

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or AWAKENED INDIA*



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Cover: Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother's temple at Jayrambati seen today and a period photograph in the foreground. Mother was born in this sanctified village 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

JUNE 2004

No. 6

Traditional Wisdom

DETACHMENT

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

To work alone you have the right, not to its fruit. Don't let your motive be the fruit of action; don't be attached to inaction either. (*Bhagavadgita*, 2.47)

Non-attachment does not mean anything that we may do in relation to our external body, it is all in the mind. The binding link of 'I and mine' is in the mind. If we have not this link with the body and with the things of the senses, we are non-attached, wherever and whatever we may be. A man may be on a throne and perfectly non-attached; another man may be in rags and still very much attached. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.101)

What is the definition of health? A man is perfectly healthy when he does not remember that he has a body. Only when you have a headache, do you remember that you have a head; only when you have a pain in the leg, do you think of your leg. You are the Spirit itself. You are life itself. Although your body sits upon you with so much power, still it cannot keep you from forgetting it. When you are enjoying a beautiful scene or beautiful music, you forget it; that is, for the time being you have transcended the body. This is your true nature, and that is the reason you are happy. When you are calm, quiet, lost in thought, you do not remember your body, and only when something comes suddenly to disturb this state, you call it pain. (Swami Ramakrishnananda)

Purity and impurity are nothing but differences in one's attitude. Attachment to sense objects is impurity; attachment to God is purity. That which is real in human beings is God. ... The consciousness in man is a part of God, and that is pure: everything else is impure. (Swami Turiyananda)

☪ This Month ☪

Towards Desirelessness, this month's editorial, discusses Vedanta's view on renunciation of desires and some aids on the path to desirelessness.

Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago features an article, 'Satya Yoga', by 'A Sannyasin' and some clippings from 'News and Notes'.

Reflections on the Bhagavadgita is Swami Atulanandaji's commentary on verses 25 and 26 of the ninth chapter of the *Gita*. This instalment discusses the worship of gods, *bhūtas* and *pītris* (manes) and their relative merits with respect to worship of God; and how God can be easily satisfied with simple offerings if only they are laced with love.

Sri Ramakrishna—The Greatest of Avatars by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj is a translation of a Bengali article from *Udbodhan* (February 1999). The concept of an avatara, his characteristics, Sri Ramakrishna's resplendent divine moods, criteria to compare avatars, what makes Sri Ramakrishna the greatest of avatars—these are admirably elucidated by Revered Maharaj, who was the twelfth president of the Ramakrishna Order. The English translation is by Swami Sunirmalanandaji, a former editor of this journal. We are grateful to *Udbodhan* for permission to publish this translation.

In Aesthetics in Swami Vivekananda's Speeches and Writings Sri C S Ramakrishnan discusses the basis of Swamiji's aesthetics and captures different facets of Swamiji's personality—how his outer appearance was a reflection of his inner coherence, his appeal to the heart rather than the intellect, his love for the despised, love for his country, his

singing that captivated the Master, and what a worthy disciple he was of his Great Master. A former editor of *Vedanta Kesari* and a regular contributor to this journal, the author is closely associated for several decades with Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

Sanskrit Studies and Comparative Philology in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Europe is the second instalment of a research article by Swami Tathagatanandaji, featuring the contribution of France in popularizing Sanskrit, the publication of Monier-Williams' Sanskrit dictionary and the contributions of some East German Sanskrit scholars. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and heads the Vedanta Society of New York.

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad is the eighth and final instalment of a translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur. The notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

Worldly people are insensitive to spiritual life and mistake a spiritual aspirant's way of life. But being the inner Controller, God guides the aspirant unerringly to Himself. The life of Maharashtrian saint Harinarayan featured in **Glimpses of Holy Lives** illustrates this truth.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition is a commentary by Swami Premeshanandaji on sutras 1 to 10 of the fourth chapter, 'Kāivalya Pāda'. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, translator of the original Bengali notes, is a former Professor of Statistics from Calcutta University. *

Towards Desirelessness

EDITORIAL

In the last editorial we discussed the degrading effect of desires on our personality, and saw how enjoyment cannot quench desire. We also dwelt on the origin, seat and root of desire. Desire pervades our buddhi, mind (manas) and the sense organs. A life of unbridled sense enjoyment is a sure recipe to missing the goal of human life, besides being an invitation to spiritual death.

Finite Pleasures and the Infinite Bliss

Vedanta says that true bliss is possible only in the Infinite; there is no bliss in the finite (things of the world).¹ Thanks to maya, the inscrutable power that conceals from us the ultimate Reality and distorts our perception (making us see this world of alluring sense objects in place of the divine Reality), we taste through sense enjoyments only a part of the real Bliss that is our birthright. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates the point with an example:

The grain-dealer stores rice in huge bags in his warehouse. Near them he puts some puffed rice in a tray. This is to keep the rats away. The puffed rice tastes sweet to the rats and they nibble at it all night; they do not seek the rice itself. But just think! One seer of rice yields fourteen seers of puffed rice. How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of 'woman and gold!'²

Is Renunciation for All?

Does everyone need to give up desires? Is renunciation the way for all? Though there are no two opinions about renunciation being a prerequisite to the realization of our true nature, Vedanta accepts human frailties and advocates a graded life. It accepts as perfectly legitimate our righteous desires as long they do not infringe on others' rights. In fact, the *Bhagavadgita* says that God is in the form of desires

not opposed to dharma.³

Accordingly, ancient Hindu life was divided into four stages. First, brahmacharya, or a life of self-control, studies and deep reflection. This stage was followed by *gārhasthya*, the life of a householder. The institution of marriage is meant for satisfaction of one's legitimate biological desires, but the self-control learnt in the first stage of life formed the sheet anchor of this stage. A householder's life does not imply license for enjoyment, but enjoins on him responsibilities that can test his selflessness to its limits. The third stage is *vānaprastha*, the life of a recluse in the forest, where the husband and wife retire after discharging their worldly responsibilities, spending their time in prayer, worship and meditation. Sannyasa, the last stage of life, is signalled by total renunciation of all worldly ties and characterized by a life of prayer, contemplation and complete self-abnegation. Human life is thus a graded march to the Divine, and sannyasa is its important step leading to the ultimate goal of God-realization. If one does not succeed in taking to sannyasa formally, one should at least strive for it mentally at some stage in life.

Incidentally, the householder's life is classified as the centrifugal path (*pravṛtti mārga*) with worldly prosperity in view. The last two stages denote the centripetal path (*nivṛtti mārga*) with freedom as the goal.

Heaven, or a life of unmixed sense pleasure after death, is not an ideal extolled in Vedanta. Even if one gains such a heaven thanks to one's efforts on earth towards this end, one needs to return to earth on the exhaustion of one's merits, to begin afresh one's journey towards Truth through spiritual disciplines.⁴ Thus, the bottom line is that everyone—monks or householders—conscious of the ul-

timate goal of life needs to cultivate desirelessness according to his capacity.

Turning a New Leaf

If sense discipline and mind control are the way towards desirelessness, why don't most people take to it even when the time is ripe for it? Man does not turn to a sense-transcendent spiritual Reality, or God, unless and until he is through with all desires for enjoyment. It is only when he is fed up with worldly enjoyments that he calls on God and God too responds. Till then, God lets him be happy in pursuit of worldly pleasures. In his inimitable way Sri Ramakrishna gives an example from everyday life to illustrate this truth: 'So long as the child remains engrossed with its toys, the mother looks after her cooking and other household duties. But when the child no longer relishes the toys, it throws them aside and yells for its mother. Then the mother takes the rice-pot down from the hearth, runs in haste, and takes the child in her arms.'⁵

According to the *Gita*, only a few among thousands strive for perfection; among such rare ones only a few know God in Reality.⁶ A true aspirant towards desirelessness (or desire for the Highest) is not discouraged by this fact. He believes strongly that he is one among the few that strives for perfection and has faith that he is sure to belong to those rare few among them to attain perfection. He does not wait for the right time to arrive, but exercises discrimination and creates the right time for himself. Conscious that mere pious intentions do not mean anything unless they are put into action, he is up and doing in his spiritual disciplines.

Some Aids on the Path to Desireslessness

Disciplining the senses: In his illuminating discourse to Arjuna on desires, Sri Krishna prescribes sense control as the first discipline to free oneself from them: 'Therefore, control your senses at the outset and kill this destroyer of Knowledge and realization.'⁷ Our five

sense organs are like windows to the external world and bring us perceptual knowledge and, along with it, the memory and desire from these perceptions. He who does not want to be swayed by desires needs to be careful about the sensory inputs to his mind. Only that can help in purification of the mind and help him gain mastery over it. Says the *Chandogya Upanishad*, 'If the food is pure the mind too becomes pure.' In his commentary, Sri Shankara clarifies that 'food' does not mean just physical food, but the input through all the sense organs.'⁸

Senses mean not only the five sense organs, but also the mind. Mind is the inner organ that is looked upon as the king of the senses.⁹ Since in any perception the mind connects itself to the concerned sense organ, mind control is fundamental to control of desires. Who controls the mind? It is buddhi, the discriminative faculty. However, it lies dormant in a person swayed by desire.

We saw in the last editorial that our degradation is triggered when our will (the dynamic aspect of buddhi) gets hooked to the desire. When someone succumbs to a desire, his will does not have a separate existence: it merges with the succumbing mind and the senses. A slave to sense enjoyments (or any bad habit for that matter) identifies himself only with his mind and the body, and is not conscious of a separate will. He begins to turn a new leaf only when he succeeds in freeing his will from the hold of desires. Thus, though the will is bound, it is through the will that release is possible. Though Sri Krishna includes buddhi also among the seat of desire, (3.40) he says elsewhere in the *Gita*, 'Seek refuge in buddhi.' (2.49) Thus, all efforts at mind control basically mean awakening buddhi, which amounts to strengthening the will.

Faith in the higher Self: Sri Krishna describes in the *Gita* the various aspects of human personality in the order of increasing subtlety: 'The senses are superior (to the gross body); the mind is superior to the senses; bud-

dhi is superior to the mind; He (the Atman) is superior to buddhi. Knowing that the Atman is superior to buddhi, restraining your self (mind) with the self (buddhi), destroy the enemy who comes in the form of desire and is hard to overcome.' (3.42-3)

Swami Vivekananda ceaselessly stressed the glory of the Atman and the need to have immense faith in one's real nature. In his powerful letter of 25 September 1894 to his brother disciples he energized them saying, 'What makes you weep, my friend? In you is all power. Summon up your all-powerful nature, O mighty one, and this whole universe will lie at your feet. It is the Self alone that predominates, and not matter.'¹⁰ He held that faith in oneself is fundamental for faith in God to become meaningful. He considered strength as the medicine for weakness, not brooding over weakness.

Faith in God's name: Sri Ramakrishna's two laws of motion are significant in spiritual life: (1) The more you move towards the east, the farther you are from the west. In other words, the closer you move towards God, the farther you recede from desires. (2) If you move one step towards God, God moves ten steps towards you. Those who sincerely struggle with their mind can vouch for the truth of these laws.

There was a hatha yogi in Dakshineswar displaying cleansing techniques of yoga. Sri Ramakrishna's disciple Yogin (later Swami Yogananda) felt that he could not conquer lust or realize God if he did not practise those techniques. One day Yogin asked Sri Ramakrishna how to be free from lust. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to repeat the divine name, but Yogin was not satisfied. He thought Sri Ramakrishna had prescribed something useless since probably he was not aware of any practical technique. He also thought, so many people repeat the name of God without any reduction of lust in them. The next day Yogin went to the hatha yogi and while he sat listening to him, Sri Ramakrishna came there and

asked him to follow him back to his room. On the way, the Master remarked, 'Why did you go there? Don't do that. Your mind will stick to the body if you learn those techniques. It will not thirst after God.' Yogin again doubted the Master and thought he was probably jealous of the hatha yogi. He thought again, why not follow the Master's prescription, and started doing japa with some concentration. Soon he began to experience tangible results.¹¹

Offering things to God: Another potent means to free ourselves from the hold of desires is to offer anything to God before enjoying it ourselves. There are instances where Sri Ramakrishna gave a new turn to the mind of some of his lay disciples. Surendranath Mitra was given to visiting places of ill fame. When someone reported the matter to the Master, he did not condemn Surendra. He said, 'Oh yes, Surendra still has some desires. Let him enjoy them for a while. He will become pure soon enough.'¹² Later he told Surendra to think of the Divine Mother: 'Well, when a man goes to a bad place, why doesn't he take the Divine Mother with him? She would protect him from many evil actions.' (111) Again, though Surendra directed his energies to spiritual practices, he could not totally free himself from his drinking habit. When Surendra met his Master once in Dakshineswar, the Master encouraged him: 'Well, Suresh, why, when you are drinking wine, you have to think of it as ordinary wine? Offer it first to Mother Kali and then drink it as her prasada. Only you must be careful not to get drunk. ... At first you'll feel only the kind of excitement you usually feel, but that will soon lead to spiritual joy.' (112) Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual influence gradually brought about a spiritual transformation in his disciple.

Prayer and discrimination: It is not for nothing that Holy Mother advocated prayer to God for desirelessness, for 'desire is the obstacle to liberation.'¹³ Prayer can transform our mind, if only it is done sincerely, without hypocrisy. Persistent prayer can wean the

mind off sense enjoyments. Sri Ramakrishna assures us that God listens even to the sound of anklets on an ant's feet. And along with prayer Sri Ramakrishna stresses the importance of discrimination:

You must practise discrimination. 'Woman and gold' is impermanent. God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money? Food, clothes and a dwelling-place—nothing more. You cannot realize God with its help. Therefore money can never be the goal of life. That is the process of discrimination. ...

Consider—what is there in money or in a beautiful body? Discriminate and you will find that even the body of a beautiful woman consists of bones, flesh, fat, and other disagreeable things. Why should a man give up God and direct his attention to such things? Why should a man forget God for their sake?¹⁴

Giving a different turn to the mind: When his disciple Hari (later Swami Turiyananda) asked Sri Ramakrishna how to conquer lust, Hari was in for a surprise answer: 'Why should it go, my boy? Give it a turn in another direction. What is lust? It is the desire to get. So desire to get God and strengthen this desire greatly.'¹⁵ Patanjali advocates cultivation of a contrary, wholesome thought to counteract an undesirable thought.¹⁶ In the words of Swamiji, merely shouting about darkness will not dispel it, but only bringing in light will.

Selfless work: According to the *Bhagavata*, Karma yoga, or the path of selfless work, is a discipline primarily meant for those who have desires and have yet to have dispassion for fruits of work.¹⁷ Karma yoga is the time-honoured preliminary discipline for purification of mind. (According to Swamiji, it is an independent path to Self-realization.) Performing our work with a sense of dedication to and adoration of God, who dwells as our inner Self, and trying to serve others without expectation of return—these can greatly help us in strengthening our will, reducing our desires, and awakening in us the longing to break free

from the hold of the senses and the mind on us. Swamiji's illuminating lectures on the subject¹⁸ are worthy of deep thought and concerted action.

