faith in Me. Do not get anxious—that spoils everything. I know what I am doing; every-

thing at its proper time. Go quietly your way and love and remember Me, who am the Mother of the universe. And then have no fear; all will turn out well.'

That is the idea of the *Gita*: to make Arjuna fight. By work, by making the mind strong and steady, following the rules given in the scriptures, man gains wisdom. By the light of

that wisdom he is able to perceive the invisible cause in all visible forms. The wise man sees God everywhere and in everything. Such yogis are never separated from the Lord. They exist in Him and He in them.

This leads us to the next subject, dealt with in the next chapter.

## Chapter 9: The Path of Sovereign Wisdom and Sovereign Secret

The ninth chapter begins with Brahma-jnana, pointing out that jnana yoga is the direct route to Brahman. In the eighth chapter was declared the yoga of concentration (*dhāraṇā*): closing the gates of the senses and concentrating the mind on the heart and rising through the *suṣumṇā* to the place between the eyebrows. The result of such meditation, we have seen, is the attainment of Brahman in course of time, passing thus through realms of fires, light and so on. This is the path from which there is no return to earth. But this yoga of concentration is a very difficult practice and requires special conditions. Few are

able to carry out this practice successfully. Is there then no hope for those who are not able to practise this difficult matter of concentration?

Yes, there is hope. There is another path, which also leads to moksha. This is the royal way, the highest, and is called Brahmajnana, the knowledge and realization of God the Absolute. 'I shall tell you about it,' says the Lord to Arjuna, 'because you are a fit disciple.' You have no evil tendencies and you do not doubt my words. You accept my teaching. I shall therefore tell you about this *rāja-vidyā*, kingly Knowledge.

### 1. The Blessed Lord said:

**Now I shall declare to thee, who art without evil thought, this most profound secret wisdom combined with realization, knowing which thou shalt be freed from evil.**

Now, after having told you in the preceding chapters about the goal and the means of reaching it, I shall tell you about another path by which Brahman may be known. It is a most profound secret, but I can tell it to you because your mind is pure and free from evil thoughts.'

What a glorious state is that of Arjuna, to be told the truth by the Lord Himself! But he fully deserves it. The Lord says, 'I cannot tell this to all, but I can tell it to you because you don't have evil thoughts.' How wonderful, to be without evil thought. Some way or other we may manage to go through life without committing many evil deeds, at least not

openly and publicly. But to be without evil thought, who could say that of himself? Never to be jealous, envious and hateful even in thought—that is remarkable. Then the mind indeed must be filled with the Spirit; for so long as there is worldliness in the mind, evil thoughts must arise. Arjuna lived *in* the world, but he was not *of* the world. He was like the lotus, which though growing in the mire, holds its beautiful head above the mire. Others are like vultures, as Ramakrishna used to say. The vulture flies high up in the sky, in the purest air, but its eyes are constantly watching for carcasses. Some men talk high philosophy and high doctrines but their thoughts are very



low and evil. But not so Arjuna.

What is that great secret that the Lord will declare? It is the secret of Brahmajnana, Wisdom and its realization. It is *vijnana*, the direct perception of Truth. The Lord calls it a secret because it is known to very few and should not be communicated to the evil-minded. They will only cavil at it or misinterpret it and use it to do harm to themselves and to others. It is a great mystery, until it is well known.

The knowledge regarding nature and the knowledge of the Spirit is the most mysterious of all. If you have mastered this secret you will be free from all evil because it is the road to freedom. It leads one beyond samsara, beyond existence. It is the only direct path; and for you, who can follow it, the quickest of all paths. Listen further how grand this knowledge is.

**2. This is the King of sciences, the King of secrets, the supreme Purifier. It is realized by direct perception and is endowed with (great) merit, very easy to perform and of imperishable nature.**

This is the King of sciences, the most brilliant of all, the highest, because it is of the greatest benefit to mankind, more beneficial than any other science. Those who are masters in this science know all that there is to be known. All other knowledge is insignificant compared to jnana, the science of the Soul, which brings the highest result. It is for this reason that greater reverence and respect is shown to those who know Brahman, the Truth, than to any other persons of learning. So also it is the King of secrets, the deepest, the most profound of mysteries. Other mysteries may be solved with the help of external means. But this mystery is more profound than any other. To solve it one has to renounce external means; one has to dive deep into one's own soul. There alone the secret will be revealed. And it is also the greatest of all purifiers. How does it purify? By removing the accumulated results of acts performed during endless incarnations. All our past karma is burned up by this knowledge of Brahman. All our deeds—good, bad and indifferent—committed during thousands of lives are uprooted. No result of them is left. Our debts are

paid instantly and we are free.

Moreover this Brahmajnana can be realized. As we realize the feeling of pleasure and pain, so the Truth can become an immediate perception and experience.

Many things are taught in shrutis and smritis, and those can be known through our understanding, by the power of intellect. But this jnana can be *experienced*. It works a transformation; it is a becoming, a rebirth. Through this knowledge we become new beings. Yes, it is of immense merit, for it teaches about the Atman, how to know ourselves, how to realize our own divine nature.

But if it has all these wonderful qualities, then it must be very difficult to attain. Not so says the Lord. It is very easy to acquire. It does not call for difficult practices or severe austerities, as do some other paths. And the greatest of all—it is imperishable. Every other cause is perishable and so too is its effect. But Brahmajnana is eternal and its effect is therefore everlasting. That knowledge of Brahman, of the Atman, results in mukti, or nirvana, which has no end. Therefore, this knowledge is certainly worth acquiring. But, says Sri Krishna:

**3. O scorcher of thy foes, those who have no faith in this dharma do not attain to Me, but return to the path of rebirth and death.**

Those who have no faith in this dharma, in this religion that teaches about the im-

mortality of the Soul; those who believe that the body is all there is of man; those athe-

ists who do not believe in any higher power (call it what you please); those who are sinful, unlawful and full of passion—they do not attain me when they pass out of this life. They return again and again to this world till they change their ways and beliefs.

We have seen that where our heart is and our thought, love and attachment are, there we go because our thoughts are the forerunners, and we have to follow them. Therefore those who do not believe in a life hereafter, who think that there is no soul whose welfare need give them the least concern, who think there is no absolute Being to aspire after—they come back to earth. For in this world all their hopes and thoughts are bound up. Of course

**4. By Me, in my unmanifest form, is all this world pervaded; all beings exist in Me, but I do not dwell in them.**

The entire universe is pervaded by the Spirit. God is Spirit and as Spirit, that is in His highest unmanifest form He is present in every being, quite invisible to the senses. Neither can any instrument detect Him, for He is subtler than the subtlest, finer than the finest. He is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses, subtler than the ether in the air. And in Me of unmanifest form all beings exist. From Brahmā, the Creator, down to the minutest form of life, all exist in Me. It is through Me as the Self of all that beings have their individual existence. I, the absolute Existence, the *sat*, am their real existence. I am the *sat* in everybody. Still see the wonder and mystery: I do not dwell in them, I am free from contact with them. I am the Self, the Consciousness, the innermost Essence. They are what they are, in virtue of Me. But I am not contained in them. I remain always unmodified Consciousness. I do not take form like corporeal things. It only appears to be so. It is like ether or space. You cannot say, here is a cupful of space. So by taking hold of a person you cannot say, there is a measure of Spirit. The

there may be very good people who are out-and-out atheists. They do not get free from samsara, but they will be born on earth under favourable conditions; while atheists with evil tendencies will meet with miserable conditions when they return.

These three verses are, as it were, an introduction to prepare Arjuna for the doctrine that will now be expounded. By extolling the teaching Sri Krishna has aroused in him that curiosity and desire to know the Truth, which will enable him to listen till the very end with concentrated attention. It is only thus that this difficult and sublime subject can be comprehended.

The teaching begins in the next verse:

Spirit cannot be divided. It pervades everywhere. There is no place the size of an atom where the Spirit is not.

The Spirit is one uninterrupted omnipresent whole. Name and form alone make an apparent distinction. It is by name and form that this universe is split up and divided. But what is name and form? A creation, an activity of the mind. The whole universe exists through the universal Mind. But individually it exists through our personal mind. Remove these ideas of name and form, time and space; wipe the mind clean of all these superstitions, and the Truth, the Spirit, remains. Wake up from sleep and the dream disappears.

*(To be continued)*

## References

1. *Acts*, 17.27-8.
2. *Prashna Upanishad*, 4.7.
3. *Ibid.*, 4.10-1.
4. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.2.8.
5. *Isha Upanishad*, 18.

When we get something for nothing, we haven't had the bill for it yet.

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# Yoga Darshana

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

Every nation, just as each individual, has its own vocation. That is its special duty. India's vocation is spirituality. There is a criticism that this preoccupation with spirituality renders Indians indolent and dreamy. This complaint is neither totally correct nor completely wrong. The outlook of the young and that of the aged cannot but be different. Everything is pleasant for the boyish, discordant to the young and painful to the old. This world is true and fine to the Jews and the Muslims; to the Buddhists and Christians, it is painful and sinful.

## The Hindu View of Life

Among religions, Hinduism is the senior-most. The Hindu looks at life in its totality. To him the world is not an eternal truth. Nor does he consider it full of pleasure or full of misery. He gives it a place it deserves, not beyond that. He knows the world is *anitya* and *asukha*, ephemeral and miserable. He also knows that the world is an occasion to achieve an ultimate goal. That goal is realization of God, he discerns. Wealth and enjoyment are what you gain from the world. The Hindu does not consider them either as ultimate goals or as totally contemptible. If they are helpful and lead to the ultimate goal, they are welcome, they are righteous. The Hindu welcomes wealth and enjoyment within the bounds of ethics and emancipation. He does not accept them as ultimate ends. That is what makes him comparatively indifferent and renders him equipoised in happiness and misery.

## Darshanas

Dharma and moksha, ethics and emancipation, are not cognizable to the senses. The Vedas are the authority for them. 'Dharma-

*brahmani vedaikavedye*; Dharma and Brahman can be known only from the Vedas.' Many a system of philosophy has taken shape based on the Vedas. They are called *darshanas*. *Darshana* means 'seeing' in common parlance. Realizing the ultimate Reality as clearly and as surely as we see worldly objects with the eyes, is *darshana*. To Indians philosophy is realization and not rational ratiocinations. Those that accept the authority of the Vedas are called *āstika-darśanas*, orthodox systems. There are systems that do not accept the Vedas. They also uphold dharma.

## The Six Darshanas

Orthodox systems are Sankhya and Yoga, Nyaya and Vaiseshika, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Kapila, Patanjali, Gautama, Kanada, Jaimini and Badarayana are their exponents respectively. These are joined in three pairs, due to their approach. For us now the object of discussion is Yoga. Yoga is a companion to Sankhya. Kapila is the father of philosophy. Because he analysed and categorized all the physical phenomena it is called Sankhya.<sup>1</sup> Since Kapila fixed the number of categories as twenty-five, his system came to be called Sankhya, the system based on *sankhyā*, number. According to the Sankhyas, the ultimate categories are two: Prakriti and Purusha. The whole universe is the transformation of Prakriti.

## Sankhya-based Twenty-five Categories

From Prakriti comes *mahat tattva*; from that is born *ahankāra*. The five *jñānendriyas* (organs of knowledge), five *karmendriyas* (organs of action) and the mind form the eleven senses; the five *tanmātras*, called *śabda*, *sparśa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha*—these sixteen are born

from *ahañkāra*. From the group of sixteen, from the five *tanmātras* are born the five gross elements, *prthvi*, *ap*, *tejas*, *vāyu* and *ākāśa*, bringing the total to twenty-one. Prakriti and her modifications, *mahat* and *ahañkāra*, add up to twenty-four. With Purusha, the total is twenty-five.<sup>2</sup>

Purushas are innumerable and are different in each body. Vedantins more or less accept this analysis of the Sankhya. Considering Prakriti and Purusha as eternal principles is not acceptable to the Vedantins. Sankhya does not accept a creator God.

Prakriti undergoes these modifications for the sake of Purusha's *darshana* (enjoyment) and isolation. Purusha is inactive, lame. Prakriti is inert, blind. The lame climbs on the shoulders of the blind and leads the blind.

***Yoga means joining. Here it means the joining with God. Darshana means seeing. Realizing God as clearly as one sees sense objects with the eyes, is darshana. Yoga is the goal, and the practical disciplines to attain that goal is called Yoga-darshana.***

When the Purusha comes to know that he is different from Prakriti, he discards her. That Purusha attains *kaivalya*, freedom. Prakriti continues her drama for the sake of other Purushas and thus the drama of creation goes on.<sup>3</sup>

### The Yoga Philosophy

Sankhya being atheistic, Yoga was propounded to supply that want. It is designated *śeśvara sāñkhya*, Sankhya with God. In Sankhya, *kaivalya* is attained through the knowledge of the categories. Yoga is empirical. The yogi accepts the categories of Sankhya. But he posits God above them.

Yoga means joining. Here it means the joining with God. *Darshana* means seeing. Realizing God as clearly as one sees sense ob-

jects with the eyes, is *darshana*. Yoga is the goal, and the practical disciplines to attain that goal is called *Yoga-darshana*. Based on its propounder, it is known as *Pātañjala-darśana*; and based on the disciplines, it is called *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. Of the eight disciplines, the first two, *yama* and *niyama*, are meant for the purification of the mind, speech and body. These are essential for all the other systems also. Therefore leaving out these two as common property, Yoga is also referred to as *Ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*, Yoga with six disciplines. All the other systems except Mimamsa being intellectual in procedure, Yoga is practical. Therefore, the other systems also rely on the Yoga disciplines to attain their goals. Thus Yoga has become the common property of all. Not only that; it has a dimension transcending the barriers of religions.

In June 1981, there was a Hindu-Christian conference in Rajpur in the Himalayas. During the discussion the question as to what each religion can adopt from the others was raised. The Christians proposed that the *vānaprasthāśrama* and Yoga practices of Hinduism can be gainfully adopted by them. It is a set of disciplines that can be followed both by the theist and the atheist.

### The Yoga Sutras

There is difference of opinion whether the author of Panini's *Mahābhāṣya* and the writer of the *Yoga Sūtras* is one and the same Patanjali. It is conjectured that the author of the sutras lived between 300 BC and 300 AD. The sutras of Patanjali are the primary texts of Yoga Darshana. There are four parts in it known as 'Samādhipāda', 'Sādhanapāda', 'Vibhūtipāda' and 'Kaivalyapāda'. There are fifty-one sutras in the first part, fifty-five in the second, fifty-six in the third and thirty-three in the last, 195 in all.



### First Chapter: Samādhipāda

'*Atha yogānuśāsanaṃ*' is the opening sutra. *Atha*, 'then', is indicative of auspiciousness and the competence of the students. All who desire to benefit by this course are qualified to take up this study. Only those who are incompetent and indifferent, the restless and the deluded are debarred. This is an *anuśāsana*, a re-statement of an age-old teaching. The starting point of every branch of knowledge is Ishvara, the first teacher. The *Yajñavalkya Smṛiti* says that Hiranyagarbha is the first instructor of Yoga.<sup>4</sup> The writer of the *Sutras* claims only that he is propounding the ancient teaching handed down through past teachers beginning from Hiranyagarbha and tested by his own personal experience.

Next he defines what Yoga is: '*Yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhah.*' *Chitta*, the mind-stuff, is basically pure. When it is under *tamas*, indolence, it becomes deluded; under *rajas* it becomes restless; and under *sattva* it becomes restrained, that is calm and clear. Yoga is the methodology of rendering the deluded and restless mind clear and pure after stilling all its waves and whirls. What is the use of so rendering it? '*Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam*; When the mind-stuff is calm and clear with all the waves stilled, then Purusha, the seer, remains in his own isolated state.' This is the ultimate goal of the yogi. That Purusha is no more affected by mental vibrations. The Purusha shines in his own glory like the sun in a cloudless sky.

One opts for a course only after knowing the ultimate goal it promises. People will be ready to give a try to it in case they find it desirable. Therefore, in order to induce people to take it up, the end fruit is declared at the outset. Continuing, the disturbing vibrations that stand in the way and the means of clearing

them are stated. The teacher sounds a warning at the very start that this requires prolonged, sustained practice.

Yoga is a means to attain *kaivalya*. The main discipline in it is the control of the mind. The system prescribes specific disciplines for it. Many consider it as a short cut for selfish ends discarding the rigorous practices. In spite of the warnings sounded by the teachers that it is dangerous to take to it without the direct control and guidance of an experienced teacher, some resort to pranayama and some other practices on their own and find themselves in mental disturbance, insomnia and so on.

***Modern science has proved that an atom contains immense power and that infinite energy will be released if the atom is split. If it is split under control, it will shed light; if otherwise, it will bring about the destruction of the world. Similar is the condition of the concentrated mind. If it is used for spiritual purposes, it will set the Purusha free; if for selfish worldly ends, it will land him and others in hell.***

There are several ways to make the mind concentrated. It is easy to fix the mind on an object one likes. If the object of concentration is not sublime, the result will be more harmful than beneficial. The aspirant's aspiration must also be noble. Ravana and other demons had done much more severe *tapas* than the rishis. Because the method they adopted was unscientific and their intention impure, the consequence was harmful to the world as well as to themselves. Modern science has proved that an atom contains immense power and that infinite energy will be released if the atom is split. If it is split under control, it will shed light; if otherwise, it will bring about the de-

struction of the world. Similar is the condition of the concentrated mind. If it is used for spiritual purposes, it will set the Purusha free; if for selfish worldly ends, it will land him and others in hell. Therefore, only that practice which is preceded by the preliminary disciplines such as *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, constancy in practice and dispassion, will bear beneficial fruits. If the practice is intent and constant, the result will be quick. Meditation on God is also a means to concentration.

*Pranava*, Om, is a sound symbol of God. Repetition of *pranava* and dwelling on its meaning is a helpful practice to control the mind. Concentration is the means and samadhi, spiritual absorption, the end. The goal of Yoga is described in the 'Samādhipāda'.

### Second Chapter: Sādhanapāda

The next is 'Sādhanapāda'. 'Control of the body and the senses, repetition of *pranava*, dedication of all action to God—these are called *kriyāyoga*.<sup>5</sup> These are helpful in gaining samadhi and removing the obstacles on the way. The cause of misery is the identification of the Seer and the seen. The cause of identification is *avidyā*, ignorance. To get rid of *avidyā*, one should practise the Yoga disciplines. Control of the body, control of the mind, proper seat, breath control, withdrawal of the mind from sense objects, fixing the mind on an object, prolonged concentration and spiritual absorption—these are the eight limbs of the Yoga system.<sup>6</sup>

Of these, *yama* and *niyama* are the primary disciplines for the fitness of the body, purity of the mind and lofty aspiration. Without attaining firmness in these, the practice of pranayama and so on leads to disaster. That will be like building a house without proper foundation. Yoga will be safe and fruitful only when the body and the mind are brought under control through the practice of *yama* and *niyama*.

The next step is seat. Firm and easy, is the prescription for posture.<sup>7</sup> One should not feel

the weight of the body while practising yoga. 'Keep the body, neck and head in an upright position' is the direction of the *Bhagavadgita*.<sup>8</sup> A posture in which one can remain long without feeling any discomfort should be adopted. Once the posture is fixed, one can take up pranayama. It is of three kinds: *bāhya*, external; *abhyantara*, internal; and *stambha*, arrested. There are differences of duration for these. When the mind is rid of impurities through pranayama, it gains competence for taking up meditation. Then comes *pratyāhāra*, keeping the mind-stuff as itself without allowing it to issue into the forms of the senses. By this the senses come under control. Through *āsana*, pranayama and *pratyāhāra* one gains the control of the senses and the mind. These are the topics dealt with in the 'Sādhanapāda'.

### Third Chapter: Vibhūtipāda

Next is the 'Vibhūtipāda' of Yoga. This part deals with the results. Fixing the mind on the chosen deity or the heart or the tip of the nose is known as *dhāraṇā*, concentration. The flow of the mind uninterrupted to the object of meditation is called *dhyana*, meditation. When one is aware of only the object of meditation to the exclusion of every other awareness, it is samadhi. *Dhāraṇā*, *dhyana* and samadhi are only the different degrees of concentration. All three together is called *saṁnyama*, perfect control. Once *saṁnyama* is attained, one gets *prajñāloka*, the light of knowledge. This is the ultimate goal of the practice of yoga. The yogis get various miracles depending upon the various objects chosen for meditation. Miracles are the proofs of the effectiveness of the discipline. If they are used for selfish purposes, they will be lost. Not only that, the aspirant will go astray thereby. The master sounds the warning: 'Supernatural powers are hindrances in samadhi and miracles in common life.'<sup>9</sup>

When the buddhi-stuff and the Purusha become equally purified, *kaivalya* is attained.<sup>10</sup> When the *chitta* becomes pure with all the vi-

brations stilled in samadhi, the Purusha gets isolated and shines in his own glory, freed from the bondage of ignorance.

#### Fourth Chapter: Kaivalyapāda

Next is the 'Kaivalyapāda'. With the attainment of samadhi, all worries and karmas come to an end. The yogi becomes omniscient. So far as he is concerned, the evolution of Prakriti has stopped. He is alone, free. Prakriti continues her course for other bound souls. The purpose of Prakriti is to provide enjoyment and emancipation to Purusha. To the isolated, Prakriti is destroyed; it continues for the others.<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

Yoga is a spiritual discipline. A jiva reeling under the threefold miseries, in order to be freed from their clutches, seeks the advice of an experienced teacher. Achieving purity of the body and senses through the practice of *yama* and *niyama* under his instructions, and through *āsana*, pranayama and *pratyāhāra* gets rid of all the mental impurities, fixes his mind on the chosen deity and attains samadhi and thereby becomes isolated and freed. This spiritual path is a lifelong discipline. Some of these disciplines can be practised by even common people with profit. Common man in his mad rush for money and pleasure is on the brink of insanity.

Man's mind is likened to a monkey writhing in pain, mad with drink, possessed by a ghost and stung by a scorpion. How to control this monkey of a mind? Man has lost even the gift of sleep. The number of inmates in lunatic asylums is on the increase. Yoga can give relief to him. Keep away from the bad habits; keep the mind and senses under control as far as possible; repeat the name of God fixing the mind on the chosen deity—then the mind will calm down. If one practises this daily with diligence, the tensions and conflicts of the mind will come down.

One can sleep without the help of pills. And in course of time, one will progress in the path of spiritual life. One need not practise complicated postures and breathing exercises—they require the guidance of a guru. Thus by the practice of simple yoga disciplines one can achieve practical results and unseen merits. One can make life simple and purposeful. The *Gīta* says, 'Catch hold of the running mind slowly (by degrees) and fix it on the Self. Think of nothing else. It will run away again and again. Catch hold of it again and again and fix it on the Self.'<sup>12</sup>

Even a little of this practice will save one from great fear. (2.40) Therefore, 'Do thou become a yogi, O Arjuna,' says Sri Krishna in the *Gīta*. (6.46) \*

#### References

1. *Samyag-vidiçya khyāyante prakāṭikriyante tattvāni prakṛiti-puruṣa-padārtharūpaṇi yasmin tat iti sāṅkhya.*
2. *Prakṛter-mahānstatō'haṅkāra-stasmād gaṇāśca ṣoḍaśakah; Tasmādapi ṣoḍaśakāt-pañcabhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni. —Sāṅkhyakārikā, 22.*
3. *Puruṣasya darśanārthaṁ kaivalyārthaṁ pradhānasya, pangvandhavād-ubhayorapi samyogastakṛtaḥ sargaḥ.*
4. *Hiraṇyagarbho yogasya vaktā nānyaḥ purātanaḥ.*
5. *Tapah svādhyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ. —Yoga Sutras, 2.1.*
6. *Yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhaḥo'ṣṭāvāṅgāni. —Ibid., 2.29.*
7. *Sthira-sukham-āsanam. —Ibid., 2.46.*
8. *Samaṁ kāya śirogrīvam. —Bhagavadgīta, 6.13.*
9. *Te samādhāvopasargaḥ vyutthāne siddhayaḥ. —Yoga Sutras, 3.38.*
10. *Sattvapuruṣayoḥ śuddhisāmye kaivalyamiti. —Ibid., 3.56.*
11. *Kṛtārthaṁ prati naṣṭamapy-anaṣṭam tad-anya-sādhāraṇatvāt. —Ibid., 2.22.*
12. *Gīta, 6.25-6.*

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# Buddhism in Contemporary China

DR ALAN HUNTER

## Decline of the Tradition

From about 100 AD onwards, Mahayana Buddhism, including its texts and philosophy, monastic traditions, icons and popular beliefs, spread from India throughout China. The religion gradually became indigenized, notably in the famous Chan (Japanese Zen) sect, which adopted ideas and techniques from Taoism. Until the twentieth century, Buddhism underwent periods of ebb and flow. It never fully became a national or state religion, although its influence on Chinese society was profound. The monastic population was always considerable, and in every generation some intellectuals at least maintained the study of classical Buddhist philosophy.