* * *

Desires in consonance with dharma are perfectly acceptable for a righteous life in the world. But if our goal is God-realization, only desirelessness can lead to it. Nay, desirelessness is synonymous with the state of God-realization; for according to Vedanta a knower of Brahman becomes Brahman and there in no second entity for him to desire. Disciplining the sensory system, training the mind, faith in God's name, prayer and meditation, and selfless work are some potent means to help us in our journey towards desirelessness. *

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4. *Ibid.*, 9.21.
5. *Gospel*, 149.
6. *Gita*, 7.3.
7. *Ibid.*, 3.41.
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17. *Bhagavata*, 11.20.7.
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Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago

June 1904

Satya Yuga

The Hindu Puranas believe there was and there will be an era called Satya Yuga, in which good preponderates over evil. Biblical revelation predicts the millennium, during which holiness is to be triumphant throughout the world and Christ will reign on earth in person with his saints. The poet trusts 'that good shall fall at last—far off—at last to all, and every winter change to spring.'

A look into the depths of our own self or at the facts of the world around, shows that the world is neither all good nor all evil but a mixture of both.

Dissatisfied with evil, some hope they will go, after death, to some place where there is good for aye and no evil. Such a dream may satisfy children. But is good possible without evil? If unmixed good is never in this life, the theory of unmixed good in an afterlife is absolutely baseless. So is that of eternal good, as nothing is known yet that does not die. 'What is here, is there, and what is there, is here.' (*Katha Upanishad*, 4.10) The same laws must be supposed to hold good throughout the universe until the contrary is proved by well-known facts.

A denial of evils by assuming that they are apparently so but really good is a lie to one's self and cannot be a lasting consolation. Blows, if they are called 'kisses', would not be less painful.

Will evil be, in the course of evolution, gradually eliminated, leaving only good as the residuum? The history of evolution answers in the negative. The elimination would be possible if the amount of evil were a fixed quantity. The fact, however, is that evolution multiplies evil with good equally, if not more. The pleasures and pains of the savage are mostly in the senses and gross. If civilization has opened the gates to finer enjoyments of the senses and new pleasures of the head and the heart, it has created for man new sources of and bred in him a keen susceptibility to very fine sufferings too.

Is there any remedy? The answer is, we find none in Nature. Her laws are uniform, everywhere and always. One of them is, good is always mixed with evil. So long as we shall be under her laws, we shall never be able to avoid evil, here or elsewhere, now or millions of centuries hence. But it is possible to master the laws, says Vedanta. Only then, and not till then, can we hope to conquer evil.

The remedy lies in the mastery of the laws of Nature. How can the particular law of the coexistence of good and evil be mastered?

The same nerves carry the sensations of good as well as of evil. The same thing produces pleasure in one and pain in another. To one man, the same thing is pleasurable at one time and painful at another. Therefore, good and evil cannot, in the first place, be two absolutely separate existences. They are manifestations differing only in degree, as all manifestations are, according to Vedanta, of a unity underlying them. Knowledge of the Unity alone gives control over its manifestations. Know first the Unity. Then you will have the power to manifest it only as good or only as evil or just as you like.

'Thou art That.' That Unity is also the reality of your soul. You, the real you, are then manifesting yourself as good, as evil, as all the laws of the universe. Know this and find out that you are not, never were or never will be, a slave but are eternally the manifesting cause, the master of the laws. Find out that the universe, however infinite it may appear to you now, is to your 'real you' as a bubble in the ocean. Have faith in, know and assert the real you; then the whole Nature, with all her laws—what to speak of the one law of good and evil—will be your willing slave.

A bold ideal indeed! Yet Vedanta asks everyone to realize it. The whole world will realize it. Then Nature will have no power over the soul, Spirit will get perfect control over matter, man will neither be the slave of good nor of evil. Then everyone will be a *jivanmukta*, that is, free whilst living, being established firm in the Unity.

Then everyone will see the Unity running through all its manifestations, in man, in animals, in every point of the universe. All selfishness will go. Love will reign in the place of hatred and competition. Brute force will be an evil dream of the past. For when all will be One, shall one hate or kill oneself?

Then there will be no *shudra*, *vaishya* or *kshatriya*. Everyone will be a knower of the Brahman unity and therefore a *brahmana*. And *Satya Yuga*, the vision of the ancient rishis of India, will dawn on earth.

And India—what is she doing to realize the vision of her rishi ancestors? Our *brahmanas*, the priests specially, the privileged custodians of the *shastric* lore—what are they doing? Every impediment they throw, as they very often do, in the way of the noble ambition of the other three castes to acquire *brahmanahood*, is a pullback to the advancement of the *Satya Yuga*. Why should a *shudra* be born a *shudra* and die a *shudra*? Give him opportunities, so long withheld, and see if he does not become a *brahmana*, by asserting the Brahman within. If you do not, the advancing wheel of the ideal *yuga* will nevertheless roll on crushing you down.

Freedom from the bondage of Nature in every shape is the goal. The whole world has to attain it. Let us Indians, the sons of the rishis who had the vision of the goal, proclaim it to the world. Let everyone be a *brahmana* and help others to be *brahmanas*. It is not impossible. The power of the Spirit is infinite, before which all obstacles, however insurmountable, will vanish away like mist before the rising sun.

—A *Sannyasin*

The Japanese dentist does not frighten his patients with an array of steel instruments. He draws teeth with his thumb and forefinger. The needful skill is acquired only after long practice, but when it is attained the operator can extract several teeth in a minute without removing his fingers from the patient's mouth. His education begins with the pulling out of pegs pressed into soft wood, and ends with the drawing of hard pegs driven tightly into an oak plank.

The sensitiveness of plants and flowers to certain conditions of weather and light is such that it is always possible that they may have other properties not yet discovered. There is an American garden, for instance, in which the flowers are so selected that one set closes at each hour of the day. Others only open and shed perfume at night, others curl up and suppress their existence for months, yet will open in a few minutes and put forth buds in a few hours when immersed in water.

India has suffered an irreparable loss in the passing away of her truly good and patriotic son, the first great captain of Indian industry, Mr J N Tata of Bombay. We all know of his magnificent gift for a postgraduate research institute. The making of a prosperous Indian nation depends on the qualities of head and heart like those possessed by Mr Tata. A few more Tatas would change the face of India. Let our wealthy countrymen imitate the Parsi patriot in the direction and munificence of his charity.

At Dresden, a blind man crossing a street was struck on the head by a cart. It has now been found that the shock has restored the man's sight.

—from 'News and Notes'

Reflections on the Bhagavadgita

SWAMI ATULANANDA

Chapter 9 (continued)

25. To the devas go the worshippers of the devas; to the *pitris* go their votaries; to the *bhūtas* go the *bhūta* worshippers. My devotees come to Me.

The devas are angels or gods or bright spirits who in a celestial sphere enjoy the merits of their good deeds performed during earth life. They have a subtle body and can travel with the velocity of thought, just by their will power. Not encumbered with a gross body, they do not suffer from heat and cold or hunger and thirst. Neither are they ever fatigued. No sorrow, no depression, no suffering ever enters their world. There, hatred and envy and jealousy are not entertained. These are barred from the gates. It is the pleasure garden where all enjoy eternal youth. The gods are said to have the power of granting boons to their votaries as they have charge of certain forces in the universe. They enjoy adoration. And when they find on earth devotees who regard them very highly and who bring offerings to them, they are much pleased and they give the votary whatever he most desires.

Now, when a person prays to these devas and constantly worships them and at the same time lives a righteous life, when he dies he joins these gods in their heaven and he becomes one of them. And there is a continuous entering and departing from these heavens, the same as on earth. For though the gods may enjoy their heavenly abodes for long years, the end must come at last and they enter earth life once more.

It is the same with the spheres of the *pitris*, the ancestor world where ancestor worshippers go, and also with the sphere of the *bhūtas* (beings between men and devas) com-

monly called spirits.

But what is more important than all this is that those who worship the Lord go to Him. But what do we find? Notwithstanding that it is no more trouble, people do not worship Me alone, says the Lord, because of their ignorance. That is why they attain very small results. The trouble, the effort, is the same, whether we direct our worship to a deva or a *pitri* or to the Lord. On the other hand, the results are very different. For though all other paths bring small results and lead to temporary happiness, only the worship of the eternal One results in the highest good, namely everlasting bliss. From there, no one has to return. Once with the Lord means eternal union with Him.

And as a matter of fact, it is much easier to worship Him. No sacrifice, no austerities, no fasts, no vows are required in the worship of the true God. But we are too rajasic. We must always be doing something. We imagine that God is like us, a domineering despot. But that is very wrong. What does the Lord care for our asceticism? All he asks for is a little love. That will do. His yoke is light, but we make it heavy. God is not like us. He does not consider the gift, but the giver. Where there is love there He is pleased. Love is the great magnet. When steel is magnetized it is drawn towards the magnet. Love is the magnetizer. Once we are touched by true love, at once we fly towards the magnet, which is the Lord Himself. No effort is required; the magnet does it all.

But sometimes the iron becomes rusty and then the magnetic power cannot reach the iron on account of the rust. That is when our heart becomes dry and cold and we harbour evil thoughts and intentions. Then God's love cannot reach us. He is near and the same as always, the same strong magnet. But we have allowed rust to gather and so the power of God does not draw us. Love removes the rust. And when our hearts are clear again and free from evil, at once we are again drawn towards God. This is a natural process. It is the law of love that applies to everyone. It works the same everywhere. Love attracts and unites. It is all-powerful. By love the world is conquered. Love overcomes all opposition, all hatred and all indifference. It is a great and wonderful touchstone. With love in our hearts, the whole

would be seen that no effort is produced anywhere without a corresponding cause. But our ignorance makes us unbelievers. And we pride ourselves on our unbelief. We think we are so superior that we do not accept anything without reasoning. But we forget that in our ignorance we do not know how to reason. Our power of reasoning of which we are so proud is very limited. It does not penetrate very far. We all reason, but reason from different standpoints. And then we denounce each other; we call each other fools. We forget that perhaps some day in the far future we also may reason from the same standpoint of those whom we now look down upon.

To suspend our judgment, to withhold denunciation, to accept the possibility of a reasoning power superior to ours—that is also a form of reasoning. It is always wise to leave a margin and not to be too hasty in calling the other fellow a fool.

So love of God can be cultivated. It operates according to law as does everything else.

Once a boy came to his guru and he said, 'Sir, how can we know God?' The guru replied, 'We can know God by loving Him'. 'But,' said the boy,

'how can we love God?' Then the guru said, 'Come with me.' They went a little distance and came to a pasture where a cow was grazing. The guru said, 'Do you see that cow? Go and love that cow and when you have succeeded in doing that, I shall answer your question.' The boy went to the owner of the cow and asked to be permitted to look after the animal. The owner consented and the boy took the cow, gave her a clean and warm shelter, fed her with delicious grass and young twigs and flowers, gave her plenty of fresh water and always lived with the cow, caressing her and trying to make her as happy as possible.

Many days passed when the guru thought that he would see how the boy was

Love attracts and unites. It is all-powerful.

By love the world is conquered. Love overcomes all opposition, all hatred and all indifference. It is a great and wonderful touchstone. With love in our hearts, the whole world smiles and becomes lovable. Nothing and nobody can withstand love.

world smiles and becomes lovable. Nothing and nobody can withstand love. But such strong love is very rare, because we love ourselves so much that little is left to go out towards others. It is mostly spent on ourselves.

He who can control his love is all-powerful. Love makes us and shapes us and affects our surroundings, even the material plane. It transforms our entire existence. We must try to cultivate that love, and then gradually the law of love will be revealed to us. Now we are not even aware that there is such a law. And therefore we are so sceptic and we doubt the experiences of the bhaktas. But if we understood the law, many of these so-called miracles would lose their mysterious nature. It

progressing with the cow. He sent for him and soon the boy appeared at the cottage. The guru saw him coming and when he came to the door bade him enter the cottage. But the boy remained outside in front of the door. The guru said, 'Come, my boy. I am happy to see you. Enter and take your seat.' But still the boy did not enter. Then the guru said, 'Why do you not come inside? I would like to talk to you.' The boy replied, 'Yes, sir, I would like to come in, but my horns are too big; they will not allow me to enter through the door.' The guru realized how strictly the boy had carried out his command and how wonderfully he had

succeeded. For through his intense love the boy had so much identified himself with his pet cow that he became like her in his mind. The guru was immensely pleased. He took the boy in and told him to leave the cow and transfer his love now to God. The boy did as he was told and very soon became a great saint.

What we love we become. It is through love for God that we become God-like. And whatever we do for the Lord with love, be it ever so insignificant or small a deed, that love makes our offering very acceptable to Him. Sri Krishna says:

26. He who with devotion offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that love offering I accept, made by the pure-hearted.

What simpler thing can there be but an offering of a leaf or a flower or a little water? Still, the Lord says that it is acceptable to Him. He is so easily satisfied. But it must be offered with love and a pure heart: that is where the secret lies. There is nothing in the gift. It is all in the attitude of the giver. He who created and supports the universe, what does He care for our gifts? Only as an expression of love is it acceptable to Him.

And why does God care for our love? Because love is His very nature. By love He is touched. Love is the Truth, the Reality, the Oneness of existence. It is the expression of Oneness. Love is attracted by love. Love flows towards love. It does away with separation; it unites; it binds together. The soul that loves God unites with God. Nothing can obstruct it. God is love and

if we love in the highest sense, then we are God. Such love is entirely free from sensuality or attachment. It is spirit touching Spirit, love for Love's sake. 'I do not want wealth or relatives and friends, nor do I want learning; no, not even do I want to go to heaven. Let me be

What simpler thing can there be but an offering of a leaf or a flower or a little water? Still, the Lord says that it is acceptable to Him. He is so easily satisfied. But it must be offered with love and a pure heart: that is where the secret lies. There is nothing in the gift. It is all in the attitude of the giver.

born again and again; but, Lord, grant me that I may love Thee, and that for love's sake,' was the prayer of a great bhakta.

(To be continued)

A person who practises the teachings of the *Gita*, his mind becomes pure and he develops the power of right understanding in every subject. He attains supreme Peace.

—Swami Turiyananda

Sri Ramakrishna—The Greatest of Avatars

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

(Translated by Swami Sunirmalananda)

Swami Vivekananda on Sri Ramakrishna

In his countless letters, lectures and valuable writings, Swami Vivekananda has discussed so much of religion, literature, science, art, history, political science, social sciences and so on in such depth that it is impossible for any other literature to compare itself with them. However, surprising as it may appear, how little Swamiji has spoken and written about his own master, Sri Ramakrishna, who was ever awake in his soul, ever in his thoughts, and ever an indispensable part of his life! Regarding Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji told his disciple:

He was the concentrated embodiment of how many previous Avatars! Even spending the whole life in religious austerity, we could not understand it. Therefore one has to speak about him with caution and restraint. As are one's capacities, so he fills one with spiritual ideas. One spray from the full ocean of his spirituality, if realised, will make gods of men. Such a synthesis of universal ideas you will not find in the history of the world again. Understand from this who was born in the person of Sri Ramakrishna.¹

In fact, Swamiji would become emotional while speaking about Sri Ramakrishna. It has been seen that the very remembrance of Sri Ramakrishna's name brought tears to his eyes and choked his throat. Swamiji said to his disciple about Ramakrishna, 'Shall you or I ever be able to do all that he has done? None of us has understood him fully. So I do not venture to speak about him anywhere and everywhere. He only knows what he himself really was; his frame was a human one only, but everything else about him was entirely different from others.'²

The disciple asked Swamiji if he accepted Sri Ramakrishna as an avata. Swamiji replied, 'Tell me first—what do you mean by an Avata?' The disciple said, 'Why, I mean one like Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Shri Gauranga, Buddha, Jesus and others.' To this, Swamiji replied, 'I know Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna to be even greater than those you have just named. What to speak of believing, which is a petty thing—I know!'³

Such an attitude of Swamiji towards his Master was born from the depths of his heart. He has expressed his devotion, love and deep faith in Ramakrishna in the famous salutary hymn: 'I salute Ramakrishna, who is the establisher of religion, the embodiment of all religions, and the greatest (*varisṭha*) amongst all those avatars who were born before.'⁴

In order to expound this aphorism-like hymn, we should first discuss the ideal of the avata, or incarnation. Then we can discuss why Swamiji called Sri Ramakrishna the 'greatest of avatars'.