During the first half of the twentieth century the religion was in a state of decline. Nonetheless there were serious attempts to revitalize Buddhism, which succeeded in maintaining its monastic tradition. There were about half a million monks and 250,000 nuns in the 1930s, inhabiting over two hundred thousand monastic buildings. Monasteries were of two main kinds. At one extreme were the large public monasteries (*shifang zonglin*) that belonged to the community of monks in China. There were around three hundred of these, home to some 25,000 monks, who formed the monastic elite. It was here that the great orthodox traditions of scriptural study, austerity and meditation were maintained. At the other extreme were much smaller institutions, often housing only one or two persons, which belonged personally to a monk or a group of monks. Some were remote retreats, while others were scarcely distinguishable from the temples of folk religion, and served as ritual centres for the general population.

The number of lay believers is impossible to ascertain. The question of definition arises, because many, perhaps the great majority of Chinese people, at some time or other went to temples or lit incense before a Buddha, or attended ceremonies for the dead. Most did so merely out of custom, and equally happily went to Taoist or popular temples. They were rarely committed to any particular faith. Since there were no regulations for formal affiliation, one cannot determine how many people should be counted Buddhists. One researcher estimated that 'serious' devotees numbered around five million, or one per cent of the population, in the 1930s.

After the Communist revolution of 1949, government agencies implemented a programme of control in religious circles; those who refused to cooperate were exposed to serious consequences, usually prison or labour camp, sometimes death. Many monasteries had been important landholders, and were accustomed to subsidizing their activities by income from rent and corvées. In the land reforms of the early 1950s they lost almost all their property, and their economic structure collapsed. Many monks returned to lay life, under pressure from cadres or through poverty or because their monasteries were closed or through choice. Some were sent to labour camps, many were maltreated, others executed. Buddhist publications were obliged to change their contents to support the party line rather than preach orthodox Buddhism. Lay believers were too frightened to visit temples. With increasing speed the whole Buddhist establishment crumbled.

By the time of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 there were no publications and few surviving monasteries. It appears that they had

been kept alive that long only because the government used its tolerance of Buddhism as a diplomatic tool when dealing with Asian neighbours such as Nepal and Burma, and to keep Taiwan out of international organizations. Even these remnants soon ceased to function. Radical leaders incited Red Guards to thoroughly destroy any residues of traditional society, and hundreds of religious institutions were wrecked, along with libraries, art collections, private households and university departments. A handful of city temples were placed under military protection and escaped some of the turmoil; others in remote locations suffered less systematic vandalism. But by 1978 temples and monasteries existed only as empty shells or had been converted into factories and warehouses. Doubtless many believers kept some kind of personal faith in private, and there was a limited amount of academic activity concerning Buddhist history, but to outside observation at least, Buddhism was dead.

### The Religious Revival

But now, Buddhism is again flourishing throughout the country. In a recent article 'Tibetan Buddhism Tempts Spiritual Chinese' (*China Review*, No. 23, Autumn/Winter 2002) the journalist Bill Smith notes that many Chinese not only follow their traditional schools of Buddhist thought, but have also become increasingly engaged with Tibetan Buddhism. Even apart from the efforts of Buddhists themselves, Chinese academic institutions are producing high-quality publications and translations into Chinese, for example of the works of Tsong Khapa, founder of the Gelugpa School.

So what has changed? In 1978, Deng Xiaoping came to power. As is well known, his radical agenda led to profound reforms in economic and political life. Very soon, his government announced that, with certain restrictions, religious life would again be permitted in China. The past twenty-five years has seen a tremendous revival of all the major reli-

gions—Taoism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. Although there were some failures and manipulation concerning the implementation of this policy, by and large the Chinese government has adhered to it.

People outside China are sometimes misled by stereotypes that could have been justified twenty or thirty years back, but which are now irrelevant. One example is the notion that the Chinese state somehow still implements a monolithic, totalitarian control over religious activities. In fact, religious life in China is for the most part remarkably free. There is now virtually no state control over Buddhism as far as the visitor is concerned: the authorities are perfectly happy for anyone to wander around the monasteries freely, talk with monks, receive their blessings and look at the antiquities.

There are probably two things only that the visitor should avoid. One is discussing politics in detail, except with people one knows. The other is that one should be extremely wary of contacting opposition, pro-Dalai Lama monks or nuns in Tibet. Unless you know exactly what you are doing, you are likely to cause a lot of trouble both for them and for yourself.

There are still no reliable estimates of the total number of monastics in China. One recent estimate is that there may be around 50,000 monks and 40,000 nuns, which presumably makes it the biggest monastic population of any country in the world.

Incidentally, nuns in China are, and, as far as I know, usually have been, in totally independent institutions, running their own affairs and convents; unlike in some other Buddhist traditions, there is no male hierarchy over them. One of the great success stories of recent years was the rebuilding and spiritual renewal of Jiming Temple in Nanjing, entirely managed by nuns after a terrible period of destruction in the Cultural Revolution.



### Pilgrimage to Buddhist China

China has its sacred geography, comparable perhaps to that of India in terms of antiquity and scope. For countless generations, Chinese have built up pilgrimage and retreat centres, both in cities and remote rural areas. They have been the residences of monks, saints and sages; and visited by the pious. Is it feasible for a non-Chinese speaker to make a meaningful pilgrimage to Buddhist China today? I would answer, emphatically, certainly yes. However, some preparations are advisable. The major tourist agencies will happily sell you tours to Buddhist sites, but they assume that foreign tourists are interested in showcases. These are usually historical sites that have been smartened up and renovated, often probably beyond all recognition of what they were originally. One buys a rather expensive entrance ticket and is ushered through at speed to admire late-twentieth-century reproductions of traditional art and architecture, admittedly elegant, but essentially cold and empty. After half an hour, one will be in the coach headed for the next item: a museum perhaps or a new concert hall.

To see contemporary Buddhism at a deeper level, it is advisable to read one or two of the English-language publications avail-

able. For example, I would recommend Martin Palmer's *Travels through Sacred China* (London: Thorsons, 1996). Palmer gives a detailed account of Chinese Buddhist and Taoist symbols and signs, a good introduction to the iconography one is likely to see. The second half of the book includes a gazetteer of sacred places, including temples, monasteries, mountains, caves and grottoes. More technical, academic publications are also available.

Having decided on a few places to visit, the visitor now needs to secure the services of an interpreter. Official tourist guides are generally honest, pleasant and well-informed people; but they may often simply fail to understand what a devout traveller may be looking for. He or she would simply not conform to what ninety-nine per cent of other tourists may want from their trip. In my opinion a better option is to find an English-speaking student or young academic with a serious interest in Buddhism. Many such young people will be happy to make some pocket money by acting as interpreter and guide, and they will relate immediately to your requirements. Outside the country, academic departments of Sinology will often be happy to put you in contact with their counterparts in China. Alternatively, one can simply ask around in big cities

like Shanghai, Beijing and Nanjing. In the great Chinese universities, there are now departments of Buddhist studies, Sanskrit, Asian philosophy, Asian religions and so on, with dedicated, well-motivated staff and students. They are usually delighted to make contact with overseas visitors. Another possibility would be to visit the various Buddhist academic centres in Hong Kong, for example



Entrance to Ling Gu Temple, Nanjing

Fat Yuen on Waterloo Road. Staff there have a comprehensive knowledge of current Buddhist activities in the People's Republic and can offer good advice for the traveller. They also stock a wide range of books, artwork and tapes.

### Temples in China

The easiest temples to visit are obviously those in the major cities: there are fine examples in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Xiamen, Xi'an and many other places. You should be aware that very often the best temples from a religious point of view, those with sincere, long-standing monks and groups of lay believers, are generally not those promoted by the tourist agencies. That is why you need a knowledgeable local person to help. For example in Shanghai, the most elegant and heavily promoted temple is that of the Jade Buddha (*Yufosi*). Many local devotees prefer to go to the Peaceful Temple, *Jing'ansi*, which teaches Buddhism of the esoteric school and which has a fine collection of icons not usually on public display; or more likely, they would go to smaller buildings in out-of-the-way suburbs, where they know a *shifu* (guru, or senior teacher).

The majority of Buddhist temples follow a similar scheme throughout China, albeit with many variations. The great entrance hall usually contains four guardian deities and an image of the typically Chinese laughing Buddha, a fat, jolly personage depicting Maitreya, Buddha of the future. In the popular interpretation, he promises a future Incarnation who will bring peace and prosperity to all. To the more devout, he is a

symbol of the bliss they may achieve through their spiritual practice.

The main hall usually contains three enormous statues of Lord Buddha, side by side. Depending on the tradition, these may be Buddhas of past, present and future; or Buddha essence, revelation and incarnation; or some other triad. Very often, these statues are exquisite examples of Buddhist art. Some of them are made in China, while others are made in Thailand or elsewhere, and imported. The sides of the main hall are often flanked by eighteen *lohans* (images of enlightened monks), nine on each side, who act as some kind of symbolic intermediary between the human visitor and the deities. And usually at the rear of the main statues, one will find images of Guanyin, the female Avalokitesvara. As with many Indian traditions, Chinese Buddhism is very alert to the Mother Goddess, and to the interplay of male/female deities.

A second main hall often contains a variety of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other deities according to local or sectarian traditions. And on the way, one will often pass through various side halls, corridors, bell towers or other rooms with their own imagery and history.



Devotees offer incense in the courtyard of Ling Gu Temple. Two monks can be seen (one with his back to the camera). Chinese monks usually wear grey or brown robes, to express humility: they say they do not deserve to wear ochre. They may wear ochre robes for formal ceremonies

Most temples also have a shop selling religious books, tapes and art; and a vegetarian restaurant, which in my experience provides usually cleaner and more wholesome fare than an average restaurant.

Finally, many temples have their own 'treasures' which are believed to possess what the Chinese call *ling*, or, approximately, *shakti* in Sanskrit. On a recent visit to Tiantong monastery near Ningbo on the eastern sea-coast, I was shown their four treasures: a meteorite that had fallen into the temple grounds; a spring that had appeared miraculously close to the main hall, which was said to have curative properties; a cooking pot of vast dimensions from which over a thousand monks used to be fed in the monastery's heyday; and a picture of Buddha, whose eyes appear to move and somehow gleam if he recognizes you as a sincere devotee. Whether you consider such things as superstition, I do not know. But they add to the colour, interest and intensity of our religious journeys.

Rather than just wander around the temples, one is always welcome to participate in this colourful, multidimensional theatre. Either by oneself or with assistance, one can purchase incense. The basic ritual is to light a

number of sticks in front of each major hall, pray in the four directions and place the sticks in an incense holder. There are, however, countless variations on this. One can offer candles or fruit also, or one can worship at the shrines, and one can join in the prayer meetings which are usually congregational chanting of Mahayana scriptures, although it is polite to request permission to do so. In my experience, local devotees are extremely pleased to see foreigners take a serious interest.

Perhaps the most rewarding experience is to gain an interview with a senior monk or nun. Unless your Chinese is good, this will be conducted through an interpreter. The whole process I find not dissimilar to meeting a swami or sadhu in India. That is, the meeting may be profound or baffling, entertaining or irritating. It probably all depends on how you approach the person, what kind of mood he is in, the state of your karma, what you had for breakfast that day .... Anyway, at their best, the meetings can be extremely meaningful and the impact can stay with you for years.

All in all, the great thing about such visits is that they teach us that Buddhism is a vibrant, profound reality in contemporary Chinese life. I believe that is a hopeful sign for the whole of Asia.



Early morning at the small shops outside the Ling Gu Temple gate. Soon they will be busy with customers for incense, candles, images, books and tapes

## Publications

The renewed publishing tradition is another sign of religious freedom and revival. Any member of the public can now buy excellent editions of the Buddhist scriptures, and choose between a large number of commentaries and interpretations. They are available both in monastery outlets and in general bookshops in

cities. Several major universities and research institutes now have faculties of religion, philosophy, Tibetology or Asian studies, which produce world-class studies. In addition, there are quite a few national and local journals or newsletters.

A particular surprise may be the recent growth of interest in Hindu philosophy, reflected in recent Chinese translations. The whole of East Asian civilization was profoundly influenced by Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures more than a thousand years ago. Let us hope the efforts of the present generation are equally fruitful.

Xu Fancheng was the major figure in Chinese twentieth-century Sanskrit studies. As a young man in the 1920s, he was closely associated with the revolutionary movement and lived for some time in Europe. Later he went to India, where he stayed for many years and studied Sanskrit deeply, being influenced above all by Sri Aurobindo. He later translated several of Aurobindo's writings into Chinese, which are now available in Chinese bookshops. In 1953 Xu undertook the massive task of translating fifty Upanishads into Chinese, which were printed in a limited edition in 1984 after his return to China. He lived to see their publication by a major press, running to 1130 pages, in 1995, before he passed away a couple of years later. (*Fifty Upanishads*, translated into Chinese by Xu Fancheng (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1995.)

The *Bhagavadgita* was translated by Professor Zhang Bosheng of Beijing University's Faculty of Asian Language and Literature, and first published in the mid-1980s. Professor Zhang mentions

that he consulted the scholarship of Tilak, Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo for his annotations to the text. An excellent feature of the translations of these classics is that the two scholars have established standard modern Chinese equivalents for hundreds of Sanskrit philosophical terms. (*Bhagavad Gita*, translated into Chinese by Zhang Bosheng (Beijing: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1985.)

A volume by Professor Jing Sanlong contains perhaps the first lucid account of classical Vedanta in modern Chinese. The book has an unusual history. Professor Jing's father, who used the pen-name Gao Yang, was a largely self-taught scholar and a great lover of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. As a very private matter, in the Communist era, Gao Yang pursued his studies at home and also conveyed his passion to his son. The present book was thus formulated and started by the father and completed by the son in the late 1990s. It is an astonishing tour-de-force, presenting a detailed account of six schools: Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Not only that, the Professor includes synopses of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*; a chapter on Jain philosophy; and a long section on the Indian sources for Buddhism. Finally the eighty-page appendix describes the struc-



Early morning at Jiming Temple: the front gate is just opening



ture of the Vedas, with many Vedic mantras given in Sanskrit, Roman alphabet transliteration and Chinese. I managed to have a telephone conversation with Professor Jing while I was in China; he was delighted to think that foreign scholars are taking an interest in these efforts. (*Hindu Philosophy and Buddhism*, by Jing Sanlong (Xi'an: Taibai Cultural Press, 2001).)

Finally, Yao Weiqun, who works at the Institute for Research on Foreign Philosophy at Beijing University, has produced translations of the full texts of *Vaisheshika Sutras*, *Padartha Dharma Sangraha*, *Nyaya Sutras*, *Nyaya Kusumanjali*, *Sankhya Sutras*, *Patanjala Yoga Sutras*, *Mimamsa Sutras* and *Brahma Sutras*. These translations are the fruit of ten years' labour. As far as I can tell, Professor Yao has done an outstanding service here, building on the edition of the Upanishads mentioned earlier. This volume (430 pages) confines itself to translation rather than exegesis, with concise technical footnotes. (*Scriptures of Six Classical Indian Schools of Philosophy*, translated into Chinese by Yao Weiqun (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2003).)

It is heartening to know that such books are now available to the public in China. One can only admire the persistence and dedication of these scholars, who laboured for so many years in such difficult conditions for the enlightenment of the Chinese-speaking world. I would also be pleased to hear about any other translations if any reader should know of any.

### Suggestions for the Traveller

In the previous part of this article, we made some comments about city temples. To feel closer to the essence of the religion, however, you need to travel in rural areas. There are numerous monasteries in all the provinces, some of them well-known national institutions, some tiny retreats. Probably the most famous, and in some respects the most interesting, are the four mountains known as

Holy Buddhist Mountains, which, in accordance with traditional cosmology, are in the north, south, east and west of the country. They are each dedicated to a particular bodhisattva. Wutaishan in the north is the dharma field of Wenshu (Sanskrit: Manjushri), and Jiuhuashan in the south is that of Dizang (Kshitigarbha). In the east, a short ferry ride from the city of Ningbo, south of Shanghai, is the island of Putuoshan, devoted to Guanyin (Avalokiteshvara), the bodhisattva of compassion. In the western mountains of Sichuan lies the mountain of Emei, which can be reached by rail from Chengdu. It is sacred to Puxian (Samantabhadra).

The mountains serve several functions. First, they support the largest clusters of monasteries in China: for example, Jiuhuashan has around eighty, spread over several square miles, with some four hundred monks and nuns. They also house various offices, art collections and research materials.

Second, they provide a pilgrimage destination for many thousands of Buddhist laypersons. With some effort city dwellers can reach one of the mountains, visit its temples, converse with the monks and perform devotions before returning home. A typical visit might take five days. Both believers in popular Buddhism, whose main motive appears to be petitionary prayer, and more intellectual lay practitioners can be seen in large numbers.

Third, all the mountains have become popular tourist destinations for ordinary Chinese: they offer beautiful scenery, cheap food and accommodation and a relaxing atmosphere. Unfortunately, it also means that the main pathways are extremely crowded.

### Nine Lotus Mountains

For example, the range of hills known as Jiuhuashan (Nine Lotus Mountains) covers an area of 100 square kilometres. It has ninety-nine peaks, the highest of which is 1350 metres



above sea level. Situated just south of the Yangtze River, it has some of the finest scenery in southern China: strange granite formations, twisted pine trees, a rich variety of plant life and acres of bamboo. It has long been known as a source for medicinal herbs, and local farmers concentrate on rice farming and tea bushes. There is no industry close by, so the air and water seem very clean: an idyllic setting. Adding to the mysterious atmosphere is the climate. Its proximity to the Yangtze results in a great deal of fog and cloud throughout the year. The temperature is pleasantly warm except perhaps in January and February, but the mountains are very often covered in cloud. You can stand on a hilltop and see things clearly for a few minutes, soon enveloped in fog for hours. This is perhaps quite appropriate for most of us! A few monks told me they get bored with the constant dampness, but it is no great hardship on a short visit. A trip should perhaps be timed to miss the height of the Chinese tourist season, between May and September; when I went in March there were few visitors of any kind and no other Westerners. The weather was cool, cloudy but dry. It seemed a good month.

One can observe two main kinds of monastic life. First, the large, public monasteries, which house between a dozen and fifty monks. These perform services, train young monks and are pilgrimage destinations. Some contain relics, including the preserved bodies of deceased venerated monks. Jiuhuashan came to fame because in the eighth century a Korean monk called Jin Chaojue lived as a hermit on the mountain, became renowned for his practice and attracted many disciples. Temples were built and, despite occasional devastations by marauding troops, the mountain became a centre for Buddhist culture until the present day. However, because of the lack of flat ground, the temples on the mountain are rather small and constructed somewhat like local farmhouses; they are not typical of the grand and imposing buildings to be found

in most other Buddhist centres.

Jin Chaojue was posthumously recognized as an incarnation of the bodhisattva Dizang. His main attributes are, first, great strength and single-mindedness in practice, a sure encouragement to backsliders; and second, a capacity to save lost souls. His intervention can lessen the torments of those being punished after death. Chinese believers I spoke to accepted both symbolic and literal interpretation of these qualities without apparent difficulty. Many of the large monasteries are influenced by the belief in this bodhisattva. The main type of practice is of Pure Land school, that is reciting sutras and Buddha's name, Amitabha.

Second, many monks and nuns live in small cottages in remote parts of the mountains, either as hermits or in groups of two or three. They have various reasons for not living in the large monasteries. Most want solitude; others disagree with the senior leaders or the training programmes; others dislike showing tourists around. If you wander the lonely paths away from the main monasteries you will come across these characters, some of whom seem rugged individualists. They do not have an easy life, relying on donations or wild plants for food. One I came across lives in a tiny shack under a remote peak. He told me that the paths there were guarded by spirits, but I had been allowed to meet him because of a karmic connection. He wanted nothing to do with the world and had no interest in the overall picture of Buddhism in China. 'A few people are attracted to the true teaching every generation, that's all,' he told me. 'Buddhism can never die out and can never become popular. What they do in monasteries is just rubbish.' The reader will not be surprised to hear that he is a follower of the Chan school.

### **Mother's Presence**

Such encounters make for a rich journey. For better or for worse, such pilgrimage sites are always thronged with tourists and devo-

tees, but one can always wander off the beaten track and find some interesting corners: again, local help is very useful. On my most recent trip to China I wanted to visit Putuoshan, the island dedicated to the goddess Guanyin off the coast of Ningbo, East China. As it happened, the ferry there was cancelled due to bad weather on the only day I could have gone. I happened to meet a local taxi driver whose family were long-standing devotees. He told me, the whole point of the island was really to make money from tourists, and that local believers preferred a place called Little Putuo, which they claimed was the original from which the island monasteries were copied. And indeed, Little Putuo was a very moving place. It had originally been an underground cave temple in which was installed an awakened image of the bodhisattva. And it was in fact on an island, but in a lake, not the sea. For many generations it was known only to locals and monastics, but in the past few years had begun to attract a wider following. Now, the inevitable is happening: large-scale renovations, the occasional coachload of visitors, and the influx of donations. Who knows whether it is a good thing or not. Times change. Doubtless the temples there will be rich and popular soon; perhaps the local devotees and the monks they revere will find a new spot somewhere else.

Another massively popular temple, Tiantaishan, had found another strategy. The temple is open for casual visitors, tour groups and the local population. All day, every day, crowds throng there. I asked a monk how he felt about it, and he explained that the monastery had several hermitages located high in the hills some miles from the main temple. Visitors rarely reached them. So the monks could arrange for periods of retreat as well as serv-

ing the community in the main temple.

In fact, so popular has Buddhism become that the problem of corruption though money is quite insidious. I spoke at length to a person who for ten years had been quietly supporting monasteries by taking in donations from Hong Kong. He said that he had stopped doing so because by now it was only contributing to a sad development. Many monks had become more interested in money than religion. Unscrupulous people had realized that they could become rich by soliciting donations from overseas individuals and institutions. Funds were either donated for building projects or paid in exchange for ceremonies such as masses for the dead. Much of it was not declared and went into private pockets. Another source informed me that this was not only the case for overseas visitors; some monasteries had also begun to rake in large sums of money from the local population in exchange for performing rites. According to him, some young men became monks for a few years solely in order to save money to get married!

Added to which, China has the familiar problem of fake gurus and lamas. Just as in the West, quite a few fashionable rock singers, artists and movie stars are turning to, especially, Tibetan lamas for spiritual guidance. Doubtless a few scandals will emerge sooner or later!

\* \* \*

Having said that, I would certainly not want to end this article on any kind of negative note. The revival of Chinese Buddhism has been, one might almost say, miraculous, given its dire position in the 1970s. In previous centuries it was an inspirational and regenerative force not only in China, but throughout many Asian countries like Korea and Japan. Hopefully it may become so again. \*

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All mankind is divided into three classes: those who are immovable, those who are movable, and those who move.

—Benjamin Franklin

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# Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

*A sannyāsin not to maintain the ritualistic (sacred) fire*

संन्यस्तस्य न श्रौतस्मार्ताग्निसेवनम्  
संन्यस्याग्निमपुनरावर्तनम् ॥९॥

9. Having renounced the sacred fire, [a *sannyāsin*] ought not to return to it [either physically, mentally or in speech].<sup>1</sup>

**The sin accruing out of maintaining the ritualistic fire [even after *sannyāsa*]**

अग्निसेवने प्रत्यवायः

यन्मन्युर्जायमावहम् इति ॥१०॥

10. 'May I, who have [verily] become Death, enter into that [Brahman-Knowledge] that is being engendered.' Thus [say, as it were, the *karma-kāṇḍa* portion of the *śruti*, to a person who continues to be engaged in fire rituals and so on even after taking to *sannyāsa*].<sup>2</sup>

(To be continued)