The Meaning of Avata

The term *avata* is found in the Puranas. There is no specific mention of this word in the *shrutis*. The Lord desired that He would be many, and thus He entered creation.⁵ In all such Vedic passages we get only a hint on the principle of avata-hood. The interpreters have therefore said that *avata* means '*Aprapañcāt prapañce avataṇam avatārah.*' To become manifest from the divine state beyond maya in the world of maya has been called *avataṇa*, descent from divinity. Whose manifestation is it? Indicating himself, Sri Ramakrishna told Swamiji, 'He who was Rama and

Krishna has come down as Ramakrishna now. But this is not in your Vedantic sense.' From the Advaita Vedanta viewpoint, Brahman alone is *sat*, or real, and the world is unreal. The coming down of the formless, changeless, actionless, attributeless Brahman is not possible. But this world, which is existentially and practically real and has living beings in it, can also have the coming down of the avatars. This avatara or descent is of Brahman Itself, or of the Mahashakti, who is not different from Brahman. Though She is in Brahman Itself, being without attributes and in the state of the supreme Fourth, She assumes forms out of Her creative motive.

'Though [the supreme Prakriti is] formless and attributeless, She is with form. In the state of manifestation, She assumes numerous names and forms. In the attributeless state She is only indicated by Truth, Knowledge and Bliss; but She is not to be known through any other means like direct sense experience.⁶ Though the Lord is involved in *maya*, He is also the ruler of *maya* and is called *bhagavān*. It is He who comes down in every age as the avatara. It is written in the *Bhagavata*, 'The first manifestation of this supreme Power is as the Purusha, possessing sixteen *kalās*.'⁷ The sixteen *kalās* are the eleven senses (mind plus the ten sense organs) and the five gross elements—all born of the five supreme elements. These supreme elements are born of *ahankāra* and that in turn is born of *mahat*.

The second manifestation of the Supreme is when He enters the universe as the indwelling Spirit of the moving and unmoving things. As the first Purusha, He is the Controller of Prakriti and in Him are hidden *mahat* and others. As the second Purusha He is the Controller of the universe, and the fourteen worlds are hidden in Him. Finally, as the third Purusha He is in the hearts [as God] of all the living beings of the infinite number of worlds. But all these three are his subtle bodies. In the gross physical body, He comes down as the avatara of the age, as the sportive divine incarnation.

Avatars like Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha, or Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanatku-māra, or Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Kapila and Dattātreya, or Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna—all of them are 'great waves on the ocean of Power' (*śakti-sa-mudra-samuttha-taraṅgam*). So it has been said in the *Bhāgavata*, 'Hari's incarnations, full of pure *sattva*, are infinite. Just as small rivulets spring forth from a huge source of water that never dries up, so also do all the avatars spring forth from Hari. From Prajāpati down to the extremely brilliant sages, the Manus, the gods, and the children of Manu—all are parts of Hari.'⁸

Scriptures on Incarnation

This statement of the Puranas has its echo in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*:

Praising Sri Krishna, Arjuna said, 'Thou art Brahman Absolute.' Sri Krishna replied, 'Follow Me, and you will know whether or not I am Brahman Absolute.' So saying, Sri Krishna led Arjuna to a certain place and asked him what he saw there. 'I see a huge tree,' said Arjuna, 'and on it I notice fruits hanging like clusters of blackberries.' Then Krishna said to Arjuna, 'Come near and you will find that these are not clusters of blackberries, but clusters of innumerable Krishnas like Me, hanging from the tree.'⁹

The meaning is this: since time immemorial, innumerable avatars have taken birth, are taking birth and will take birth. In that case, what could be the yardstick to measure them and compare notes? All are embodiments of the Supreme alone. In essence there is no difference at all. But according to the manifestation of their powers, they are called either partial or complete incarnations. That there is a difference in the manifestation of power we see in Sri Ramakrishna's statement itself. The *Gita* says, 'Whatever is glorious, whatever is excellent, whatever is brilliant, know them all to be a minuscule part of Myself.'¹⁰

There are some characteristics common

to all the incarnations. The Lord incarnates for three important reasons. He Himself has said in the *Gita*: 'Whenever dharma (of the nature of the four stages of life and meant for the uplift of human beings) declines, and adharma or irreligion spreads, I take birth and become embodied (using My power called maya). In order to protect the good and punish the wicked, and also to establish dharma, I come down as a human being in every age.'¹¹

We find a similar verse in the *Devī Bhāgavata*: 'Whenever there is trouble owing to the uprising of the demons, I manifest Myself and destroy them.'¹²

In the *Gospel of the Holy Mother*, we find

So if we are to make a comparative study of avatars, we should first see how far these three things have been done by them. Second, we should see how many people have been inspired by them towards the divine life. Third, we should see if their influence is limited to any particular place, region or group of people, or if it is universal.

Holy Mother saying this: 'Human beings have by nature forgotten God; therefore He Himself comes down whenever necessary, performs sadhana, and shows the way.'

Comparing Avatars

So if we are to make a comparative study of avatars, we should first see how far these three things have been done by them. Second, we should see how many people have been inspired by them towards the divine life. Third, we should see if their influence is limited to any particular place, region or group of people, or if it is universal. Further, how permanent and far-reaching is this influence? Fourth, we should also see the vitality and the universal utility of their message. And, finally,

we should see if there is balance between their divine births and purposes, as well as in their human play.

Swami Vivekananda has saluted his master, Sri Ramakrishna with the words '*Sthāpakāya ca dharmasya*; the establisher of dharma'. This is worth noticing. Ramakrishna was not the originator of any new faith or religion. The religion of the Vedānta, which is eternal and immortal, has been divested of the limitations of time and place and has been placed on the world stage. This religion is not just limited to worship and adoration, sin and virtue, heaven and liberation: it is beyond limits.

'*Durgati-prapatat jantu dhāraṇāt dharma ucyaṭe*; that training which lifts up the living being beyond sorrow and misery is dharma.' The ancient sages did not reject the world as unreal, but they positively accepted it as Brahman. They said, '*Jīvo brahmaiva*, the living being is Brahman Itself.'¹³ Therefore their singular attention was fixed towards making the life of the human being—from birth to death—worthwhile. We are the children of Immortality, *amṛtasya putrāḥ*,¹⁴ and shall return to Im-

mortality alone. Our aim of life is to regain our real nature. The teachings of the avatars are meant to take us towards that goal, and to see that we don't fall away from the supreme ideal; this is called dharma, and these teachings are aids to our sadhana.

This religion is the religion of love or the all-encompassing religion of humanity. The gist of Indian sadhana can be summed up as this much: The perfection of the living being is in knowledge, and the perfection of knowledge is in love. The elaborate rituals of religion consisting of numerous dos and don'ts, and which in subsequent times became weapons for the priests to earn bread, are not considered the religion of the Upanishads. The reli-

gion of India is spirituality, and it is centred in the Self, or Atman. Advaita is its fundamental ideal. But this Advaita is not a vacuum or nihilism. By relinquishing everything unreal with the ideal of '*nedam brahma*, this is not Brahman', we should acquire the Supreme through the ideal of '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*; All this is indeed Brahman'¹⁵ and '*Īśāvāsyam-idaṁ sarvam*; All this is pervaded by God.'¹⁶ Mukti is not the last word. To know the fifth *puruṣārtha*, the ideal of life, as the embodiment of Love, and to 'serve Shiva in the jiva' is the final word.

With the flow of time, when some selfish and worldly-minded people forgot religion and became antagonistic and vengeful towards others, there began the growth of irreligion. There arose various sects whose fundamental qualities were dissension and narrowness. In such situations, the helpless wanderer who has lost his way goes on searching for a pathfinder or a guidepost and praying fervently to the Lord for the descent of divine grace. Then arrives the incarnation of the age.

Speciality of the Ramakrishna Avatara

The Ramakrishna incarnation too happened at such a crucial juncture in world history. Human beings have always had numerous problems. These problems relate to the individual, society, class and country. During the times of Ramachandra, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ and Chaitanya, the problems were localized. But from the eighteenth century onwards, thanks to science, our earth has become a 'family'. Therefore the problems of today do not pertain to any single nation or faction. Any problem or its solution should be considered from the global context. Compared to the painful situation we are passing through nowadays, that of the past has been

termed a 'mud-puddle' by Swami Vivekananda.

From the superficial viewpoint, it would appear that Sri Ramakrishna never touched any universal problem. Let alone the problems of the world, Ramakrishna neither discussed nor tried to solve even the burning problems of India, like social injustice, caste discrimination or the narrowness of different faiths and religious denominations. Like his predecessors, he never openly antagonized any political dynasty or religious reign. He didn't have to leave his Dakshineswar room and go out as a mendicant or a religious preacher. Not only that; even when he was in his room, he never gave lectures. He only

His life as a spiritual seeker and as a guru, and his Gospel, have effortlessly and quietly revolutionized the whole world. By his own personal example, he brought about a sweet harmony between the different Vedantic tenets like Advaita, Dvaita and Vishishtadvaita, as also between the Shaiva, Sakta, Vaishnava and their numerous sects.

practised and casually discussed, in a simple rural language, all that he had attained through spiritual struggle, thereby tremendously influencing the English-bred and qualified Bengali youth who were deeply interested in gaining true knowledge but were dismayed and misguided. Along with this, he reformed and remodelled the minds of the seekers of those days as if their minds were wet clay, thereby bringing light to their hearts and removing the age-old ignorance. All this has no parallel in world history. What could be a greater miracle than this?

The long-forgotten glories of the Eternal Religion became enlivened and rejuvenated in those few young men and others who were in-

fluenced by Ramakrishna's life and teachings. They re-established that Eternal Religion not only in India but also in other parts of the world—just within a few years of his passing. Compared to other avatars, this is the speciality and greatness of the Ramakrishna avatara. His life as a spiritual seeker and as a guru, and his *Gospel*, have effortlessly and quietly revolutionized the whole world. By his own personal example, he brought about a sweet harmony between the different Vedantic tenets like Advaita, Dvaita and Vishishtadvaita, as also between the Shaiva, Sakta, Vaishnava and their numerous sects. On the one hand there was the newborn Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, and on the other were the Sahajya, Kartābhaja and, worse, Vāmācāra groups. Ramakrishna welcomed them all heartily and cordially, and declared with utmost boldness: 'As many faiths, so many paths.' In Swamiji's language, he was *ananta-bhāvamaya*—of infinite moods. Swamiji has also remarked that even *brahmajñāna* can have limits but not Ramakrishna and his infinite moods. That is why Swamiji called him *avatāra-varīṣṭha*, the greatest of the avatars.

He said:

Many become wholly preoccupied with the outward forms and observances merely and fail to direct their mind to thoughts of the Atman! If you remain day and night within the narrow groove of ordinances and prohibitions, how will there be any expression of the soul? The more one has advanced in the realization of the Atman, the less is he dependent on the observances of forms. Shankaracharya also has said, '*Nistraigunye pathi vicaratām ko vidhiḥ ko niśedhaḥ*; Where is there any ordinance or prohibition for him whose mind is always above the play of the Gunas?' Therefore the essential truth is realization. Know that to be the goal. Each distinct creed is but a way to the Truth. The test of progress is the amount of renunciation that one has attained.¹⁷

Ramakrishna's Sadhana and Attainments

To know Ishvara or Brahman totally or absolutely is impossible; He is eternally be-

yond everything, and one can't say about Him 'He is this much alone.' So an aspirant will attain Brahman according to his capacity. Brahman alone is real, and Being, Consciousness and Bliss are Its nature. The goal of human life is to attain Brahman. But the sadhana to attain or It is a long-drawn process, and it has to be done consistently; and the sadhana too differs according to the nature of the seeker. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna did not say that any one path is good or bad. The route and the vehicle a person chooses to reach the goal depend on his natural tendencies. For this reason Sri Ramakrishna did not want us to have a 'bargaining mentality' or disturb anybody's mood or method of approach. There should be no problem with the different approaches, and no hatred amongst different groups, since all are travellers along the spiritual path. If there is deep yearning from within, if there is the combination of the three attractions—of the worldly man for his possessions, of the child for its mother and of a husband for his chaste wife¹⁸—all paths and all routes can lead us to the same goal. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*: 'I offer Myself to the devotee as he propitiates Me.'¹⁹ Therefore, with sincerity at the back, whatever be path an aspirant takes to, there is no danger for him. 'One who does good never goes to ruin.'²⁰ If necessary, the Lord Himself will purify the path and give us right understanding. Therefore he says that under Mother Annapurna's care, all can eat sumptuously; some may eat in the morning and some in the evening. This love and faith in all paths is not a mere verbal nicety of Sri Ramakrishna. By the superhuman practice of different paths and different attitudes, he *realized* this truth. The gist of all scriptures became enlivened through his sadhana. He acquired that wonderful knowledge. Looking at the lives of the avatars we have read until now, we don't see such a stunning variety of spiritual practices in any other incarnation. This is yet another speciality of the Ramakrishna avatara.

The Vedas say, '*Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā*

vadanti; Truth is one, sages call It differently.' The Vedas are the pinnacles of Advaita. But so long as there is I-ness, duality cannot be negated. Therefore both duality and non-duality have been given importance in the *shrutis*, considering the differences among aspirants. In Sri Ramakrishna's life too we see that he lived in the realm of Advaita for as long as six months but brought his mind down to do good to the world. He has said that one cannot negate the world—'the weight will then become less.' 'Will you leave aside the shell and the seeds, and weigh only the flesh [of a bell fruit]?'²¹ Seeing that Narendra wanted to spend his life in meditation alone, Ramakrishna had scolded him: 'You are small-minded. There is a state higher than that.'

The sages of India did not seek liberation alone; they wanted to dedicate their lives to *jagat-hita*, the good of the world. This was the ideal of the eternal Vedic religion. In a spiritual mood, we hear Sri Ramakrishna too saying this: 'Who are you to show compassion? No, it cannot be. Not compassion for others, but rather the service of man, recognizing him to be a veritable manifestation of God.'²² This one idea contained the seed which transformed Narendranath into Swami Vivekananda. Hence the Order which bears his guru's name has adopted this mantra: 'Who loves all beings without distinction/ He indeed is worshipping best his God.'²³

The 'machines', that is, the direct disciples, of the 'operator' Sri Ramakrishna, discarded the desire for their own liberation and re-established the traditional and ever-flowing current of ancient India, which is the religion of humanity. No bloodshed, no force, no war, no hatred; only that pure and unsullied life and that eternal gospel consisting of some simple, straight words. These have been inspiring people—even after a century of the Master's passing—to join in heralding universal love and mutual understanding. Is this not the greatest revelation? To conquer the world and transform its heart totally without quarrel

and without war—can't this be called a glorious revolution? Shall we not call the harbingers of such a revolution the greatest avatars?