## Notes

1. Having given up all rituals pertaining to the earlier stages of life (*āśramas*), a *sannyāsin* ought not to return to the ritualistic fire ceremonies anymore. But then, he may still be plagued with thoughts like the following: 'Although I have renounced all rituals for the sake of the absolute Freedom (*mukti*), I still need to attain more of purity of mind that would ultimately engender Brahman-Knowledge through performance of ritualistic action without any personal desires (that is with *niṣkāma buddhi*). Therefore, I would need to continue to perform fire ceremony and so on.' In answer to this doubt, the Upaniṣad says that having once renounced fire rituals, he ought not to return to them anymore. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives the following example in this regard: A person who has crossed a river with the help of a boat does not, to be sure, carry the boat on his head thereafter! Similarly, a *sannyāsin* who has attained fulfillment through absolute purity of mind does not need to engage further in work—rituals connected with fire. He is therefore called a *niragni*, one who has abandoned fire. This being so, a person should never engage himself in diverse rituals prescribed by the *śruti* or *smṛti*. Further, it is not only engagement in rituals physically, but even verbal and mental performance of fire rituals and so on, either in part or in full, should not be done.
2. The construction here is rather elliptical. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin gives an elaborate commentary on the same *mantra*, which occurs also in the *Kaṭha Rudra Upaniṣad*. We briefly summarize his commentary: Upon taking the vows of renunciation, a *sannyāsin* shall not perform any fire ceremony. If it be asserted that even after renunciation one is justified in continuing with fire ceremonies enjoined in the *śruti* (the Vedas) and the *smṛti* (secondary scriptures specifying rules, codes of conduct and so on) for the sake of liberation or for the attainment of mental purification, the answer is no; there could be no such justification. For, a person who has crossed over to the other side of a river by means of a boat does not carry the boat on his head after reaching the other shore! Rituals and ceremonies, meant for

mental purification, lose their purpose when once such purification is attained. Suppose one asks, 'What harm does it entail if one continues to perform the ceremonies despite taking to vows of renunciation?' The answer is contained in the spiritual mantra mentioned in the text: 'May I, who have verily become Death ....' The 'I' referred to here is the *śruti* texts that enjoin appropriate rituals and ceremonies for the various social orders. These ritualistic portions of the Vedas (usually called the *karma-kāṇḍa*, which the *sannyāsin* is supposed to have transcended) tell the *sannyāsin*, as it were, in so many words: 'Look, if you fail to remain absorbed in the contemplation of the supreme Brahman, which is supposed to be the only activity of a *sannyāsin*, but rather continue to be engaged in ritualistic ceremonies even after having formally renounced them, then I, having become Death, will enter into the Brahman-Knowledge that is being engendered in you as a *sannyāsin*.' Here Death means inattention or forgetfulness, that is, lack of one-pointed application to the high ideal of *sannyāsa*. Scriptures call this inattention (*pramāda*) to be verily the death of spiritual striving and realization, for *pramāda* leads to forgetfulness of the spiritual Goal that is Brahman. On account of this 'death' entering the knowledge engendered in the *sannyāsin* devoted to *karma-kāṇḍa* (ritualism and ceremonialism), his knowledge ceases to be knowledge—it is in fact ignorance or at the most a semblance of knowledge. The import is that a *sannyāsin* shall not indulge in ritualism or ceremonialism that he has renounced as being needless accretions to his ever-pure, ever-free, ever-awakened, self-effulgent inner Core of personality—the Self, or Atman—which must be his only goal and pursuit. Suppose one asks, 'What about a person who has taken the *sannyāsa* vows without sufficient mental purification? Does he not need to go through some ritualism in order to attain mental purification, which is the essential prerequisite for getting established in Knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*)?' The answer is no. A *sannyāsin* ought not to take up what he has formally renounced (on getting initiated into *sannyāsa* through the great *sannyāsa* mantras), no matter whether he has done so knowingly or unknowingly. But then, the scriptures speak of two classes of *sannyāsa*: (1) *vidvat-sannyāsa*, renunciation by spiritual aspirants of a very high order, those who renounce the world after attaining Knowledge; in their case *sannyāsa* is a mere formality, meant for *loka-saṅgraha*, or universal welfare; (2) *vividīṣā-sannyāsa*, renunciation by aspirants who have not yet attained the highest Wisdom, but are deeply eager to attain It. While absolute abandonment of all ritualism and *karma-kāṇḍa* is prescribed for the former class, the latter may, without giving up steadfast adherence to the highest Ideal of *sannyāsa*, repeat the *praṇava* mantra (*Om*) and the *mahāvākya* (Great Saying), for these assert the absolute non-difference between the individual soul (*jīvātman*) and the supreme spirit (*paramātmān*). The *vividīṣā-sannyāsins* may, in order to attain mental purification, repeat spiritual mantras like the *praṇava*, *mahāvākyas* or the hundred and eight *Upaniṣads* starting with the *Īśa Upaniṣad*. But in no case should they perform rituals and ceremonies with a view to attaining any of their objects of desire.

Once a king suddenly declared in his court that he would give half of his kingdom to anyone who could make him understand how to prepare puffed rice. The next day several people explained to the king how to prepare puffed rice, but the king said, 'I don't understand.' Then someone brought rice, a stove, a pan and other accessories and demonstrated how to make puffed rice. But the king repeated the same thing: 'I don't understand.' If he had said 'I have understood' he would have lost half of his kingdom. Our condition is also the same. God is real and the world is unreal—if we are fully convinced of this, we would renounce the unreal for the Real. But we are reluctant to sever our attachments. That is why we are sleeping while awake.

—Swami Turiyananda

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# Glimpses of Holy Lives

## Devotion Superior to Life

**M**eyporul Nayanar was the king who ruled over Tirukkivilur. *Meyporul* in Tamil means Truth, the ultimate Reality. *Meyporul Nayanar* means one who served God or His devotees. Meyporul was known for his noble rule. He believed that his wealth was meant to be spent in serving God.

A king is certain to have enemies. Meyporul was no exception. The neighbouring king Muktinatha had several times retreated in battle with Meyporul, losing his army, cavalry and elephants. He was looking for an opportunity to avenge the disgrace. Certain that he was not strong enough to win Meyporul, Muktinatha looked for any weakness in his enemy: land, women or wealth? Meyporul had none.

There was of course one weakness in him—at least Muktinatha thought it to be a weakness: the kingdom was open to any sannyasin in the name of Shiva. There was no bar for him. On the contrary, he was heartily welcomed and the king honoured him suitably.

Muktinatha disguised himself as a sannyasin. Sacred ash smeared all over the body, he set out to his enemy's kingdom with a few books in hand, ostensibly to impress people with his scholarship. One of the books had a knife concealed in it.

The main gates at Tirukkivilur fort were thrown open as soon as the sannyasin was sighted. Muktinatha could not even touch as much the shadow of the fort when he came with his cavalry or elephants. This time he could easily gain entry with a bundle of books in hand. Seeing tight security before a mansion, Muktinatha rightly guessed that that was where his target lived.

'Most welcome, O holy one!'  
'I'd like to meet the king.'

'Please meet his bodyguard first.'

Datta was the bodyguard. He stood up, bowed before the sannyasin and welcomed him: 'The king is resting, O great one. I shall send you in as soon as he awakes.' With a condescending smile the sannyasin said, 'Is he asleep? I've come here to awaken him to the spiritual truth. Please don't stop me.' The imposter walked in. Sannyasins are never to be stopped—that was Meyporul's standing order.

Datta hesitated and then followed him. The king was asleep, the queen seated beside him. She woke up her husband on seeing the visitor. The king quickly had a wash, smeared himself with sacred ash and bowed before the sannyasin: 'Welcome, holy one, we are blessed by your visit.' The bodyguard left the place and waited outside.

Meyporul asked the sannyasin the purpose of his visit. The imposter replied, 'I have with me an Agama scripture revealed by Lord Shiva Himself. I have come here just to impart its teachings to you.' Meyporul was thrilled. He could not see through the deceit; he believed every word of the sannyasin. 'Indeed? I'm blessed. Please be seated.' The sannyasin said, 'Yes, but only we two shall sit, not the queen.' The king looked at the queen. She understood and left for the inner chambers.

The imposter sat on a pedestal and opened his bundle of books. The king was seated before him on the floor with his head resting on the teacher's feet and mind united with Lord Shiva in prayer: 'O Lord, may I be able to comprehend what I am going hear; may my teacher be endowed with strength to impart his teachings.'

All his earlier defeats gnawing at him, the imposter plunged the upraised knife into the



king's body. The king was puzzled at the sudden pain and wondered why the sannyasin attacked him.

With his whole mind on the king, Datta felt something was wrong and peeped in. When he rushed inside, sword in hand, the king gestured at him to stop. Though suffering from excruciating pain, he had to speak: 'He's ours.' He is not our enemy, our own, don't harm him—all this was implied in those few words. Datta gathered himself and asked, 'What shall I do, your highness?' 'See that this devotee of Lord Shiva is not harmed in any way. See that he leaves the place safely with proper escort.'

Having himself escorted the killer till he was safe on his way, Datta returned to the king, who was about to breathe his last. 'As you ordered, your highness, I ensured safe

passage for the sannyasin.' With deep gratitude, the king said, 'You have never been more helpful to me.'

The king called his wife, son and minister and asked them to always adore the sacred ash, be devoted to Shiva and strive for the welfare of people by safeguarding Shaivism. Absolute calmness, absolute freedom from pain arising from betrayal, solicitude for even an imposter because he was in the garb of a sannyasin—these marked his last moments. When he left the body, he beheld a divine light, which assumed the form of Shiva. The devotee merged into the Lord.

His devotion and total surrender to Lord Shiva have become legendary. Meyporul Nayanar is adored as one of the sixty-three Shiva saints of Tamil Nadu. \*

### The Mute Becomes Eloquent

Perhaps Jyoti Pant understood how disgraceful it was for a respectable brahmin in a small village to keep a son like him at home—he was already twenty and still unable to learn anything of the shastras—so he did not blame his father for casting him out.

The hopeless young man had only one place to go—the Ganesha temple in the forest outside the village. But ... what would he do there? ... Pray of course, what else.

Such was his simple faith that Jyoti told his companions who had gathered around him in front of the broken-down temple, 'Brothers, I wonder why it didn't strike me before, but Ganesha is the giver of knowledge, the lord of success. Why don't we pray to him?'

Unfortunately, his friends had all learnt what they had been taught. It was Jyoti who needed to pray, not they. So they left him alone in the temple.

After a couple of days Jyoti's father began to rue his impetuous decision. Sick with grief, he and his wife gave up food and drink.

At the end of a week Lord Shiva assured them in a dream that their son would soon come back to them proficient in the scriptures.

Meanwhile, back at the temple, Jyoti lost himself in prayer. On the seventh day he saw Lord Ganesha in a vision asking him what he desired. 'Lord,' answered Jyoti, 'until now I aspired to become an erudite scholar. Not any longer. Now I care only for spiritual knowledge and the experience of divine love.'

'So be it,' smiled Ganesha. 'You will get what you want. However, your first wish shall not remain unfulfilled.' Saying this, Ganesha wrote the syllable *om* on Jyoti's tongue and, lo and behold, Jyoti found himself a master of the Vedas!

'As for your second wish, Jyoti,' Ganesha continued, 'that will take a while. Sometime later you will go to Varanasi, where you will meet the sage Vyasa. He will impart to you the knowledge and love that you now seek. Until then, remember me if you need anything.'

Ganesha vanished from Jyoti's sight and Jyoti returned to the village. \*

## Swami Trigunatitananda to Swami Saradananda

THE HINDU TEMPLE  
2963, Webster Street  
California, U.S.A.

June 19, 1908

Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj  
Belur Math, Howrah.

Dear Brother,

I thank you very much for your kind letter of April 22.

I am glad that you did not send anybody to this country. I do not think that we should send any more Swami or Brahmacharin to any such country where men and women so freely associate, and where there are so many temptations, occasions to slip and fall; not only that, there are many such occasions and opportunities day and night everywhere in such countries, where if we fall once, we shall never be able to get up again to call you, brothers, or to call our Master; (we) shall lose everything. You have no idea how often, and how seriously and secretly and deceitfully, I was tempted in this country. Only the Lord, out of His infinite Kripa, did not leave me alone, opened my eyes, and revealed somehow or other the deceptive motives of such people; in some cases, they themselves do not know what the result will be. Such dangers [are] naturally (to be) expected, specially in religious circles where the teachers have to mingle with female students, specially in this country where social freedom is so great.

Therefore, I have made some strict rules in this Society that no member of this Society shall look up to the face of a Swami or a Brahmacharin of this Society—this is about [the] female members of the Society; nor shall any female member of the Society even bid ‘Good Morning’, or any way talk or give presents to a Swami or a Brahmacharin of this Society, and vice versa; nor shall any Swami or a Brahmacharin shall shake hands with any man or woman of this country, but just greet with folding hands in the method of our salutation of Namaskara as introduced by our Master; nor shall a Swami or a Brahmacharin accept any invitation of social or personal kind; nor shall they sit by any lady or a girl even in the crowded street cars or shall talk or walk with them.

It is not that the women of this country are to blame, but mostly—we; we know it; but can’t help; we have to make such rules as we are not used to such social manners & customs with respect to women, specially when in our higher spiritual culture such ideas of social freedom have been verified to be great obstacles and dangers.

At first when I introduced such rules here, I had to meet many difficulties, and pass through many persecutions. Of course, I expected all this. But, now, by the Grace of our Master, I am quite successful. The Lord our Master has given me such a power that no one has ever been able to baffle my arguments. I had to give series after series of lectures on every one of those strict rules. Great oppositions came at first, but at last all were silenced. Hundreds of questions, written and oral, in public meetings & private interviews, poured unto me; every one of them was answered with great courage and ability in the name of the TRUTH and the Lord our Saviour. By His Power & Grace none of those answers could be a failure. And today, His (and your & ev-

erybody else's) *servant*, who, when considered by himself, was, & is even now, nothing but a great fool, has won a great victory in the fight, and a great success in the work of the Great Master.

I have established a monastery in this temple. (Pardon me, dear brother, I have breathed a little air of egotism in this letter; I couldn't help; wanted to give you a little idea of our work here; but believe me, dear brother, by the Grace of God, I have not yet forgotten that I am His and your and everybody else's humble servant. May God, by your good wishes, increase this faith & fidelity in me).