A Spiritual Aspirant Par Excellence

The speciality of Sri Ramakrishna's life was his attitude of a spiritual aspirant. The avatars or world teachers of the past, the sages and the maharshis—have all held on to some particular method or path to attain perfection in their lives. Their followers—disciples and grand-disciples—too have followed these known paths. In this way, so many paths—Christian, Buddhist, Jain and so on—have been created. But Sri Ramakrishna's followers didn't form any sect because their guru was the embodiment of all religions. For him all religions were his own. In Rabindranath Tagore's words, he had made his own the 'diverse streams of sadhana of countless aspirants'. In his twelve-year-long spiritual struggle he did not forgo any path, be it the peaceful attitude (*śānta*), the servant attitude (*dāsya*), the friend attitude (*sakhya*), the parental attitude (*vātsalya*) or the beloved attitude (*madhura*). The intensity of devotion and steadiness that he showed while performing the spiritual disciplines of the Shaiva, Shakta or Vaishnava—without caring for the world he showed the same intensity while practising the disciplines of Christianity and Islam. What a superhuman courage—to sit in the Kali Temple and do all this, and in those days! The tantric sadhana at the dead of night with the help of Bhairavi Brahmani, worshipping his own wife as the Mother of the universe and, while doing so, losing external consciousness totally—all these are indicators of his being the greatest of the avatars. Without the least hesitation we could say that such impossible sadhanas had never been done before.

Finally, his Advaita sadhana. The Upanishads say that Brahman alone is real. In order to firmly establish this truth, they have added, '*advayam*, not two.' The only goal of life is to at-

tain that Reality. Sri Ramakrishna attained that Truth in nirvikalpa samadhi. Unlike the Vedic sages, he did not become satisfied by merely attaining that Truth; he came down from the other side, as it were. He realized the truth that '*Rūpaṁ rūpaṁ pratirūpo babhūva*; Brahman is in all forms,'²⁴ '*Sarvāṅi bhūtāni ātmani*; All living beings are in the Self,' and '*Sarvabhūteṣu ca ātmānam*; (Seeing) one's own Self is in all beings.'²⁵ The ideal is that, having transcended these three states, the *ritam*, or Truth, that remains should be known with each and every instance of knowing in one's life (*prati-bodha-viditam*). And this stunning personality was able to do that. Therefore we see that this *bhava-roga-vaidya* ('the physician who cures worldliness') was firmly established in the pinnacle of Advaita, was overflowing with unparalleled devotion and standing on the highest peaks of *prema* (*darṣita-prema-vijṛmbhita-raṅgam*), and at the same time was an embodiment of action who performed magnificent acts (*karma-kalevaram-adbhuta-ceṣṭam*)—all this, in a single person.

During his sadhana, Sri Ramakrishna had received the command from his chosen deity, the Divine Mother, three times that he should remain in *bhāvamukha*. The meaning of being in this *bhāvamukha* is twofold. One, to remain in exactly the mid-position between the transcendental and the immanent. That is, to bring down the supreme Power to the world, and to elevate worldly power. Only a supreme doer of good to the world alone can accomplish such a task. The second is wider still. He who is set to become the world teacher should know all minds in order to help them in their spiritual practices. The spiritual practice of an aspirant depends on his past actions that are bearing fruit, his desires, his mental tendencies, the variety of his desires, his choice of the *ishṭa* and so on. Each aspirant is of a different nature. A person's innermost feelings can be understood and appreciated only if he becomes one with his soul. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was empowered with such a

unique power. He himself has said [regarding a devotee], 'Everything inside him can be seen through his eyes, as one sees the objects in a room through a glass door.'²⁶

'An Ocean of Resplendent Moods'

Remaining in *bhāvamukha*, Ramakrishna could understand the natural spiritual tendencies of each one of his admirers and, having understood them, interact with them in accordance with those very tendencies, thereby establishing an eternal bond of love. He would also accelerate their movement towards God by resorting to their particular moods. Since he had traversed all the paths of the spiritual world, he was fully aware of their pros and cons. He had done sadhana with utmost dedication. He would become very involved in each one of the particular moods he practised. While performing the sadhana of Ramachandra, for instance, he not only became mentally one with Hanuman but his body too underwent changes. While he was engaged in the sadhana of the attitude of the female companion of the Divine Mother, that is, the maid-servant attitude, his physical nature had become so feminine that even Mathuranath, who was his constant companion, couldn't recognize him. On seeing Gopaler Ma, in ecstasy he became Gopala himself. But none of these is either pretension or drama. Something possible only for him, these were extraordinary states of mind, of his identity with the Ideal. It was owing to such an identity that everyone saw his chosen deity in him and became contented thereby. Again, many yogis and jnanis have realized him in their hearts as the supreme Brahman or Purushottama, who is beyond the pale of the three qualities (*gunas*). Indeed, this avatara of infinite moods has gone beyond whatever is written in the Vedas and the Vedānta. In one single personality, he was 'the ocean of love, the Infinite of the Vedas, as also all the gods like Vishnu, Shiva and Brahmā.' He was the embodiment of all the yogas—jnana, bhakti, karma and raja. In and through

him are to be found solutions for everybody's problems. In none of the past great ones have we seen such countless spiritual moods, vastness and broadness. He was the very personification of all the moods and attitudes; he was '*bhāsvāra bhāva-sāgara*; the ocean of resplendent moods' and thus did he become the greatest of the avatars.

Sri Ramakrishna's twelve-year-long hard spiritual practices, repeated samadhis, his harmonization of all the diverse faiths, his ethereal personality which was the personified form of love—all these apart, there is something significant in what Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi says. And this is the distinctive factor of this avatara. Holy Mother says, 'I tell you, my son, it never occurred to me that he practised all the religions with the *express motive* of preaching the idea of spiritual harmony. He was always in his mood of divine ecstasy. ... But what you should note, my dear, is that *renunciation* is his special message in this age.'²⁷

The greatest curse of the present times is worldliness. Selfishness, my-ness, egotism and so on have bound us down to abysmal depths. As I have already said, Ramakrishna did not deliver lectures. Whatever he had to say he has shown through his life. He has given a practical demonstration. In the field of renunciation too he was the ideal. In Swami Vivekananda's words, he was the emperor of renouncers. There was no question at all of his 'enjoying' the world, because he never touched things he didn't need. In his life was manifest the ideal of '*vañcana kāma-kāñcana atinindita indriyārāg*; you are the renouncer of all enticements of the despicable sense attractions.' But at no moment of his life—from beginning to end—do we see egotism touching him; he never allowed I-ness to raise its head. Relinquishment of the ego by a person for all time is something new to history. He would swear and say that he didn't have even a trace of egotism—words that came from the lips of the Truthful One. Such was his total dedica-

tion of body, mind and soul at the Divine Mother that he couldn't pray to Her for his own health.

He was a great revolutionary too. In his early life he had disregarded brahminical orthodoxy and accepted alms from a low-caste woman. He had subsequently eaten the leftovers of a lowborn. And towards the end of his life he said that the mind that he had given away totally to God could never be brought back to seek the removal of disease from his body.

Ramakrishna's Attitude to Life

Since the body-idea had completely left him, Sri Ramakrishna could stand apart and look upon himself as a witness. Thus the sore in the throat had been kept aside. The kick of the priest Haldar did not affect his mind; Hriday's rude behaviour didn't bring adverse reaction in the mind, nor did he hesitate in the least to stamp with his feet the costly shawl that Mathuranath gave him. Not a single instance was seen in his life, either during his sadhana or after his enlightenment, when even the slightest trace of desire arose in his mind. The little trace of ego that the Divine Mother had left in him was either the 'I of the devotee' or the 'I of the servant'. That too was for the experience of the sport of the Divine Mother, and for the good of the world. Here is a beautiful scene showing his egolessness: when great pundits like Padmalochan praised him, he sat without concern in a corner and smiled like a child. Except for truth he had surrendered everything to the Divine Mother. Truth is another name of love or bliss, and this filled the heart of this supernatural being.

A divine temperament is natural to all incarnations. When the supreme Lord comes down with the aid of His divine maya, He accepts many qualities of the human form. Though His birth and actions are divine, it is difficult for either the person of knowledge or the devotee to recognize Him as God without a shadow of doubt. This is true of everyone

from Sri Rama to Sri Chaitanya. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*: 'Though I am eternal, pure, all-knowing, beyond bondages, and the inner Ruler of all beings, ignorant mortals disregard Me, considering Me to be a human being because I behave like them.'²⁸

'Brahman weeps entangled in the snare of the five elements.'²⁹ Where even the gods are in doubt and difficulty, what to speak of the human being of limited intellect? Sri Ramakrishna was no exception, as he too was misunderstood. However, we see the mani-

His body was for all intents and purposes that of a human being, but it had become a divine body. His mind and soul too were always in God. But the most surprising thing is, when he was in the ordinary state or the conscious state, no one could realize that this person was the one who was in the blissful spiritual universe just a few moments ago.

festation of divinity in him since the very beginning of his life. What Sri Ramakrishna says about Sri Chaitanya—that he lived in three states, the external, semi-external and internal—was true of himself too. Since his childhood the manifestation of divinity was as clear as daylight in Ramakrishna. His losing consciousness while going to the Vishalakshi Temple at Anur and regaining consciousness when Mother's names were sung; his becoming deeply indrawn during the enactment of the role of Shiva; his becoming ecstatic seeing cranes flying against the backdrop of dark clouds—all these are instances of his manifestation of divinity.

From the records available about his sadhana years and the last few years of his life, we see how most of the time he was immersed in God or was in a semi-conscious state. His body was for all intents and purposes that of a

human being, but it had become a divine body. His mind and soul too were always in God. But the most surprising thing is, when he was in the ordinary state or the conscious state, no one could realize that this person was the one who was in the blissful spiritual universe just a few moments ago.

His human sport too was beautiful in every way, and he has defeated us in this aspect too. In his interactions with friends in childhood, in his play, in his relations with the elders in age, in his curiosity natural for a child—in everything he endeared himself to everyone. To bring joy to every heart through fun and wit was a natural tendency in him since his childhood. Girish Chandra Ghosh said, 'Even in naughty pranks I couldn't beat you.' In any matter, his senses would be wide awake and it was this speciality that helped him in later life to see other people as if looking into a glass case. Since he had a keen eye on the minute details

of household life, he could give everyday instances and examples to illustrate his abstruse and philosophical teachings.

'The Wish-fulfilling Tree'

He taught Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi how to deal with people, how to prepare the betel roll, how to prepare the wick for the lamp. And the truth had appeared to his seer's eyes that Holy Mother was to be the Mother of the monastic order that he would establish. Hence he quietly trained her in that aspect too, without any public notice. Thus he was the ideal husband, though without the least trace of any worldly desire; and to Chandramani Devi, he was the ideal son. By being like a teacher, father and friend to his disciples, he showed them the highest Truth and at the same time kept a keen watch over their physical, emotional and moral development. At

times, he would create a wave of bliss through his mimicry, wit and so on. The bliss he had enjoyed in the spiritual plane was showered by him all his life in the physical plane also. 'O Mother! Don't make me a dry monk. Keep me full of bliss'—that was his constant prayer to the Divine Mother. By granting this prayer, the Divine Mother brought about a wonderful harmony of the Divine and the human in him, which is seen to some extent in the lives of Sri Krishna and Sri Chaitanya. The fullest manifestation of his divine nature was seen on the 'Kalpataru Day'. The picture we get of his self-revelation and the bestowing of the boon of fearlessness on that particular day has no parallel in world history. Seeing the *vishvarupa* form of Sri Krishna, Arjuna had become afraid and scared, and had prayed to the Lord to re-assume His usual form. Moreover, the grace of Christ, Buddha or Chaitanya was obtained by only a few fortunate souls. But to shower grace on so many disciples at one time and to bring about a tremendous transformation in their spiritual lives by a mere touch, is unheard of in the world.

What is to be observed here is, it is not that he brought about a complete transformation in some lives on that Kalpataru Day, or on the Kali Puja night at Shyampukur, or at Dakshineswar; even after a hundred years of his advent it is evident how his power is working in all spheres of the world, transforming numerous lives. So far as the earlier avatars are concerned, countless peoples of different countries have been inspired by them, true. But the expansiveness and breadth of this avatara is something new. It is true that in the spread of this message the services of Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of Ramakrishna, as also of the author of the *Gospel*, Mahendra Nath Gupta, are to be reverentially remembered. But weren't they instruments in the hands of their Master? It was the all-encompassing humanism and the soul-song of the Sanatana Dharma of India that they have carried throughout the two hemispheres of

the globe. We have not heard of any other religion spreading so fast in such a short time.

Swamiji said:

The present-day civilization of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men. On the other hand, the ancient Indian civilization, by showing people the way to spiritual advancement, doubtless succeeded, if not in removing once for all, at least in lessening, in a great measure, the material needs of men. In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilizations³⁰ that Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born.

The innate truths in Sri Ramakrishna's words are eternal. They have brought forth a brilliant light of hope to all places, to all times and, specially, to the modern times—an age deep in darkness, engrossed in worldly enjoyments, strained due to divisions, and totally insecure and dissatisfied. Ramakrishna is the greatest refuge for all—man and woman, the educated and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the householder and the monastic, the fallen and the well-established in society. Through his followers, a silent revolution has begun not only at the individual level but also at the social, national and, to put it succinctly, global levels. By establishing the truths of Advaita and the true meaning of religion, he has struck a lethal blow at the very roots of the suffering of the world, caused by strife, hatred born of religious differences, and so on.

The effect of the glorious attainments of Sri Ramakrishna, which were achieved sitting in that small room on the banks of the River Ganga, has just begun to show itself and will go on working for a long, long time. Through the combined efforts of thousands of dedicated souls there will definitely be a tremendous revolution, and this world will become a heaven. Once more will Satya Yuga come back to earth. Kazi Nazrul Islam has said, 'O Sage! You have brought the sweet memories of Satya Yuga in this Kali age.' Swamiji saw with his divine eyes the possibilities of the Ramakrishna incarnation and declared, 'From the date

that the Ramakrishna Incarnation was born, has sprung the Satya Yuga (Golden Age).³¹ To the blessed feet of the great creator of the Satya Yuga, therefore, was dedicated this remarkable mantra, which sprung from the very depths of the heart of Vivekananda: *Sthāpakāya ca dharmasya sarva-dharma svarūpiṇe; Avatāra-varīṣṭhāya rāmakṣṇāya te namaḥ.* *

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5. *So 'kāmayaata, bahu syām prajāyeyeti ... tat sṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat.*—*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.6.1.
6. *Nirākārā ca sākārā saiva nānābhīdhānabhṛt; Nāmāntaraṅgīr-nirūpyaiṣā nāmnā nānyena kenacit.*—*Durga Saptashati*, 'Prādhānika Rahasya', 29.
7. *Jaṅghe pauraṣaṁ rūpaṁ bhagavān mahadādībhīḥ; Sambhūtāṁ ṣoḍaśakalam-ādau loka-sisṛkṣayā.*—*Bhagavata*, 1.3.1.
8. *Avatārā hyasaṅkhyeyā hareḥ sattva-nīdher-dvijāḥ; Yathā-vidāsināḥ kulyāḥ sarasaḥ syuḥ sahasraśaḥ. Rṣayo manavo devā manuputrā mahaujasaḥ;*

Kalāḥ sarve harereva

saprajāpatayastathā.—*Bhagavata*, 1.3.26-7.