I have got five American citizens, who have been living in this monastery, and who [have] sworn to give up the world. They are getting ready to preach the Gospel [of] our Blessed Master. It will take at least two years to be teachers. I call them Brahmacharins. And teaching them the Gita in Sanskrit. They have already learnt beautifully how to read the Gita in Sanskrit. They all obey the above strict rules regarding Swamis and Brahmacharins of this Society, about shaking hands & so forth. All the members of the Society have [been] following those rules strictly. Even many of the businessmen of this large city have started following our Hindu method of Namaskara, whenever they meet us, instead of shaking hands.

I am glad to say that luckily Swami Prakashananda obeys me a good deal, and strictly observes those severe rules, having sacrificed all the desires for the enjoyments of American free society.

I also have been following some of those strict rules in my life here. I do not shake hands with any man or woman; do not look up to the face of any woman while talking with her; do not accept any kind of invitation, social or personal; do not call on any lady or a girl even if she is closely connected with the Society; nor do I accept or give any presents to anyone, man or woman. Of course, now I have to talk with women; because, the Society being not yet self-supporting and depending *mainly* on membership-dues, I am compelled to continue giving private (i.e. individual or personal) lessons, a method which I do not like any more; women should be taught by women, men should be taught by men. The present trouble is that the ninety-nine per cent of the members have become members only because they will get such lessons from the teacher directly and personally. Only on that condition.

Some of the lady-members of the society are being taught to be the lady-teachers for the women of their country, along the line [of] our thought. They have been practising how to read and chant the Gita from Sanskrit and explain it in English just as any true Hindu scholar of the Gita's practical doctrines. They have been studying almost day and night so to say. They have already finished Rajkrishna Banerjee's Sanskrit Grammar twice from the beginning to the end. They can now read and pronounce and chant the Sanskrit verses of the Gita much better than we the Bengalis, who cannot pronounce Sanskrit properly as it should be. They do it just like a student of Sanskrit born and educated in Benares. You would really be surprised should you hear them how they beautifully chant the Holy Gita & how devotionally. Five of those lady-disciples of our Great Master have already started taking the Gita-class of the Society. It is an unexpected success. Last Monday, Mrs. C. F. Petersen (San. Name, Dhirananda) took the Gita class. By our Lord's grace she was simply grand. She had in her audience thirty students. Even we never get more students in our Gita-classes. Of course, in the public lectures we get a large audience. I started the Sanskrit class here three years ago, and in a couple of years more, those Sanskrit students will be able to become regular teachers of the Gita. The other Sanskrit students of the Gita are Mrs. A.S. Wollberg (San. Name, Prasuti); Mrs. C. French (San. Name, Sarala); Mrs. C. Betty (San. Name, Durga); Miss Ida Ansell (San. Name, Ujjvala); Mr. E.C. Brown (San. Name, Sajjana);

Mr. Horvath. There are many other students of San[skrit] and of [the] Gita, who have also been preparing themselves to become teachers, not out of desire, but out of strong request and under unavoidable circumstances of great necessity. Besides the San[skrit]-Gita-teachers mentioned above, there are other lady and gentlemen members of the Society, who have similarly consented to give public lectures along our line of thought, which they profess. They are Mr. & Mrs. Allah(;) Dr. Chandelier; Mr. Schanderlien; Mr. C.F. Petersen (San. Name, Nirmala); Mr. A.S. Wollberg (San. Name, Karmavira); Mr. Lackner (= Muni); Mr. Merkens (=Mumukshu); Mr. Kruger (= Nirdvandva); & c. & c. All these members are, in my estimation, not only able to teach, from literary point of view, but from spiritual point of view too; because, they are very sincere in their motives and actions, and lead a very good moral and spiritual life. Most of them have taken the vow of Brahmacharya; some of them live in this monastery, and some at home.

A nunnery too is going to be established within a month. Last Thursday, I gave a lecture on the utmost necessity of it; and again I will give another impressive lecture next Thursday. I am sure the nunnery will be a great success, because I know it is God's work.

If you wish to publish a few portions of this letter in all the papers of India, you can; that will be a good idea; just as you think.

As for my health, it is not very well; not very bad though, in my estimation. I can yet work all day (and) night, without any complaint.

Please find enclosed a money-order for \$ 29.99 (twenty-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents) for following purposes:

(Most probably, this amounts to 92 rupees, and 6 annas).

- (1) Rs. 50, for Swamiji's Memorial Bldg.
- (2) Rs. 25, for our Master's Mahotsav at the Belur Math, to come.
- (3) Rs. 5, for the Building at Benares.
- (4) Rs. 5, for Swami A.'s Orphanage.
- (5) Rs. 5, for our Kankhal-Orphanage.
- (6) The balance, Jilipi-Bhog [sweets offering] at the Math.

### Very Important

I tried my best, still I could not get the Title-Deed of our Shanti-Ashrama well-fixed, but pretty near it. According to the recent rules and laws of the State of California, I have to take the probate. The Deed is in the name of Swami Vivekananda and his followers. Now, the Court wants to know whether the legal owners are still alive and in possession of the property. I consulted several lawyers here. They said that the Belur Math should hold a meeting of the Trustees, or the President of the Belur Math (in case the Trustees cannot conveniently meet) should at once send me a clear and official certificate of authority and identification that I am the head-agent in the whole United States, for the followers of Swami Vivekananda, whom he recognized as such and wherefore he made them the trustees of his property; and that I am the *head representative of the Ramakrishna Mission in the whole United States*. [Without] 'Head-Agent' or 'Head Representative', Title [cannot be got]. *Please send it at once. ...*

I cannot revise this long letter; kindly correct it while reading.

With my Pronams to you all again, I remain, dear brother,

Yours Ever in the Lord

Servant Sarada

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# Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

(Translated by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee)

## Chapter 2 (continued)

### 39. *Aparigraha-sthairye janma-kathantāsaribodhaḥ.*

When the yogi is fixed in non-receiving, [his mind, not receiving the evils of givers, becomes purified and] he gets the memory of past life.

*Comment:* Lives of saints provide many instances of how the practice of *yama* and *niyama* can elevate man. An aspirant who is convinced about these pronouncements can ignore all obstacles in the path of spiritual practice and proceed enthusiastically towards progress.

When any living being comes in the vicinity of a discerning yogi who has been able to root out from his mind the idea of violence totally, it comes under the spell of his psychic power. As a result, no ideas of violence can arise in its mind. There are illustrations of this in the life of Sri Chaitanya.

When a yogi's mind becomes established in the practice of truthfulness, whatever he says becomes realized in practice. An example of this is the incident of Sri Ramakrishna's blood-vomiting.<sup>1</sup>

Let a person succeed in the practice of the ideal 'I will live by whatever I earn myself; I will not take anything from anyone else without his knowledge.' If such a person feels in his

mind the need of something, however costly that thing may be, circumstances will bring that thing to his possession.

Next comes continence (brahmacharya). In human life the key to success in every kind of activity is energy coupled with commensurate enthusiasm. When a man controls his semen, he develops in his body and mind so much energy of self-restraint that even things in the external world come under his power. To control the semen one has to stand against the animal instincts of innumerable past lives. Unless there is attraction for the blissful conscious Entity that exists beyond this world of the senses, the ability to control semen does not come to anyone.

As regards non-receiving (*aparigraha*), its practice purifies the mind and makes it extremely strong. Then it so happens that sometimes the recollection of earlier lives unfolds in the purified mind of the yogi and he is also able to know about future lives.

### 40. *Śaucāt-svāṅga-jugupsā parair-asamsargaḥ.*

Internal and external cleanliness being established, arise disgust for one's own body and non-intercourse with others [since having got rid of the body idea, one no longer cares to think of oneself and others as bodies].

*Comment:* The practice of cleanliness is an indispensable part of spiritual practice. When one's conception of cleanliness becomes refined, one effortlessly becomes aware that this

body is a receptacle of filth and even the mind now and then is affected by squalor. As a result, an urge to renounce desires, which are the cause of rebirth, arises in the mind. We



constantly see how those who are not aware of the vileness and impurity of the body suffer by making meaningless efforts to keep this body trim and well decorated and to have various kinds of bodily enjoyments.

When one comes to know that each and every body is vile and impure, love for and enjoyment of contact with other bodies—the principal attraction in this world of senses—go away.

41. *Sattva-śuddhi-saumanasyaikāgryendriya-jayātmadarśana-yogyatvāni ca.*

There also arises [by the practice of cleanliness] purification of the *sattva*, cheerfulness of the mind, concentration, conquest of the organs and fitness for the realization of the Self.

*Comment:* When the sense of impurity is removed from the mind, the quality of *sattva* unfolds itself. As a result, always pure thoughts arise in the mind and the mind remains serene. The mind becomes concen-

trated on whatever it is applied to. As the mind of such an aspirant remains steady, he is able to control the organs. Thus the practice of cleanliness opens the door to the attainment of Self-knowledge.

42. *Santoṣād-anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhaḥ.*

From contentment comes superlative happiness.

*Comment:* When the mind becomes habituated to the practice of contentment, it remains always steady. As a result, there is man-

ifestation of pure intelligence (*buddhi*). Pure intelligence is the only means for attaining Self-knowledge.

43. *Kayendriya-siddhir-aśuddhi-kṣayāt-tapasah.*

The result of mortification is bringing powers to the organs and the body, by destroying the impurity.

*Comment:* What is the result of being established in mortification (*tapas-siddhi*)? The object of undertaking mortification is to remain unmoved under happiness and sorrow, the two states that are constantly active in nature. By this, one is able to regulate the body

and the senses completely according to one's will. Thus one gets the power to fast for long periods, to undertake journeys to places of pilgrimage ignoring hardships caused by the extremes of climate, to disregard praise, abuse, insult and so on.

44. *Svādhyāyād-iṣṭa-devatā-samprayogaḥ.*

By the repetition of the mantra comes the realization of the intended deity.

*Comment:* By *svādhyāya* is meant uttering the seed word and the name of the chosen deity. The devotees say that the name and the

one indicated by it are not different. It is well known that by repeating the mantra of a deity one gets a direct vision of the deity.

45. *Samādhi-siddhir-iśvara-praṇidhānāt.*

By sacrificing all to *Ishvara* comes *samadhi*.

*Comment:* To get a direct vision of God, one should practise being absorbed in His thought. This is *iśvara-praṇidhāna*. The only

means to *samadhi* is total absorption. *Samadhi* is really another name for total absorption.

46. *Sthira-sukham-āsanam.*

Posture is that [way of remaining seated] which is firm and pleasant [so that, while sitting in it one does not feel the body at all].

47. *Prayatna-saithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām.*

By lessening the natural tendency (for restlessness) and meditating on the unlimited, posture becomes firm and pleasant.

48. *Tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ.*

Posture being conquered, the dualities [like good and bad, heat and cold] do not obstruct.

*Comment:* The main function of our mind is to serve the ten sense organs. The number of thoughtful persons in the world is extremely small. Leaving them out, everybody else remains busy with the organs of perception and action. To wean the mind away from serving the organs, one has to adopt the stratagem of sitting in a posture. The hatha yogis acquire the ability to control the organs and the mind through various kinds of *āsanas*. If one is able to remain seated for long without any movement, it helps in keeping the mind occupied

with one particular thought. For this reason a principal part of Hindu scheme of worship is the practice of posture.

The first step in steadying the restless mind is this practice of *āsana*. Certain difficulties are felt in trying this practice in the initial stages. Practice of *āsana* becomes easy, if after sitting in a posture, one tries, as far as one can, to contemplate the vast sky or the limitless creation. This enables one to counter the disturbances (like sensations of heat and cold) arising from external contacts.

49. *Tasmīn sati śvāsa-prāśvāsayor-gati-vicchedaḥ prāñāyāmaḥ.*

Controlling the motion of the exhalation and the inhalation follows after posture has been conquered.

50. *Bāhyābhyantara-stambha-ṛttih deśa-kāla-saṅkhyābhiḥ paridṛṣṭo dirgha-sūkṣmaḥ.*

Its (pranayama's) modifications are either external or internal or motionless, and regulated by place, time or number, either long or short.

51. *Bāhyābhyantara-viśayākṣepi caturthaḥ.*

The fourth is restraining the prana by reflecting on external or internal object.

52. *Tataḥ kṣiyate prakāśāvaramam.*

From that, the covering to the [inner] light [knowledge] of the mind is attenuated.

53. *Dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ.*

The mind becomes fit for *dhāraṇā*.

*Comment:* After one has become established in the practice of *āsana*, the second step in the process of controlling the mind fully is pranayama. In his book *Raja Yoga* Swamiji has given instructions about it. If one practises pranayama after comprehending them thoroughly, success would be assured.