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Preaching His Message

Whenever you are at a loss, pray to [Sri Ramakrishna] with heart and soul; he is there within you, the very soul of your soul. He will throw light from within; he will let you know what exactly is to be done. Never harbour such an idea in your mind that you are going out to preach something. The Master himself preaches his message. What can you and I preach about him? Who can understand him? ... The goal of life is to have faith in him and devotion to his lotus feet.

—Mahapurush Swami Shivananda

Aesthetics in Swami Vivekananda's Speeches and Writings

C S RAMAKRISHNAN

To dwell on the aesthetics innate in the words and deeds of Swami Vivekananda is at once a challenge and an inspiration. In Homer's winged words it is an invitation to stroll along the shore of the sounding sea. '*Mathurādhīpateḥ sakalam madhuram*; Everything connected with Sri Krishna is sweet,' sings the poet. Contemplating the Lord's beauty he goes into rapture, exclaiming '*mādhuryād api madhuram*; sweeter than sweetness itself'. The sense of beauty throbbing in all that Swamiji says and does is likewise something more to be enjoyed than analysed in words. *Mūkāsvādavat*—how is a dumb man to give expression to the sweetness he has tasted?

What Is Aesthetics?

Etymologically, aesthetics means 'feeling'. We speak of anaesthetics, drugs that dull sensitivity and relieve the patient from feeling pain. To be aesthetic, on the other hand, is to feel. But all feeling is not aesthetic, a toothache for instance. On the contrary we note the ecstasy of Sri Ramakrishna who, as a boy, was overwhelmed at the sight of the flight of silver-white cranes across the indigo of the monsoon clouds. That is aesthetics, vibrant sensitivity to beauty and total response to it.

Beauty, an Experience

But what is beauty? What does it mean? Where does it reside? An external object or a mental image may seem to be the stimulus. But the response, the feeling invoked, transcends the objective conditions. It has been called an affection of the soul, a consciousness of joy, a pang, a dream, a pure pleasure. It suf-

fuses an object without telling why. Nor has it any need to ask the question. It is self-justified. Beauty exists for the same reason that the object that is beautiful exists or the world in which that object exists or we that look upon both exist. It is an experience. There is nothing more to say about it.

The Basis of Swamiji's Aesthetics

Yet we cannot refrain from trying to put it in words, however inadequate the verbalization. Poets who weave word magic have striven variously to formulate it. The immortal lines of Keats, for instance, declare, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.' And Keats ought to know. Was he not the archpriest of beauty—worshipping, enjoying and revealing loveliness in all its hues, through all the senses? But the Keatsian equation quivers on the brink of another conundrum. If beauty is indefinable is not truth much more so? 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate and did not wait for an answer. One indescribable cannot explain another ineffable.

But there is a way out. We can improve on Keats by adding one more imponderable: goodness. The good, the true, the beautiful—it is a trine, a three-in-one. It is the Ultimate: *sat, chit, ananda* or *satyam, shivam, sundaram*. Beauty is non-separate from truth and goodness. What is beautiful is simultaneously true and good. What is false or evil cannot be beautiful. Swamiji's aesthetics is rock-based on this realization. It is from this summit that Swamiji watches and speaks. All his observations and actions have to be viewed from this perspective.

All Excellences in One

Swamiji was *yati-rajā*, a prince among ascetics. His main quest was for the Truth Supreme. But, like his Great Master, he was not a dry sadhu. He sought and enjoyed the Infinite in all Its manifestations. Seeing God in everything, he revelled in the appreciation of divine beauty, and wore out his life helping goodness at every level. His approach was Olympian

Seeing God in everything, he revelled in the appreciation of divine beauty, and wore out his life helping goodness at every level. His approach was Olympian and holistic. His head and heart and hands acted in harmonious unison, reaching out for the highest, pitying the low and serving the unfortunate.

and holistic. His head and heart and hands acted in harmonious unison, reaching out for the highest, pitying the low and serving the unfortunate. Kalidasa remarks that the Creator is usually averse to assembling all excellences in one entity. But the same servant of Kali, when he has to describe the beauty of Uma Devi, tries to compare the various aspects of her form to classical objects of loveliness, and, finding all the latter inadequate, ends his description by declaring that eager to see for once all beauty concentrated at one spot, the Creator fashioned Devi.¹ The same Creator must have tried to repeat his performance by moulding the person of Swamiji, eager to see Truth, Beauty and Goodness meeting and mingling harmoniously in one human personality.

Outer Appearance and Inner Coherence

Chemistry tells us that the lovely structure we see on the exterior of a crystal is a reflection of the pattern on which the molecules and atoms are arranged within the crystal. The outer appearance mirrors the inner coherence.

Swamiji's physical form underlined the sense of beauty with which he was infilled.

Everyone, in India or abroad, who saw him could not but be impressed by his majestic personality, which palpably radiated divinity. In the Himalayas a pilgrim would exclaim, 'There goes Shiva.' In America the impress of his personality has been graphically etched by Sister Christine.

The power that emanated from his mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it. ... It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being. ... He was barely thirty, this preacher from faraway India. Young with an ageless Youth and yet withal old with the wisdom of ancient times.²

This is onomatopoeia, the splendid body echoing the profound mind and the mind echoing the grandeur of the soul.

Look at the rapture with which a celebrated savant and connoisseur like Romain Rolland hails Swamiji's utterances:

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shock, what transports, must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!

The Essence of His Personality

Yes, heroism was the alpha and omega of his personality, the essence of his approach to every question, intellectual or spiritual. Again and again he stressed the need for strength:

Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as

one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. ... They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads.³

Strength comes from faith. 'The history of the world is the history of the few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power.' (8.228) 'Believe first in yourself, then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world.' (8.223)

But he is careful to stress what real strength, real faith, is. 'We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work. One man contains the whole universe. ... In a conflict between the heart and the brain follow your heart.' (8.223)

A Massive Heart-attack!

This observation of Swamiji is very significant. His aesthetics was not just intellectual penetration but a massive 'heart-attack'! We are reminded of the appropriateness of the epithet used for a connoisseur: *sahṛdaya*, 'one of excellent heart'. Only if the heart is large can there be positive, constructive apprehension of a piece of art. In Swamiji the brain of Sri Shankara was wedded to the heart of Buddha, who was the embodiment of *mahākaruṇā*. Swami Turiyanandaji recalls an incident that took place at the Abu Road station. He had come there with Swami Brahmanandaji to see Swamiji before he left for Bombay to set sail for America. Swamiji explained to them the reason for his going to the West. It was India's suffering. 'I travelled', he said, 'all over India. But alas, it was agony to me, my brothers, to see with my own eyes the terrible poverty of the masses. I could not restrain my tears. It is

now my firm conviction that to preach religion among them, without first trying to remove their poverty and suffering is futile. It is to find means for the salvation of the poor of India that I am going to America.' Then he added, 'Brother, I cannot understand your so-called religion.' His face was red with an influx of blood. Shaking with emotion, he placed his hand on his heart and said, 'But my heart has grown much, much larger and I have learnt to feel. Believe me, I feel it very sadly.' Tears rolled down his cheeks. Swami Turiyananda, thoroughly moved, could not but muse, 'Are not these the very words and feelings of Buddha!'⁴

Against this background we can appreciate all the more his exhortation to his young admirers of Madras:

I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now this minute to the temple of Parthasarathi, and before Him who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokula, who never shrank to embrace the Pariah Guhaka, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His incarnation as Buddha—yea, down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, the oppressed.⁵

In this spirited message we can experience the rich blend of Swamiji's aesthetics: the all-seeing eye, the razor-sharp intellect, the thunderous roar of the lion of Vedanta, the ciceronean eloquence, the weaving of choice words into a fascinating garland, the stirring appeal to the hearts of his listeners, the clarion call for urgent action and the love that conquers all.

Seeing Divinity in the Despised

Swamiji's *sahṛdayatā* made him see worth where others would have seen only ugliness. One day, in Cairo, Swamiji was taking a walk with a number of Western disciples and friends. The party happened to lose their way.

They found themselves in a red-light district. Realizing they were at the wrong place the friends tried to take Swamiji away from that squalid, evil-smelling street of ill fame. But Swamiji detached himself from the group and approached the half-clad women sitting on a wayside bench. Looking at them with profound pity he muttered, 'Poor children!' and began to weep. The women, who had been making vulgar gestures at him, were silenced and abashed. One of them kissed the hem of his robe and said, 'Man of God! Man of God!'⁶ Moved by Swamiji's palpable divinity, these unfortunate women were certifying to the great truth that God's love is unconditional and overwhelming. Where there is unalloyed love there God abides. And the *sahṛdaya* can see God in everything and everywhere. No wonder, the vast heart that could see divinity in the sordid bursts into hallelujah at the mention of the truly great.

Love for His Motherland

His love of India, the motherland, was ecstatic. 'If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhoomi*, ... the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India.'⁷

Not that he was not acutely aware of the imperfections and weaknesses of his countrymen. In burning words he chastised them even as a fond mother pulls up an errant son. And when pity and passion flow in unison the aesthetics is superb. 'Oh India, this is your terrible danger. The spell of imitating the West is getting such a hold upon you that what is good or what is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgement, discrimination or reference to the *Shastras*. ... Wouldst thou attain by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and the heroic?' (4.478-9)

Then in the same strain but at another

and higher pitch:

Oh! India! Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshipping is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, are thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say, 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother.' (4.479-80)

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words, issuing from the lips of a born king. How enthralled his audience must have been by 'his strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance and the splendid music of his rich deep voice'.

Listen to the warrior-prophet, 'the anointed of God' sounding the conch for the resurrection of the land of the rishis, 'My India, arise!'

For the next fifty years ... let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race—'everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything.' All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all around us, the *Virāt*? ... The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virāt*—of those all around us. (3.300-1)

He was the personification of energy, and action was his message—selfless action, loving action, action expecting no return. 'A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen

and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up, the gospel of equality.' (5.15)

Handsome is what handsome does. Aesthetics, the sense of beauty, should not be an ineffectual angel beating its wings in the void. It must inspire sublime action. Sister Christine has gone on record:

Our love for India came to birth when we first heard him say the word 'India' in that marvellous voice of his. It seems incredible that so much could have been put into one small word of five letters. There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry, *heimweh*, and again love. Whole volumes could not have produced such a feeling in others. It had the magic power of creating love in those who heard it. Ever after, India became the land of heart's desire. Everything concerning her became of interest—became living—her people, her history, architecture, her manners and customs, her rivers, her mountains, plains, her culture, her great spiritual concepts, her scriptures.

What a tribute from a sensitive soul to the magic of Swamiji's *pañcākṣari!*

Growth according to One's Inner Law

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within,' Swamiji points out. Divinity is the beauty of perfection, the infinitude of truth and goodness. The master artist is he who enables his audience to feel this touch of the One in the play of the many. He helps them, encourages them, stirs them to manifest in themselves the divine perfection falsified over by the pale cast of diffidence. But then Swamiji also knew when and where to switch off the spell.

At one of the public meetings in New York, after addressing a tense audience for about fifteen minutes, he suddenly made a formal bow and retired. The people went away wondering why the Niagara had so suddenly stopped. A friend asked him if he had forgotten his points. Had he become nervous?

Swamiji's reply stunned the friend. He revealed that at the meeting he felt a tremendous upsurge of power. He had noticed that the audience were becoming so absorbed in his ideas that they were losing their own individualities. He had felt that they had become like soft clay, that he could give them any shape he wanted. That, however, was contrary to his outlook. Every man and woman must grow according to his or her own inner law. Not wishing to change or to destroy anyone's individuality, he had to stop.

This episode reveals what a master craftsman Swamiji was, how finely his aesthetics were honed.

His Singing Charmed Sri Ramakrishna

Plotinus observes, 'The mind could never have perceived the beautiful, had it not first been itself beautiful.' How beautiful Swamiji's mind was can be seen from a variety of angles. His love of and expertise in music, for instance. We recall how the Great Master was first drawn to Naren by the impetus of the latter's singing. 'O my mind, go to your own abode./ In the foreign land of this world/ Why roam uselessly like a stranger!'

Sri Ramakrishna was so overwhelmed by the song that he suddenly grasped Naren's hand, took him to the northern porch and with tears streaming down his cheeks expostulated, 'Ah! You have come so late. How unkind of you to keep me waiting so long!' One is left wondering whose aesthetic was sublimer—Naren's or Narayana's. And we may be sure that when Sri Ramakrishna transmitted his powers to Naren just before passing away, he vastly enriched Naren's sense of beauty also.

Worthy Disciple of a Great Master

It will be remembered that Naren's attention was first drawn to Sri Ramakrishna when, in order to explain the meaning of 'ecstasy', Professor Hastie observed that this exalted state was the result of purity and concentration and that he could only think of the Saint of

The flood tide of Swamiji's sense of beauty coursed through diverse channels. The majesty of physical form, the splendour of nature, the love of song, the intellectual passion, the thunder of oratory, the compassion for the lowly and the lost, the poet's pen, the burning renunciation—the list is endless. To docket the various aspects of his appreciation and exposition of loveliness will be chasing the horizon.

* * *

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Dakshineswar as a living example of this rare phenomenon. But even earlier Naren had had a taste of spiritual trance. While with other members of the family Naren was journeying to Raipur in a bullock cart, nature's beauty bowled him over. The air was crisp and clear. The trees and creepers were covered with green leaves and many-coloured blossoms. Brilliant-plumaged birds warbled all around. The cart was moving along a narrow pass. The lofty peaks rising on the two sides seemed to touch and hug each other. And in the cleft of a giant cliff dangled a huge beehive. Suddenly Naren's mind was filled with awe and reverence for Divine Providence. He lost consciousness and lay in the cart inert for a long time. Even when he regained his senses his heart radiated an ineffable joy. We are reminded of the Great Master's repeated ecstasies on seeing what to ordinary eyes might look humdrum—the flight of white cranes across the dark of rain-laden clouds; an English lad standing against a tree; drunkards making merry outside a tavern. Sri Ramakrishna's aesthetics were nonpareil and he had a very worthy disciple in Narendranath.

has advised us, entering the garden of Swamiji's aesthetics let us not waste our time and energy counting the leaves. We are here to enjoy *eating* the superb mangoes. *

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Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps as few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a mine of gold which the owner knows not of.

—Jonathan Swift

Sanskrit Studies and Comparative Philology in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Europe

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The Oriental Renaissance: Sanskrit Studies and Comparative Philology in the Nineteenth Century

After the rediscovery of Greco-Roman antiquity in the fourteenth century in Italy and in the fifteenth century elsewhere in Europe, a 'phenomenon of primary importance' was witnessed in Europe in the nineteenth century with the rediscovery of the East. Amaury de Riencourt described it as the 'Oriental Renaissance.'¹

In his *Gūnie des religions* (1841), French historian Edgar Quinet introduced the title 'The Oriental Renaissance' to his chapter describing the event: 'In the first ardor of their discoveries, the orientalists proclaimed that, in its entirety, an antiquity more profound, more philosophical, and more poetical than that of Greece and Rome was emerging from the depths of Asia. ... [One that promised] a new Reformation of the religious and secular world. ... This is the great subject in philosophy today.'²

Quinet believed that 'When human revolutions first began, India stood more expressly than any other country for what may be called a Declaration of the Rights of the Being. That divine Individuality, and its community with infinity, is obviously the foundation and the source of all life and all history.'³

L S S O'Malley's observation describes the impact of the translations of Sanskrit works in the West:

The wisdom found in Sanskrit works was greeted with something like reverential awe. Thus the French philosopher Victor Cousin, speaking of the poetical and philosophical movements of the East, and above all, those of India, which were, he said, beginning to spread in Europe, declared that they contained so many truths, and such profound truths, that he was constrained to bend the knee before the genius of the East and to see in that cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy.⁴

The enthusiasm for Upanishadic thought that was expressed paralleled the intensity with which, in but a few decades, significant Sanskrit works were translated into French. Simon Alexandre Langlois' complete translation of the *Rig Veda* appeared on the heels of Horace Hayman Wilson's (1786-1860) translation in 1838-51, then Hippolyte Fauche's (1797-1869) *Ramayana*, most of the *Mahabharata*, and all of Kalidasa's literary works, Loiseleur-Deslongchamps' *Laws of Manu*, and Eugène Burnouf's (1801-52) *Saddharmapundarika* and *Bhagavata-Purana*. With the exception of Burnouf's, these translations were 'pretty but unfaithful' and still represent a substantial body of work and influence.⁵ Langlois' work, *Samkhya*, which appeared in 1852 in the *Memoires de l'Académie des Sciences morales et politiques*, is still distinguished as an important resource for Indic scholars today.

According to the great Sanskrit scholar Louis Renou (1896-1966), the three principal poets of the Romantic period in France,

Lamartine, Alfred-Victor de Vigny (1797-1863) and Victor Hugo (1802-85) were all greatly influenced by the Upanishads. Their enthusiasm and wonder increased when they became acquainted with translations of the great Sanskrit works. Lamartine lauded the *Shakuntala* as a 'masterpiece of both epic and dramatic poetry, combining in one work the essence of the pastoral charm of the Bible, of the pathos of Aeschylus and tenderness of Racine.'⁶ Vigny described his excitement in his *Journal d'un poète* and in his *Letters*. Victor Hugo's respect and awe for the literary masterpieces of India were born of his perception of the immensity of the universe described in the epics. In 'Supremate,' a poem in his *Legend of the Ages*, he versified the narrative portion of the *Kena Upanishad* in 1870. Sensing that India possessed a great richness of spiritual unity, Henri Früdūric Amiel, a contemporary of Vigny and Hugo, saw the need of 'Brahmanising souls' for the spiritual welfare of humanity.⁷

The Special Significance of France

France played a unique role in the advancement of Indic studies in Germany—Paris had become the 'capital of nascent Indology'. The universality that prevailed in Europe during the nineteenth century permitted German scholars to enter France and England without discrimination. They freely associated with their elite counterparts in their adopted countries. Indology, which began with the first English scholars generously disseminating Sanskrit manuscripts and translations, became centralized in Paris in 1803 and attracted the German scholars who disseminated the wisdom of India further into the West. It is significant that between 1820 and 1850 Europe gained more information about India, both ancient and modern, than it had obtained in twenty-one centuries since Alexander the Great.

In Paris, a British lieutenant was to play a very important role in the focus of Sanskrit studies in Germany. Lt Alexander Hamilton

was employed by the East India Company and was one of the first twenty-four charter members of the Asiatic Society.⁸ Hamilton, who collated Sanskrit manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale for a new edition of Wilkins' translation of the *Hitopadesha*, was the only one apart from Wilkins who knew Sanskrit and lived in Europe at the time.

During the war between England and France, the orientalist Claude de Saint-Martin expressed his enthusiasm for 'the numerous treasures that the literature of India is beginning to offer us,' in his *Le ministère de l'homme-esprit* in 1803. (236) It was the same year Hamilton became a paroled prisoner in Paris but received special treatment due to his scholarly associations. The orientalist Constantine Volney was interested in his work and protected Hamilton's right to continue cataloguing the manuscripts. (67) Hamilton taught Sanskrit to Volney and a few others, including the Latin scholar Burnouf, father of the great philologist Eugène Burnouf, Louis Matthieu Langlūs, Claude Fauriel and Friedrich von Schlegel. Between 1803 and 1804, Schlegel used his knowledge of Sanskrit to translate excerpts from the Indian epics and the *Laws of Manu*. A private course he taught on world literature in Paris in 1804 included Sanskrit works. (67-70)

In 1813, Hamilton published his catalogue of the manuscripts. (158) By 1814, news of Hamilton's presence in Paris had spread. German scholars who were interested in Sanskrit studies rushed to Paris. Franz Bopp, who stayed in Paris to study Sanskrit until 1816, and August Wilhelm Schlegel, who made several trips to Paris to perfect his ideas about Sanskrit, were among them. In 1825 Schlegel returned to France to obtain the fonts of Nagari characters for his editions of the *Hitopadesha* and the *Bhagavadgita*. Bopp and Schlegel moved the centre of Indic studies from Paris and London to Germany by establishing the field of comparative grammar and introducing Sanskrit studies at the Universities of Berlin and Bonn. (78) Indic studies were fur-

ther ensured when both universities received the Nagari typefaces. (88)

Sociūtū Asiatique de Paris

On 1 April 1822, Silvestre de Sacy (1755-1838) chaired the first general meeting of the Sociūtū Asiatique de Paris, which was founded in 1821. Paris became the first European city to officially provide teaching of the Sanskrit language and thus follow the example laid down by the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. Eugène Burnouf was an expert in Vedic language and literature and was everywhere considered the fountainhead of Sanskrit and Indological studies. He was a very enthusiastic member of the Sociūtū Asiatique and contributed many articles to its *Journal*. In 1838, he began using his initiative to establish Indian studies in Calcutta, France and England. Other associates of the Sociūtū included Wilkins, Wilson and Colebrooke from England, and Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Bopp and Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel from Germany.

In the 'Announcements of the Sociūtū,' was announced the need for a better instrument than the existing Indological journals ('new policies and details of interest solely to the East India Company take up so much space'). This was resolved when publication of the *Journal Asiatique* of the Sociūtū began in 1823. It later became a series, producing more expository works to fulfil 'the scientific and literary concerns' of European scholars. (82-4) It was also well known throughout Europe that any research at the Collège de France in Paris set the standard for progress. The German philosophers and writers who came to Paris as associates of the *Sociūtū* studied Sanskrit at the Collège. Christian Lassen (1800-76), the founder of Indian studies in Germany, also studied there.

The Great Demand for Sanskrit Dictionaries is Fulfilled

There was a great demand from Euro-

pean scholars for a Sanskrit dictionary to further their studies. Wilson was the first to provide one. His mentor in Sanskrit studies, Colebrooke, was president of the Asiatic Society at the time. He appointed Wilson as secretary in 1811, a post he held until 1832. Wilson continued Jones' work in Indic studies with the more methodological approach that he acquired from Colebrooke. In 1819, the weight of Wilson's position as secretary of Calcutta's mint led the Indian government to send him to Varanasi to start a Sanskrit college.

Wilson compiled and published his practical and useful Sanskrit-English dictionary in Calcutta in 1819. (53) More than 1000 pages long, it was reprinted in 1832 in Calcutta and posthumously in 1874 in London. It was the only dictionary available to Europeans with an interest in Sanskrit studies and enjoyed this hegemony until 1875, when the Roth-Böhtlingk German dictionary of Sanskrit appeared.

Monier-Williams'

Sanskrit-English Dictionary

The highly qualified lexicographer and leading Sanskritist Sir Monier-Williams (1819-99) dedicated his life to the Sanskrit language. In 1846 he published the *Elementary Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* for the benefit of students. It was in great demand and many editions followed. He occupied Oxford University's Sanskrit chair from 1860 to 1888.⁹ His *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, originally published from London in 1851, was published again from Oxford in 1872 and more recently from India.¹⁰ He is indebted to the German Indologists for its second (posthumous) edition in 1899, which was written with the collaboration of Ernst Leumann and Carl Cappeller (1840-1925).

Keenly aware of the need for reliable Sanskrit resources, Monier-Williams was dedicated to the task of compiling Sanskrit-English and English-Sanskrit dictionaries and Sanskrit grammars, and continued to improve his

Sanskrit-English dictionary throughout his life. A new edition of the dictionary was published in 1951. His *Sanskrit Manual for Composition* and *Practical Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* were both published in 1862 from London during his tenure at Oxford.

He was mindful of the prosaic beginnings of Indology in Europe when he wrote in *Hinduism* (1877):

India, though it has, as we have seen, more than 500 spoken dialects, has only one sacred language and only one sacred literature, accepted and revered by all adherents of Hinduism alike, however diverse in race, dialect, rank and creed. That language is Sanskrit, and that literature is Sanskrit literature—the only repository of the Veda or ‘knowledge’ in its widest sense; the only vehicle of Hindu theology, philosophy, law and mythology; the only mirror in which all the creeds, opinions, customs, and usages of the Hindus are faithfully reflected; and (if we may be allowed a fourth metaphor) the only quarry whence the requisite materials may be obtained for improving the vernaculars or for expressing important religious and scientific ideas.¹¹

To know the Hindus, to understand their past and present condition, to reach their very heart and soul, we must study Sanskrit literature. It is, in truth, even more to India than classical and patristic literature was to Europe at the time of the Reformation. It gives a deeper impress to the Hindu mind, so that every Hindu, however unlettered, is unconsciously affected by it.¹²

Sanskrit Dictionaries Published in Germany

During the golden age of Sanskrit studies in Germany, English dictionaries, expensive and difficult to obtain, were in demand. The poet Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) copied Wilson’s entire Sanskrit-English dictionary. Franz Bopp and leading Sanskritist Theodor Benfey (1809-81) each composed German glossaries for student use in 1850 and 1865, respectively. The translation of Panini’s grammar into English by Richard Garbe (1857-1927) was also a boon to many Eastern and Western scholars. Theodor Goldstücker

(1821-72) produced an unfinished Sanskrit dictionary in English in 1855. In *Panini: His Place in Sanskrit Literature* Goldstücker praised Panini’s work:

Panini’s grammar is the centre of a vast and important branch of the ancient literature. No work has struck deeper roots than his in the soil of the scientific development of India. It is the standard of accuracy in speech—the grammatical basis of the *vaidika* commentaries. It is appealed to by every scientific writer whenever he meets with a linguistic difficulty. Besides the inspired seekers of the works which are the root of Hindu belief, Panini is the only one among those authors of scientific works who may be looked upon as real personages, who is a *ṛsi* in the proper sense of the word—an author supposed to have had the foundation of his work revealed to him by a divinity.¹³

Otto N Böhlingk (1815-1904) and Rudolf von Roth compiled the first comprehensive German dictionary of the Sanskrit language in seven volumes. This work, known as the *PW* or *Petersburger Wörterbuch*, was published by the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg between 1852 and 1875.¹⁴ The Russian Academy later sponsored a shorter version by Böhlingk that was published between 1879 and 1889 and referred to as the *pw* or smaller *Petersburger Wörterbuch*. (361) All generations of Germans are indebted to these latter two works which form a comprehensive Indian thesaurus. In 1887, Cappeller edited his still smaller dictionary of 550 pages, *Sanskrit Wörterbuch*. It was based on both *pw* and *PW* for the use of beginners. (361) An enlarged English edition of *Sanskrit Wörterbuch* was published soon after in 1891. Supplements to both, published by Richard Schmidt (1866-1939) during 1924-28, included new additions from later translations. (361) The *Sanskrit Wörterbuch* was reprinted in 1991 by Motilal Banarsidass and remains unsurpassed to this day.

In 1927, the Latin scholar Friedrich August Rosen (1805-37), a professor of Oriental Studies and of Sanskrit at London University College, furnished Berlin with the ‘best col-

lection¹⁵ of grammars and lexicons produced by Hindus that missionaries had contributed since the eighteenth century. An exhaustive Sanskrit-English dictionary recently published in Pune brings these valuable resources up to date.

Early German Sanskritists

Kant (1712-1804) was the first German philosopher of importance with a serious interest in Indian philosophy and Sanskrit. His doctrine of the 'categorical imperative' may have been derived from Hindu philosophy, according to the Soviet scholar Theodore Stcherbatsky (1866-1942). After Kant, the works of Friedrich von Schlegel and August Wilhelm von Schlegel were next to appear. They were both great pioneers of nineteenth-century German Indology.

Friedrich von Schlegel was the first German Indologist to study Sanskrit and Indian religion and philosophy in depth.¹⁶ His knowledge of Persian, Greek and Latin put him in a unique position to recognize Indo-European linguistic relationships. Schlegel wrote acclaimed works on history and philosophy. Among them is the pioneering work *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Altertumskunde* (*On the Language and Wisdom of India: A Contribution to the Foundation of Antiquity*), which he wrote in 1808 after returning to Germany. This was a primary publication of nineteenth-century European Indology influenced by the Romantic Movement. This work thereafter inspired Germans to refer to the 'Wisdom of India' and was enthusiastically acknowledged for its scholarly translations of extracts from the Sanskrit texts of the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Ramayana* and the sacred literature of Buddhism. Schlegel wrote:

May Indic studies find as many disciples and protectors as Germany and Italy saw spring up in such great numbers for Greek studies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and may they be able to do as many things in as short a time.

The Renaissance of antiquity promptly transformed and rejuvenated all the sciences; we might add that it rejuvenated and transformed the world. We could even say that the effects of Indic studies, if these enterprises were taken up and introduced into learned circles with the same energy today, would be no less great or far-reaching.¹⁷

August Wilhelm von Schlegel occupied the first chair of Sanskrit and Indology at the University of Bonn.¹⁸ He was the first to publish standard-text editions with penetrating commentaries in classical Latin translations of the *Bhagavadgita*, *Hitopadesha* and the *Ramayana*.¹⁹ Between 1820 and 1830 he published *Indische Bibliothek*, a collection of Indian texts. He is regarded as the founder of Sanskrit philology in Germany. His unrestrained praise for the Upanishads and especially for the *Bhagavadgita* elicited this fervent remark:

If the study of Sanskrit had brought nothing more than the satisfaction of being able to read this superb poem in the original, I would have been amply compensated for all my labors. It is a sublime reunion of poetic and philosophical genius.²⁰

(To be concluded)

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Mousetrap

A mouse looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package; what food might it contain? He was aghast to discover that it was a mousetrap!

Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning, 'There is a mousetrap in the house, there is a mousetrap in the house.'

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, 'Mr Mouse, I can tell you this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me; I can't be bothered by it.'

The mouse turned to the pig and told him, 'There is a mousetrap in the house.'