If one can control the vital force of the

body, tamasika qualities like laziness and inertia of the body and the mind and rajasika qualities like greed and desire-born restlessness of the organs become restrained. As a result, knowledge unfolds in the mind and the buddhi, and a clear conception about the object of meditation arises.

54. *Svasva-viśayāsamprayoge citta-svarūpānukāra ivendriyāṅgāni pratyāhāraḥ.*

The drawing in (*pratyāhāra*) of the organs is by their giving up their own objects and taking the form of the mind-stuff, as it were.

55. *Tataḥ paramā vaśyatendriyāṇām.*

Thence arises supreme control of the organs.

*Comment:* When the mind is engaged in thinking something, withdrawing it from that and applying it to a different subject is called *pratyāhāra*. We constantly practise *pratyāhāra* while attending to our worldly duties. For instance, suppose the son of a gentleman who earns his livelihood by doing a teacher's or a clerk's job is seriously ill. During working hours, he has to draw the mind away from the thought of his family and engage it in his duties. The working of *pratyāhāra* can be always observed in everyone's life. Success [in spiritual practice] becomes possible if one is able to apply this natural power to the process of attainment of Self-knowledge. For those who can engage the mind in the thought of Brahman, Atman or God, whenever they intend to

and for as long as they please, the attainment of liberation, let alone such a small thing as the conquest of the organs, becomes easy of accomplishment.

*(To be continued)*

### Notes

1. During the period of Sri Ramakrishna's intense sadhana at Dakshineswar, his elder cousin Haladhari, who was established in truthfulness, once got angry with him due to a misunderstanding and cursed him that he would vomit blood. Sometime later blood actually came out profusely from Sri Ramakrishna's mouth. See *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), 70. —*Translator.*

## A Million Frog Legs

A farmer came into town and asked a restaurant owner if he could use a million frog legs. The restaurant owner was shocked and asked the man where he could get so many frog legs! The farmer replied, 'There is a pond near my house that is full of frogs—millions of them. They all croak all night long and they are about to make me crazy!'

So the restaurant owner and the farmer made an agreement that the farmer would deliver frogs to the restaurant, five hundred at a time for the next several weeks. The first week, the farmer returned to the restaurant looking rather sheepish, with two scrawny little frogs. The restaurant owner said, 'Well, where are all the frogs?'

The farmer said, 'I was mistaken. There were only these two frogs in the pond. But they sure were making a lot of noise!'

*Next time you hear somebody criticizing or making fun of you, remember, it's probably just a couple of noisy frogs. Also, problems always seem bigger in the dark.*

*Have you ever been in bed at night worrying about things that seem almost overwhelming like a million frogs croaking? Chances are pretty good that when the morning comes, and you take a closer look, you'll wonder what all the fuss was about.*

—from cyberspace



## Reviews



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

**Sri Ramakrishna's Religion.** *R K Dasgupta.* Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029. E-mail: *rmic@vsnl.com.* xi + 130 pp. Rs 40.

Professor Dasgupta is no stranger to all those seriously interested in (indeed, committed to) Ramakrishna Vedanta. With a solid academic background allied to devotion, he has written and lectured in this area quite extensively. Naturally, one's expectations are high (or rather, heightened) when one comes across his new book. But here if these expectations are not belied, they are not fulfilled either. That seems to me the paradox of this attempt to formulate the salient features of what is called 'Ramakrishna's religion'.

It is unfair and rather unwarranted to point to the absence of any focus in this apparently valiant attempt to pin down the assumed and not-very-demonstrable claims about Ramakrishna's religion. But then, the Professor's sources are impeccable and his chapter titles impressive enough. Besides the introduction, we have chapters on 'The Reconciliation of Opposites', 'Ideas Old and New', 'The Philosophical Framework', 'The Nature of God', 'The Path of Devotion', 'Ramakrishna's Idea of God', 'Ramakrishna Vedanta', 'Ramakrishna's View of Bhakti: The Traditional Element', 'The Response of Max Muller', and finally 'The Western Response'. And, of course, a bibliography and an index.

Apart from the Order's revered President Ranganathanandaji's foreword, we have the Institute's Secretary, revered Prabhanandaji, giving his assurance that 'a careful reading ... will not only dispel the reader's doubts but will raise their understanding of Sri Ramakrishna to a new height'. One is caught in a conundrum: if doubts arise, yours is a careless reading!

It is somewhat intriguing to note that in 'the Debutter Deed and Declaration of Trust signed and executed by Vivekananda on 30th January 1901

and ... registered the same year' Swamiji himself refers to 'Ramakrishna's religion'. An impeccable source and that not in a philosophical context, but in the technicalities of a legal document. But then, we have another context: the Memorandum of Association registered on 4 May 1909. Here the Great Master is described as 'an illustration and embodiment of the Religion Eternal'.

One can infer that the exigencies of a legal nature demand verbal variations. Often, there are, for any religious organization, situations which warrant certain re-visions. But, alongside, Akshay Kumar Sen's *Punthi* is cited as saying Ramakrishna is 'Satchidananda Purna Brahma Hari' and, for him, this is 'preparation for the idea of Ramakrishna's religion'. So we have Eternal Religion, Satchidananda Purna Brahma and Ramakrishna's (unique?) religion.

Compounding the correlations and equations, the author says that '... although Sri Ramakrishna's religion Vivekananda contemplated as a unique religion, it emerges out of the Hindu religious tradition of which it is a reflowering'. That is, 'while Sri Ramakrishna's is a new religion with some unique features, it is not a rootless religion'. Clinching the uniqueness, the author throws into this rather heavy brew 'the religious life of his [Ramakrishna's] people' as exemplified in the oral tradition. Of course, the Great Master is 'Vedanta's greatest exemplar'!

As if this is not enough variety (which perhaps is Ramakrishna's religion), we have disarming (also read 'dismaying') assertions about, of all deities, the Mother: '... the Mother can be of any color, shape and She can also be Nothing.' Of course, 'this Shunya is the Impersonal Brahman of the Advaitavadi. But we must distinguish it from the Buddhist idea of the Shunya which is a *void without any spiritual context*,' asserts the learned Professor (emphasis added). Except quoting Rabindranath Tagore, we do not know what the author meant by the apparently startling but really naive and indefensi-

ble statement that Buddhist shunya is a void of nothingness!

It is understandable that Ramakrishna's religion is unique—even granting this premise, to dismiss the most crucial Buddhist insight in this way seems rather disproportionate enthusiasm or sheer indifference to the insights of another religion. Even granting that the Great Master's religion is unique it is also 'a new flowering of the old faith, the renaissance of Indian spirituality, a rebirth of an ancient tradition'. In this sense, it is interesting that Swamiji himself found Buddha a fount of perennial spirituality. Do we infer that he rejected shunya and accepted Buddha?

Comparable are the Professor's remarks about the amnesia which overtook us regarding, of all people, Rabindranath and Ramakrishna. In a deeply disturbing but, alas, sentimental strain, the author declares, 'I see in Rabindranath Tagore's eyes the tears which Ramakrishna shed but I am afraid both Ramakrishna and Rabindranath are now distant figures. ... They have no living presence in our life. ... We have become a noisy and violent people because we have forgotten our Chaitanya and Ramakrishna and do not care for what they gave us.' And there is a plea 'to return to Ramakrishna'. I do hope that from this sweeping generalization, the Professor exempts the centres of the Ramakrishna Order (one of which sponsored these lectures) at least where, I perhaps naively feel, the Great Master is a living Presence; not to mention the innumerable scholar-devotees, both in the East and the West, who continue to engage themselves with this most lovable and intriguing figure of our time.

One does not know whether the Professor wants us to accept or merely be amused by remarks such as the one quoted above. Similarly, when we come to the *Kathamrita*, the author finds 'an element of clumsiness' and 'there are words which may appear to be not permissible in decent conversation. There are even expressions which are shockingly vulgar' (echoes of Shivnath Shastri). Indeed, the existing version, in this view, could as well be what Professor Dasgupta himself calls 'a bowdlerized' one. Yet 'we find in the *Kathamrita* the *summa philosophica* and the *summa theologica* of our three-thousand-year-old wisdom'.

These remarks somehow, I felt, retrieve from the significance of the *Kathamrita*. Vulgar, yes, but valuable. But 'we too make the mistake of trying to understand Ramakrishna's religion from his words

as recorded by Mahendranath'. So where do we get the Master's words unsullied by vulgarity, and a text not bowdlerized? Perhaps, implicit here is the tendency to run with the hare of post-modernist negation of 'foundational narratives' and hunt with the hound of traditional hagiographical milieu. In spite of vulgarity and bowdlerized narratives one should have raised the intriguing fact that, as the Professor says, 'His words in the *Kathamrita* present the essence of our three-thousand year-old tradition including the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Epics', not excluding the 'magical'ly moving tradition of Ramprasad and others. The author intuits the amazing virtuosity of the text but the cold contemporary winds of textual analysis blow him over, almost off his feet, whether consciously or otherwise. (Compare the author's citation from Bertrand Russell in contexts where one wonders whether Russell can figure at all!)

In sum, Professor Dasgupta's book is typical of oral texts transcribed into written ones. The rough edges remain. The overall ambience of a live audience which enjoys cracks and jokes appear odd in a printed text. Moreover, the bibliography does scant justice to the considerable work done on Ramakrishna of late. (We ourselves, attempting an exhaustive bibliography, were overwhelmed by the range of references to this Dakshineswar phenomenon). Unless there are constraints, there is no reason why the considerable work beyond the usual bibliographical items should not find a place.

I know the Professor can easily meet the points I felt like mentioning in this review. But I take refuge in sage wisdom: For the believer there is no question; for the questioner there is no answer. Both of us are, luckily, believers in the redeeming love of Ramakrishna. But do read the book.

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**Society, Religion and Politics in India: Ideas and Issues.** Dr Anil Baran Ray. Manuscript India, 166/3 SNN Ganguly Road, Santragachhi, Ramrajtala, Howrah 711 104. 2001. 370 pp. Rs 230.

Readers of *Prabuddha Bharata* are not unfamiliar with the name of Anil Baran Ray, a devoted scholar who contributes frequently on issues like



politics, religion, culture and the life and teachings of Sister Nivedita. Here is a compilation of his thought-provoking, well-researched articles published over the years in various journals on the major issues related to society, religion and politics in India.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with the ideologies of great Indian seers like Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi. It also focuses on India's eternal values and its holistic approach to politics while discussing the life of Sri Ramakrishna in the backdrop of the religious and social scenarios of nineteenth-century Bengal. The author explains the 'spiritual socialism' of Sri Ramakrishna as evidenced by the role he played in holding together a society fragmented by different religions and cultures and graded in different castes. Sri Ramakrishna harmonized them all and gave them a common background of ethical life and spiritual single-mindedness. Some of the key dimensions of Swami Vivekananda's mission are spelt out in the four essays on him, narrating at length his Neo-Vedantism, the impact of his message in America, his ideas on national integration and the regeneration of India, his man-making, character-building education, and his concepts of religion.

The nationalism and internationalism in the light of Tagore's deep spiritual humanism and the ever-growing relevance of Gandhi-ism in politics are elucidated in the next chapters. The essay on Subhas Chandra Bose concludes that his lasting contribution to the Indian freedom movement lay in his combative spirit. The next two chapters pinpoint the significance of eternal values and underline the need for a holistic approach to politics with a strong value system.

Part 2 of the book examines the major issues in India's domestic and international politics. The section on domestic politics focuses on socio-political issues thrown up by student, communal and 'terrorist' politics. The author has dwelt on student politics at length giving its historical perspective and has offered suggestions to the government to effectively channel their vibrant life force and provide employment opportunities to them. The in-depth political analysis of the essay on the communal attitude of the British brings to light the reasons behind the conflicting attitudes adopted towards the 1905 Partition of Bengal by Hindu, Muslim and

British communities. The author drives home the fact that a study of India's freedom movement shows that bridging the confidence gap between the majority and minority communities is the only way to avoid violence and secession. The next chapter deals with an evaluative analysis of reservation politics, national integration and terrorism in Kashmir.

The section on international politics focuses on issues pertaining to India's conflicts with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, with China on the border issue, and with the US on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

By all means the book makes an interesting reading as serious topics are handled admirably. The essays are thought-provoking, analytical and well documented with copious notes and a rich bibliography. The book helps us to better understand our great philosophers and their ideologies, and provides an insight into some of the most pressing issues of our day.

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**Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism.** *Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta.* Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. 2001, xiii + 170 pp. Rs 50.

This volume is a republication of the 1988 Vivekananda Award-winning volume first published in 1984 by Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta. The author, Dr Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta, a scholar par excellence, has to his credit many books on diverse subjects connected with English and Bengali literature and this volume on Vivekananda brings to culmination his mastery in the domains of thought, style and scholarship.