'I am so very sorry Mr Mouse,' sympathized the pig, 'but there is nothing I can do about it but pray; be assured that you are in my prayers.'

The mouse turned to the cow, who replied, 'Oh, a mousetrap, Mr Mouse? I am in grave danger, eh?'

So the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that the trap had caught the tail of a venomous snake. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. His wife's sickness continued so that friends and neighbours came to sit with her round the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; in fact, she died, and so many people came for her funeral. The farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.

So the next time we hear that someone is facing a problem and think that it does not concern us, let us remember that when the least of us is threatened, all of us are at risk.

—from cyberspace

Kuṇḍika Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

Gradual liberation in the case of knowers of Brahman with attributes (*continued*)

स्वदेहस्य तु मूर्धानं ये प्राप्य परमां गतिम्
भूयस्ते न निवर्तन्ते परापरविदो जनाः ॥२८॥

28. Those [sages, monks] who, attaining to the top of the head of their own bodies, [remain] in [that] supreme (that is transcendent) State [of Brahman-awareness] do not again return [to this relative plane of existence]. [They are the] knowers of Higher (*para*) [Brahman] [as well as] lower (*apara*) [Brahman].¹

The liberation attained by the knowers of Brahman without attributes

निर्विशेषब्रह्मज्ञानिनां मोक्षः
न साक्षिणं साक्ष्यधर्माः संस्पृशन्ति विलक्षणम् ।
अविकारमुदासीनं गृहीधर्माः प्रदीपवत् ॥२९॥

29. The characteristics of the objects seen do not touch the seer (witness), who is different [from those objects]. The characteristics of a householder [do not affect the ascetic monk who is] free from any [mental] modification and is unconcerned (that is, uninvolved)² [in respect of the world of duality], just as a lamp [remains unaffected by the objects it illumines].

जले वापि स्थले वापि लुठत्वेष जडात्मकः ।
नाहं विलिप्ये तद्धर्मैर्घटधर्मैर्नभो यथा ॥३०॥

30. Let this [body, which is] insentient by nature wallow in water or on the ground. I am not smeared (that is, tarnished, stained or tainted) by its [the body's] characteristics even as *ākāśa* (space) is not [tainted] by the characteristics of the jar [which encloses the space].³

निष्क्रियोऽस्म्यविकारोऽस्मि निष्कलोऽस्मि निराकृतिः ।
निर्विकल्पोऽस्मि नित्योऽस्मि निरालम्बोऽस्मि निर्द्वयः ॥३१॥

31. I am actionless; I am without modifications; I am partless (that is, homogeneous, whole); [I am] formless; I am [the One] without the other;⁴ I am eternal; I am without [any kind of] support;⁵ I am [the] non-dual [Truth].⁶

सर्वात्मकोऽहं सर्वोऽहं सर्वातीतोऽहमद्वयः ।
केवलाखण्डबोधोऽहं स्वानन्दोऽहं निरन्तरः ॥३२॥

32. I am the Self of all;⁷ I am the All;⁸ I am [the Truth] transcending all;⁹ I am [the] non-dual [Truth]. I am indivisible Awareness (Consciousness)—pure and simple; I am [the absolute] Bliss [rejoicing in] my own Self,¹⁰ unbroken (uninterrupted).

स्वमेव सर्वतः पश्यन्मन्यमानः स्वमद्वयम् ।

स्वानन्दमनुभुञ्जानो निर्विकल्पो भवाम्यहम् ॥३३॥

33. Seeing one's own Self everywhere, realizing [through profound reflection and contemplation] one's own Self as the One-without-a-second, experiencing the [absolute] Bliss of one's own Self, I remain as [the One] without the other.¹¹

गच्छंस्तिष्ठन्न्युपविशञ्चयानो वान्यथापि वा ।

यथेच्छया वसेद्विद्वानात्मारामः सदा मुनिः ॥३४॥ इत्युपनिषत् ॥

34. Going (or walking), standing (or staying), sitting, lying down or otherwise [that is, in whatever posture], an enlightened sage may live in whatever manner he pleases, always delighting [sporting with unbounded joy] in the Self (Atman). *

Notes

1. The worshippers of the pure, resplendent Brahman (*śabala-brahma*) enter the world of Brahma (*brahmaloka*), that is, the sphere of *Hiranyagarbha*, along the path of the Sun (*sūryamārga*, or *uttarāyana mārga*) by exiting from the crown of the head (*brahma-randhra*) through the *suṣumnā* canal; and there they are engaged in their quest for the attributeless Brahman till the end of the *kalpa* (till *pralaya*, or great dissolution, takes place). Having lived there till such time, they ultimately merge with Brahma on the attenuation of their subtle desires and attractions (*vāsanā-kṣaya*). Thereafter they never return to the plane of relative existence. This is the gradual liberation (*krama-mukti*) attained by the knowers of Brahma with attributes (*savišeṣa brahmajñāni*). On the other hand, the knowers of the attributeless, absolute Brahman (*nirvišeṣa brahmajñāni*) will attain direct, instant liberation (*sadyo-mukti*), here and now (*ihaiiva*).
2. Standing apart, unattached, unaffected.
3. The Atman is absolutely unattached by any of its *upādhis*, or limiting adjuncts. Compare Śaṅkara's famous verse 'Asaṅgo'ham asaṅgo'ham asaṅgo'ham punaḥ punaḥ; I am unattached (free), I am unattached (free), I am unattached (free); I repeatedly assert [that I am unattached (free)].'
4. The word used in the text is *nirvikalpa*, often used in regard to Atman/Brahman and Its realization. It literally means 'without any *vikalpa*'. *Vikalpa* means an alternative, an 'other', as against the Self, vacillation, wavering, mental waves arising due to thought or reflection. *Nirvikalpa* therefore means recognizing no distinction of subject and object; in one word, it means the subject-objectless Reality—that is, the ultimate Truth transcending all duality of subject and object.
5. Since the Atman is eternally free, it is absolutely independent of anything else as its support.
6. The Atman alone *is*—It is absolute Existence or Being (*asti*, or *sat*). Since there is nothing else apart from the Atman, It is non-dual (*advaya* or *nirdvaya*).
7. Compare Swami Vivekananda's poem, 'The Song of the Sannyasin': 'Say, "Peace to all: From me no danger be/ To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high./ In those that lowly creep, I am the Self of all!"'
8. The Atman is the immanent, all-pervading Principle (Truth) of all beings, '*Ābrahma-stamba-paryantam*; from Brahma to a clump of grass', which is the usual phrase in Vedānta.
9. The Atman is also the transcendent Principle (Truth) beyond all duality represented by name and form.
10. Compare Swami Vivekananda: 'I am free and therefore depend on none else for my happiness.' Such a sage rejoicing in his own Self is called an *ātmārāma*, *ātmārata*, *ātmakṛida*, *ātmāpriya*, *ātmāṛpta*, *ātmasantuṣṭa*. He is independent, free and absorbed in the Bliss of his own Self.
11. See note 4.

Glimpses of Holy Lives

The Sole Refuge

Anantrao Deshpande was sad because he was childless. In order to assuage his grief, his elder brother Narayanrao let him adopt his son Harinarayan. By a twist of fate, however, a son was born to Anantrao within a year of his adopting Harinarayan. Clever and calculative, as many worldly-wise people are, Anantrao now began looking for excuses to get rid of his nephew. It was not long before the idea struck him: Harinarayan showed marked religious tendencies though he was still a little boy. Was that why Narayanrao let him take his son so easily? Perhaps, who could tell? So Anantrao curtly asked his brother to take his 'lazy' son back.

The pretext came in handy, but unfortunately the blame stuck! It is almost always the case that the lack of interest and concern regarding mundane affairs that religious people show is misunderstood as laziness and irresponsibility. Spiritual life is real for spiritual people, but worldly people suspect the genuineness of such a life and see it merely as a front for some hidden weakness. As a matter of fact, had his wife not prevailed, Narayanrao, too, was sure to turn his son out.

Harinarayan's mother was the only person in the family to sympathize with his aspirations. Not only did she shield her son from his intolerant father, but being herself a woman of like disposition, she carefully nurtured Harinarayan's spiritual tendencies. And gradually Harinarayan grew up into a fine young man.

The Turning Point

It is ironical, but the more worldly a man is the more he struggles to appear religious; he cares a lot about orthodoxy and the formalities of religion. But this kind of religiosity melts

away at the first touch of a test, and the man behind the mask is exposed for what he is.

When he was well past middle age, Narayanrao decided to go on a pilgrimage to Varanasi before he was too old. So he set out with his wife, leaving Harinarayan behind to care for the property. In those days the pilgrimage usually took a couple of years.

Two years were more than enough for Harinarayan to empty his father's house. His compassionate heart could never say no to anybody who came asking, and now there was none to stop him. Very soon he gave away the cows and the gold to the brahmins and the poor and began spending the remaining money organizing festivals and entertaining sadhus. That Harinarayan could sing kirtan exceptionally well was an added attraction to the simple village folk, who came to regard him as an incarnation of the divine sage Narada and thronged to hear him.

This was the scene that greeted Narayanrao when he returned from his pilgrimage. It gave him the shock of his life to find that it had taken less than two years for his worthless son to bring down what it had taken him a lifetime to achieve! Quaking with fury, he roared at Harinarayan: 'Get out of my house—now! And don't show me your face ever again!'

Neither his wife's implorations nor the agitated villagers' warnings of divine retribution had any effect on Narayanrao; nothing could save Harinarayan this time.

Towards Fulfilment

For a devotee like Harinarayan, even a forest, where it is possible to feel God's presence, is preferable to a godless house overflowing with riches. Praying for his father's welfare, he silently walked out and sat under a

tree next to the village temple. It was now the villagers' turn to help Harinarayan. For three days he accepted their service and spoke to them about how to live a truly religious life while living in the world. On the fourth day, having done his best to console the sad villagers, he left the place for good and turned his feet towards Prayag.

After Harinarayan had spent twelve long years in hard tapasya, he was blessed with a vision of the Divine Mother. 'Go to Narsimhpur,' Mother commanded. 'There you will meet your guru, by whose grace you will realize God.'

Miracles Do Happen

At Narsimhpur Harinarayan settled down beside a small temple on the riverside and continued his spiritual practices with redoubled enthusiasm. The familiar sight of Harinarayan absorbed in contemplation, completely oblivious of time or place, soon filled people's hearts with awe and reverence.

One early morning Harinarayan was lost in meditation, when a torrential rain caused a flash flood which submerged the little temple. When people came out of their houses after the rain let up, they were deeply grieved to find the temple still under water; there was just no way they could get to it.

They need not have grieved. Beneath the waters a miracle had happened. The divine sage Narada had come to the devotee's rescue, protecting him by his spiritual power. Not

only that. Immensely pleased with Harinarayan's one-pointed devotion, Narada blessed him with an experience of the supreme Truth!

It was a full week before the flood waters gradually subsided, allowing the anxious villagers to reach the temple. Expecting to see nothing but a corpse, the villagers approached the temple with hesitant steps. What met their eyes when they peeped inside, however, was a Harinarayan immersed in an unusually profound meditation! The strange radiance of his face told them that the devotee had now become a saint.

* * *

Sant Harinarayan spent the remaining years of his life in native Maharashtra. Once during this period he paid a visit to the famed Panduranga temple of Pandharpur. The Lord Himself descended from the altar to meet his devotee. Embracing Sant Harinarayan, He said, 'You don't have to take the trouble of coming this far to have My darshan anymore. Be assured that I will be by your side during your Ekadashi kirtans.'

It is said that in his final moments Sant Harinarayan had a desire to bathe in the sacred Ganga before giving up his mortal body. No sooner did the desire arise in the saint's mind than Mother Ganga appeared right in his courtyard and fulfilled her child's last wish. Sant Harinarayan attained mahasamadhi in 1591. *

The Devil's Visit

Transformed into an angel of light, the devil appeared to one of the holy Fathers of the Desert and said, 'I am the Angel Gabriel and I have been sent to thee by the Almighty.'

The monk replied, 'Think again. You must have been sent to someone else. I have done nothing to deserve the visit of an angel.'

With that the devil vanished and never again dared come anywhere near the monk.

—Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*, 1.180

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras—An Exposition

SWAMI PREMESHANANDA

(Translated by Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee)

Chapter 4 (continued)

1. *Janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ-samādhijāḥ siddhayaḥ.*

Siddhis (powers) are attained by birth, chemical means, power of [sacred] words, mortification or concentration.

Comment: Struggle with Prakriti (nature) goes on ceaselessly in human life. Our everyday chores to get food and clothing for the sake of sustaining our body are simply extraction of essential things out of Prakriti. All of us can see how this process has been enlarged and extended with the aid of science. The efforts that were made in ancient times to acquire mastery over nature are known by the name 'yoga'. Man can himself become powerful and also remove to some extent the miseries of others by attaining various kinds of marvellous abilities like those of curing diseases by psychic power and bringing news from distant places. It is the possession of such uncommon abilities that has been termed 'siddhi'. Some persons are born with such siddhis due to acquisitions made in earlier lives. Nowadays patients are rendered unconscious by the administration of drugs and surgery is performed on them. In earlier times also people used to know various drugs of that type. Even now at some places we hear about feats like the performance of an impossible task by dint of mantras and the attainment of unusual powers through the observance of severe austerities. But it is only the powers that come through samadhi attained by following the path of Yoga that are most beneficial to men.

It has already been said that one can attain siddhi by three means: samadhi, mortifi-

cation and repetition of mantras. Certain persons are found to possess siddhis right from their birth. It is heard that certain materials by their properties generate psychic powers in men. About siddhis Swami Vivekananda has said that these represent 'milestones of progress'. When in course of spiritual practice an aspirant attains a siddhi, it increases his enthusiasm. But it is usually found that those who embark on yoga without doing selfless work, worship of God and study of scriptures as the means of purification of mind—when they acquire some kind of siddhi, remain infatuated with that and do not progress any further. Some among such men are even found to meet with downfall.

Siddhis are of two kinds, the first being in the form of 'knowledge' and the second, in the form of 'activity'. The first kind of siddhi enables one to see and hear from a great distance and read the thoughts of others. Some are able to know definitely the past and future of themselves and of other people. The second kind of siddhi generally has six forms: the power of killing somebody (*māraṇa*), the power of ruining an adversary or distracting somebody's mind and thus making him leave a place or occupation (*uccāṭana*), the power of subjugating somebody (*vaśikaraṇa*), the power of transfixing somebody (*stambhana*), the power of propitiating the gods to bring happiness to somebody (*svastyayana*) and the power of acting

malevolently against somebody (*vidveṣaṇa*).

However, there is no end to siddhis. Everybody knows about the eight siddhis. There is no feat that cannot be accomplished, no topic that cannot be known by the practice of the eightfold Yoga. Although little yogic practice is at present in vogue in our country, yet

the general public, including even those who have had modern education, believe in things like curing diseases and foretelling the future by yogic means. As a result many people get cheated, and it becomes impossible to ascertain the presence or absence of siddhi in any of the practitioners.

2. *Jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ prakṛty-āpūrāt.*

The change [of the body] into another species is by the filling in of nature [that is, by the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being and is struggling to express itself].