The author suggests that though Vivekananda 'kept aloof from politics, he has been hailed as the first great exponent of Indian nationalism ... [but] India's leaders had not read Vivekananda aright'. This is specially significant today because the author goes on to say that Vivekananda was not only an exponent on Hinduism but aimed at the unification of faiths, which is the one basic need of our violence-torn nation today. As he rightly concludes, 'the religion Vivekananda preached drew upon Islam as well as Hinduism, and he was also an admirer as well as a critic of Christianity and of Bud-

dhism.'

Dr Sen Gupta finds that the usual readings of Vivekananda are one-sided and there is a need for openness in reading this great pragmatic philosopher. So he undertakes the task, but with a candid confession that his approach is also one-sided. His attempt in the book has been to probe the central philosophy of Vivekananda from which all his teachings emanate to establish its enduring and refreshing contemporaneity as it deals with the socio-economic problems of human beings as well as their spiritual cravings.

The book is divided into ten chapters of which the chapters entitled 'Vivekananda on Nationalism' and 'Impact of Vivekananda on Indian Nationalism' bring the central premise of the volume to the forefront. As a background to the study of Vivekananda's nationalism the author devotes an entire chapter to 'Bankimchandra and *Ananda Math*'. There is also another interesting chapter entitled 'Vivekananda and Aurobindo', 'these two men [who] were the fountainhead of revolutionary activity in Bengal, which later spread to other parts of India'. Tracing the similarities and differences of the views of these two stalwarts, Dr Sen Gupta draws valuable conclusions about Vivekananda's influence on Aurobindo.

In conclusion, in the chapter 'Today and Tomorrow' the author draws a bleak picture of independent India, which has turned away from the teachings of Vivekananda. According to him, a corrective to this would be to rethink and reintegrate the thought of Vivekananda into the mainstream of life today, specially in the fields of universal education—both secular and spiritual—economic betterment and also the evolution of a viable political system.

The volume makes interesting reading to both the admirers of Vivekananda and researchers working in the field.

*Dr M Sivaramkrishna*

**Vedanta for All.** *Swami Satprakashananda.*

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. E-mail: *srkmath@vsnl.com*. 2001. viii + 274 pp. Rs 25.

Vedanta is a way of life with Hindus. It is not based on persons but on eternal principles. It is a philosophy based on Knowledge and spiritual illumination. In fact, in Vedanta religious practice,

philosophy and mystic experience are closely related.

Vedanta teaches that this vast universe is permeated by one spiritual Reality, which is of the nature of Consciousness. And, the innermost Self in us is identical with the ultimate Reality, called Brahman. This 'ultimate reality is one and ... the whole existence is unbroken'. According to Vedanta the goal of life is to realize this Reality. This goal can be attained by devotion, selfless action, mind control or knowledge.

Swami Satprakashananda clearly mentions that Vedanta will help a person with any religious conviction as long as he is not dogmatic. Vedanta says that to achieve perfection one has to have a strong moral foundation and follow the path of virtue.

Special mention needs to be made of the chapters 'The Spiritual Teacher', 'Good and Evil', 'The Mystery of Maya', 'Reincarnation', 'The Doctrine of Karma' and 'Death and After'. They bear testimony to the author's admirable elucidation of Vedantic concepts.

The chapter on 'Morality' rightly emphasizes that only a moral relationship among human beings can lay the foundation for proper living. The author advocates that before one develops the power of making money, one should know the secret of right living. This means that one should not succumb to vices such as lust, anger and greed. This aspect of morality is stressed repeatedly in the chapter 'Meditation and the Spiritual Teacher'.

In the chapter on 'Divine Law and Divine Grace' the author quotes Sri Ramakrishna eloquently: 'The breeze of God's grace is constantly blowing but you have to unfurl the sail of the vessel of life to get the benefit.' The author succinctly says that justice and grace operate in the scheme of life, a point worth noting in today's ego-dominated world. As long as a person holds on to his ego, justice takes care of him, but when he surrenders himself to the supreme Lord, grace descends upon him and his mind becomes purified.

The relationship between an infinite, omniscient God and a finite world is tenuous at best. Vedanta tries to explain this relationship through the concept of maya. According to Vedanta the world is unreal but not absolutely false. Maya keeps us in bondage, but it is through maya again that we overcome bondage.

While explaining the doctrine of karma the au-

thor makes a very valid point: through karma it is impossible to become wholly good or wholly bad. As a result, karma cannot lead one to complete freedom. But there is a way out. Karma becomes ineffective (it does not bind us with its fruits) if all acts are done without a selfish motive. In today's world when ego creates intractable problems, this advice is very relevant.

In the chapter 'Death and After', the author underlines the importance of human birth: it is only at the human plane that we attain complete liberation. A person who goes to a plane like paradise or heaven cannot acquire anything new. Therefore human birth is extremely important, and if we properly utilize it, we can attain liberation.

This admirable book is a compilation of the author's class talks on different aspects of Vedanta. Well-printed, moderately priced and written in an easily readable and understandable style, this is a valuable companion for anyone who looks to Vedanta for solution of life's problems.

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Mumbai

**Shri Sai Baba's Teachings and Philosophy.** Lt Col M B Nimbalkar. Sterling Publishers, A-59 Okhla Industrial Area, Phase II, New Delhi 110 020. Email: *ghai@nde.vsnl.net.in*. 2001. viii + 140 pp. Rs 75.

The life and teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba are abundantly available in the market today and they also have a wide readership. This volume is a useful addition to this list because it has made a laudable attempt to sort out the teachings of Baba subject-wise in order to facilitate their understanding and practice. As the author declares, 'any teachings contained in a book are fruitful only if they are properly understood and brought into action'.

It is with this pragmatic mission in mind that the author has set out to categorize the teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba under twenty headings: 'Wealth', 'Food', 'Speech', 'Bhakti Marga', 'Cycles of Re-birth', 'Theory of Karma', 'Human Births', 'Plea-

tures of the Senses', 'Maya', 'Egotism', 'Non-violence', 'Good Conduct', 'Bliss' (Perfect Joy), 'Nishtha' (Firm Faith), 'Saburi' (Patience), 'Service to the Distressed', 'Reading of Books', 'Devotion to Guru', 'Astrology' and 'Various Religions'. The last chapter, Chapter 21, is a medley entitled 'Teachings Summarised'.

All these have appeared in the form of articles in Shri Sai Baba Sansthan's official English journal called *Sri Sai Leela*. Based on the pattern of the booklets published by Aurobindo Ashram on the teachings of Aurobindo and the Mother on various subjects, the present volume combines short commentaries and quotations of the teachings of Sai Baba.

Each chapter is further subdivided into sections dealing with various aspects of the topic being dealt with. For instance, the chapter on 'Bhakti Marga' explicates What is Bhakti?, Types of Bhakti, Nine Forms of Bhakti, *Shravan* (Hearing of Praises), *Kirtan* (Singing of Praises), *Smaran* (Remembering the Form and the Name), *Padasevan* (Service of the Feet), *Archan* (Worship), *Vandan* (Bowling), *Dasya* (Service), *Sakhya* (Friendship), *Atma-nivedan* (Surrender), Sai Baba's Most Simple but Effective Method, What is Ideal Bhakti, and Sai Baba's Assurance, which puts all this in the most profound yet basic terms: 'Look at Me wholeheartedly and I in turn will look at you similarly.' Such gems of assurance and wisdom go a long way in sustaining and nurturing faith.

The author's personal transformation when he came into contact with the life and message of Sai Baba adds authenticity to the volume and serves as an inspiration to the confused or deluded pilgrim wandering in this maze towards a spiritual goal. Today all media, including many channels on TV, are devoting much time and effort to cater to the growing demands of providing spiritual succour to the masses. Volumes such as the present one also have their function in such a scenario and therefore need to be read, understood and translated into action, as the author himself recommends.

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Utility is when you have one telephone; luxury is when you have two; opulence is when you have three—and paradise when you have none.

—Doug Larson

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## ॐ Reports ॐ

**Visited.** Ramakrishna Math, Lucknow; by Sri Vishnukant Shastri, Governor of Uttar Pradesh; on 3 October 2003. Sri Shastri attended the centre's Durga Puja on Mahash-tami day.

**Attended.** Durga Puja; at Ramakrishna Math, Dhaka; by Home Minister Altaf Hos-sain Chowdhury, Mayor Sadek Hossain Khoka and several other distinguished per-sons.

**Launched.** 'Jnana Vahini'; by Sri Ramakrish-na Ashrama, Mysore; on 5 October (Vijaya Dashami). The year-long project aims at car-rying the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda to the interior villages of Karnataka through per-sonality-development programmes, book-shops, exhibitions and satsangs with the help of audio-visual aids.

**Celebrated.** The third anniversary of its affil-iation with the Ramakrishna Math; by Ve-danta Centre of Sydney; on 18 October. Mr Gary Hardgrave, Federal Minister for Citi-zenship and Multicultural Affairs, inaugu-rated the function, which was attended by 500 persons.

**Commissioned.** Modern diagnostic equip-ment; by Sri Sudershan Agarwal, Governor of Uttaranchal; at the pathological laboratory of the hospital run by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Kankhal; on 24 October.

**Inaugurated.** A pathological laboratory at the dispensary run by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Bankura; by Swami Smarana-nandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 8 No-vember.

**Launched.** The first phase of its celebration of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's 150th birth anniversary; by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai; on 12 November. The day began with arati, Vedic chanting and devotional music. It was followed by a public meeting at which special issues of the centre's three monthly magazines, *The Vedanta Kesari*, *Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam* and *Sri Ramakrishna Prabha*, and a CD on Holy Mother's life brought out by Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyalaya, Chennai, were released. At the end of the meeting nearly 4000 monks and devotees moved in procession to two well-decorated chariots in front of the temple, each with an image of Holy Mother inside. After arati to Mother, one of the chariots, ac-companied by an exhibition van, a book-sales van and other vehicles, started on a month-long journey through different places in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry where grand receptions have been planned. The other chariot will be a part of the centre's various celebrations in Chennai city.

**Visited.** Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, Itanagar; by Sri L K Advani, Deputy Prime Minister of India; on 15 November. Sri Ad-vani was accompanied by Arunachal Pra-desh Chief Minister Mr Gegong Apang and some other dignitaries.

**Visited.** Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad; by Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; on 16 November. Sri Chaturvedi partici-pated in the centre's annual celebrations.

**Laid.** Foundation stone for the proposed temple at Ramakrishna Mission, Jaipur; by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakri-shna Mission; on 20 November.

**Launched.** *www.rimse.org*, website of Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE), Mysore; in November.

**Distributed.** Food to 79,654 people belonging to 133 flood-affected villages in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal; by Ramakrishna Mission centres in Patna, Bhubaneswar, Puri and Malda; in September 2003. Besides, 10,000 ORS packets and an equal number of water-purifying halazone tablets were also distributed. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Malda, organized a medical camp where 256 patients were treated. Rs 8 lakh were spent on the above-mentioned relief operations.

**Distributed.** 593 blankets, 600 towels, 30 dhotis, 30 bed sheets and 30 sets of steel utensils among flood-affected people of 4 villages in Cuttack district; by Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar; in October.

**Treated.** 4435 patients belonging to 26 villages of Puri district; at medical camps organized by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri; in October.

**Distributed.** Cooked and uncooked food among 2,56,464 flood-affected residents of 145 villages of West Bengal; by centres of the Ramakrishna Mission in Contai, Ichapur, Malda, Medinipur and Belur (Saradapitha); in October.

**Distributed.** 7472 kg rice, 1500 kg pulses, 2155 blankets, 2155 dhotis, 2913 saris and 2155 chadars; by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri, and Ramakrishna Mission, Sikra-Kulingram; among 2155 flood-affected families in 56 villages of Puri and North 24-Parganas districts, respectively; in November. The Sikra-Kulingram centre also distributed 1632 kg flattened rice, 240 kg jaggery and 2714 assorted garments among 3749 people.

**Distributed.** 400 kg rice and 810 dhotis and saris by Ramakrishna Mission, Dinajpur, and 60 dhotis, 60 saris, 60 *lungis*, 100 towels and 600 assorted garments by Ramakrishna Mission, Kamarpurkur; among poor and needy families of nearby areas; in November. \*

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## Does Prayer Change Things?

Does prayer change your present situation or sudden circumstances? No, not always, but it does change the way you look at those events.

Does prayer change shattered hearts or broken bodies? No, not always, but it will change your source of strength and comfort.

Does prayer change your wants and desires? No, not always, but it will change your wants into what God desires!

Does prayer change your regrets from the past? No, not always, but it will change your hopes for the future.

Does prayer change the people around you? No, not always, but it will change you—the problem isn't always in others.

Does prayer change your life in ways you can't explain? Oh, yes, always! And it will change you from the inside out!

—from cyberspace