3. *Nimittamaprayojakaṁ prakṛtīnām varaṇabhedastu tataḥ kṣetrikavat.*

Good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformation of nature, but they act as breakers of obstacles to the evolutions of nature. It is just as when a farmer breaks the obstacles to the course of water, water runs down by its own nature.

Comment: We watch the progress and decline of men all the time. Yet our understanding of these phenomena is so erroneous that some of us say, 'Everything happens according to God's will' and some others attribute everything to destiny. A very small number of people hold that progress and decline occur as a result of one's own acts. It is essential that we comprehend this matter well. Here it has been explained clearly through two aphorisms. Maharshi Patanjali says that the rise and fall we see in human life are merely the manifestation and non-manifestation of the real nature or Self of a living being. We see the different objects in this universe as divided into discrete units. But actually all the objects in the universe are situated within one integral reality. In the *Bhagavadgita* it is said, 'All this is strung in Me, as a row of jewels on a thread.'¹ Hence the more one is able to take the mind away from diversity and inequity and approach the underlying undivided entity, the more does

the majesty of the integral reality become manifest within oneself.

We think that a man's perseverance and austerities are the cause of his progress. But in reality, as a result of his efforts only the obstacles in the path of progress are removed. It is from within that strength comes. It is just like bringing water from a tank to a nearby field. One has to remove the mass of soil that lies as an obstacle in between the tank and the field; when that is done, water rushes into the field through the opening it gets.

If one knows this fact all despondency becomes dispelled from one's mind and there comes unlimited enthusiasm for exerting oneself. For this reason it is extremely necessary that everybody should know this fact. That is why Swamiji has said, 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man' and 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.'

4. *Nirmāṇa-cittāny-asmitā-mātrāt.*

From egoism alone proceed the created minds [that is, minds distinct from original minds and created by yogis. Yogis attach these minds to certain bodies, also created by them, to work out their karma quickly].

5. *Pravṛtti-bhede prayojakam cittam-ekam-anekeṣām.*

Though the activities of the different created minds are various, the one original mind is the controller of them all.

Comment: Brahman divides one part of Itself into multiple sub-parts with the help of *vidyā* maya (power of knowledge); each sub-part represents a jiva (individual living being). This means, something like a covering appears before the jiva and as the jiva goes on watching it, it altogether forgets its own identity. After that, through hundreds of thousands of years various kinds of curious changes take place in that covering. The jiva looks at them, but feels as if these changes and transformations are happening to itself. Such is the life of a jiva.

The jiva feels so much interest in watching this play of maya that its awareness of its own real nature does not return until the play is over. The play gets very much interesting as it nears its end. As a result, extreme misery comes along with happiness. As the jiva suffers too much, now and then the thought arises in its mind that it would have been better had it not been born at all. To ameliorate this suffering of the jiva, the supreme Brahman sends through saints and various scriptures the glad tidings about the kingdom of peace and bliss (*śāntiloka*) and the way to it. These tidings reach the ears of very few people. Even those who hear it pass many a life deliberating about following the way. Those who try to proceed along the spiritual path at a really fast pace, experience the backward pull of the accumulated mass of impressions of some hundred thousand past lives. Many an aspirant who becomes qualified to attain freedom is thus forced to return even when close to attaining the knowledge of his true self. The temptations put forth by celestial beings about which we spoke earlier are merely these past impressions expressing themselves in another form.

Yogis who have attained some psychic powers may adopt a queer means to undo the hold of these past impressions totally. For sat-

isfying and exhausting those unfulfilled desires whose downward pull remains in the mind-stuff, they may manufacture certain beings out of themselves. Then they can use the bodies and minds of such beings to have those enjoyments which they had not experienced earlier and thus destroy the mass of their past impressions.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the smaller enjoyments should be renounced after experiencing them a little and the bigger ones should be renounced through discrimination. In the Puranas it is found that the yogis used to be done with enjoyments by resorting to 'manufactured bodies' (*nirmāṇa-dehas*).

Man is born impelled by his past impressions. But these beings with manufactured bodies do not have any impressions of their own behind them. So the question arises, how are their bodies and minds created? According to the seers, these beings do not have any separate existence. They are like puppets in the hands of a yogi—they only serve to show their play to their creator. We have said earlier that a person who has mastered the art of concentration (*siddha-puruṣa*) acquires tremendous authority over nature. He creates these manufactured bodies, as it were, out of his own entity (*asmitāmātrāt*). When his interest in enjoyment becomes satisfied with the help of the bodies of these beings, they just vanish. This is just like a dream. A dream has no correspondence with reality, but it remains as impression.

The thing appears to be very strange and impossible. But as we have repeatedly said earlier, Prakriti or Mahamaya, which rules over this changing universe, becomes to a large extent subservient to the yogis and for this reason they can perform many impossible feats.²

6. *Tatra dhyāna-jam-anāśayam.*

Among the various minds [that we see in various men], [only] that which is attained by samadhi [perfect concentration] is desireless.

Comment: Many things have been said about the human mind. The gist of all that is this: after attaining samadhi through continuous reflection on his true Self, when the yogi's mind comes back to the ordinary plane, the

mind-stuff which he experiences is shorn of all past impressions. It then becomes like a seed which has been roasted; not even a trace of desire remains in it.

7. *Karmāsuklākṛṣṇaṁ yogīnaś-trividham-itareṣāṁ.*

Works are neither black nor white for the yogis; for others they are threefold—black, white and mixed.

Comment: Any work is associated with both good and bad. In the *Gīta* it has been said, 'All undertakings are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke.'³

But a yogi who stops the modifications of

the mind-stuff and engages it in the contemplation of God harbours no desires in his mind. Hence any work done by him has no association of merit or sin with it.

8. *Tatas-tad-vipākānugaṇānām-evābhivyaktir-vāsanānām.*

From these threefold works are manifested in each state only those desires (that are) fitting to that state alone. (The others are held in abeyance for the time being.) [This shows that the power of environment is a great check and can control even karma itself.]

9. *Jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām-apy-ānantaryāṁ smṛti-saṁskārayor-ekarūpatvāt.*

There is consecutiveness in desires [that is, no discontinuity in the chain of cause and effect], even though [different incarnations are] separated by species, space and time, there being identification of memory and impressions.

10. *Tāsām-anādītvāṁ cāśīṣo nityatvāt.*

Thirst for happiness being eternal, desires are without beginning.

Comment: A jiva does karma impelled by past impressions and that karma in its turn becomes stored in the form of an impression in its mind; it is just like a boomerang. But nobody can tell when this karma began. Only our life goes on revolving on it for ever as on a wheel, until at last it somehow succeeds in getting out of this cycle and attains eternal Peace. Thus we reach the conclusion that there is no beginning but there is an end to karma.

Those who attain perfect knowledge say that this world is like a dream. While dreaming, we see so many animals, trees and plants, buildings and so on and seem to witness through our own eyes various events. But

when we wake up we realize without any doubt that those things never had any existence and none of the events ever took place. It is nothing but a marvellous piece of magic or illusion. During dream the mind takes the form of these things and with various gestures only simulates the happening of these events. In the dream-world four actors—mind [manas], intellect (buddhi), chitta⁴ and ego—show their tricks. In reality, it is the subtle body which appears before us in the form of these scenes. It is just as completely false as the play in a theatre. A person we see in a dream has not been born out of the womb of any mother or sired by any father at any place or

time.

When this life's sleep ends and the covering of maya is removed, the yogi realizes that what he has seen or experienced are all false like a dream.

There is no jiva that wants to die; every jiva wants to live forever. Hence as soon as one body perishes it assumes another body. Due to circumstances or as a result of karma, one's body is formed at a particular place, at a particular time and with a particular constitution, and the desires that become manifest correspond to these. It is impossible that one would experience in one life the fulfilment of the desires stored through innumerable lives. Hence only those experiences which can be had in a particular state are gone through in that state. Suppose a man impelled by his karma is reborn with a woman's body. Then, only desire for experiences appropriate for a woman, and not desires appropriate for a male body, would arise in the person's mind. In this way only a portion of the previously accumulated stock of karma is worn out through experiences gathered by the assumption of innumerable bodies of different kinds; the rest remains stored and becomes the cause of repeated births. It so happens that as the result of a certain karma performed a hundred births earlier, an impression had become stored in the mind. As the conditions were not favourable in the intervening births the corresponding desire could not express itself in the mind-stuff. After a hundred births, getting an opportunity, it surprisingly popped up in the mind from somewhere or other. If one knew

the secret of karma and transmigration, one could keep at bay many an obstacle in the path of progress.

(To be continued)

Notes and References

1. *Bhagavadgita*, 7.7.
2. In his explanation of aphorism 4.4, Swami Vivekananda says, 'With a view to exhausting their karma quickly, yogis create *kāya-vyūha*, or groups of bodies, in which to work it out. For all these bodies they create minds from egoism (*ahaṅkāra*). These are called 'created minds', in contradistinction to their original minds.' In his explanation of the following aphorism (4.5), Swamiji says, 'These different minds, which act in these different bodies are called made-minds, and the bodies, made-bodies; that is, manufactured bodies and minds. ... The material out of which a manufactured mind is created is the very same material which is used for the macrocosm. ... *Asmitā*, egoism, is the material, the fine state of existence, out of which these made-minds and made-bodies of the yogi are manufactured. Therefore, when the yogi has found the secret of these energies of nature, he can manufacture any number of bodies or minds out of the substance known as egoism.' —Editor, *Udbo-dhan*.
3. *Gīta*, 18.48.
4. By chitta Swami Premeshananda means 'the sum total of past impressions'; see note 1 under the opening paragraph of Chapter 3 (March 2004, 218). —Translator.

The Ministry of Agriculture decreed that sparrows were a menace to the crops and should be exterminated. When this was done hordes of insects that the sparrows would have eaten descended on the harvest and began to ravage the crops, whereupon the Ministry came up with the idea of costly pesticides. The pesticides made the food expensive. They also made it a health hazard. It was discovered too late that it was the sparrows who, though feeding on the crops, managed to keep the food wholesome and inexpensive.

—Anthony de Mello, *The Prayer of the Frog*, 2.195



Reviews



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

Karma—Rhythmic Return to Harmony.
Ed. V Hanson, R Stewart and S Nicholson.
Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow
Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007.
E-mail: *mlbd@vsnl.com*. xx + 292 pp. Rs
295.

The book contains twenty-five articles on the various aspects of karma. All the contributors except two are Westerners and so the views expressed in the book are predominantly occidental.

The Law of Karma is the key to unravel the mysteries of life. It reconciles the inexplicable link between the miserable, hard realities of the world with the unbounded compassion of our ever-loving Creator. This concept is not new to the West. 'As you sow, so you reap' is an old saying. In the 1800s this idea was developed in a more comprehensive manner by the leaders of the Transcendentalist Movement such as Ralph Waldo Emerson. He looked at the world as a multiplication table or a mathematical equation, which, turned in whatever way, would balance itself. Whatever figure we may take out of it, exactly that value—not more, not less—will still return to us. 'Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue is rewarded, and every wrong is redressed, in silence and eternity,' he observed.

Though the word *karma* has become extremely popular and appears even in English dictionaries, most people's understanding of the word is very simplistic. Newton's Third Law of Motion, 'Action and reaction are equal and opposite', is often quoted to explain the law. This may be true to some extent, but the scope of karma is much more pervasive and complex. It is the universal harmonic law of adjustment, of compensation, to which all natural processes are subject, and its ramifications are complex and endless. In the words of Madame Blavatsky, karma is the ultimate law of the universe, the source, the origin and fount of all laws that exist throughout nature. It is a self-adjusting intelligent mechanism that comes into play to restore equilib-

rium whenever there is imbalance. It restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical plane and broken harmony in the moral world.

The Law of Karma can be comprehended in totality only in the background of the Law of Reincarnation. Unfortunately, Western psychologists do not seem to recognize the Law of Reincarnation. In the Christian, especially the Protestant, tradition, reincarnation theory is unacceptable because Christ has the power to save us, and through death and resurrection, raise us to everlasting life. Christ, however, does not give any such promise. On the other hand, he says, 'The man who infringes even one of the least of my commands and teaches others to do the same will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven.' Thus Christ describes the Law of Karma in exactly the same terms in which it can be explained. The Law of Reincarnation is also implied in another statement of his. When someone asked Christ, 'Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.'

Among Western psychologists, Jung openly accepted the Law of Reincarnation, though his own disciples tended to cover it up for fear of being rejected by other Western psychologists. A number of recent researches carried out in the West have indicated that there is substance in this theory. A clear understanding of the Law of Reincarnation alone can provide the missing keystone in the overarching bridge between the Eastern and Western psychologies.

Another familiar misconception about karma is that it is a fatalistic principle that cannot be changed by any means; it is a mechanical system in which engaging a gear moves a cam, which in turn eventually turns a wheel in a prescribed, linear, cause-and-effect manner. This kind of causality implies a rigid determinism, an unalterable sequence of events. But in reality, it is not so. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'If it is someone's karma to suffer, it is

your karma to help him out of the suffering.' This concern for others, our duty, inner obligation, social responsibility towards our neighbours to help them out of their karma, may be called dharma. Thus, while karma is a horizontal, predetermined impulse towards flexibility, and operates in a straight line of action and reaction in a groove, dharma may be described as a vertical, developmental expression which breaks the groove, breaks the pattern of the straight line, and is responsible for all the dramatic turning points in history. The history of the world, therefore, is a mixture of both horizontal and vertical movements. When karma is looked at from this perspective, it is no more a binding factor in an individual's or a nation's journey towards perfection, but coupled with dharma, it becomes a liberating and progressive factor.

The book elucidates the salient differences between Eastern and Western psychologies about the understanding of the Law of Karma and the Law of Reincarnation, and tries to reconcile them. More such books are welcome. That will help bring about a total and comprehensive understanding of the Truth, enabling humankind to march towards perfection.

Swami Abhiramananda
Belur Math

Mirror of Consciousness: Art, Creativity and Veda. Anna Bonshek. Motilal Banarsidass. 2001. xi + 494. Rs 595.

In *Mirror of Consciousness* Dr Anna Bonshek breaks new ground in art criticism. She takes her guidelines from Maharishi Vedic Science and the *Vastushastra Upanishad* (its text is printed in the appendix of her book in the original Sanskrit with English transliteration and translation) and has an admirable freshness of approach. She believes in the possibility of a universal state of consciousness, the ability to live this permanently in individual and social life, and the potential to express universality in art. Maharishi's Science of Creative Intelligence connects the main principles of Maharishi Vedic Science to the main conclusions of modern science and modern disciplines. The Science of Creative Intelligence presents a novel appreciation of creativity by elucidating how life develops according to the inner dynamics of a global field of consciousness and thus founding a platform for discussion of universal value in art.

Part 1 of the book is of a fundamental nature and is entitled 'Art as a Language Game: Lamenting the Loss of Universal Value'. It has the following four sections: 'Modern Art and Theory: Created by a Genius, Art Evokes Universal Aesthetic Emotion', 'Indian Theory: Art and Śānta', 'Post-modern Art as a Pluralist Language Game: Pointing to the Unnameable' and 'Beyond Postmodernism: Universal Value in Art and a New Sense of Self'. Part 2 discusses consciousness with special reference to Maharishi's technology. Part 3 considers the complete disclosure of nature's creative mechanics in Vedic literature. Part 4 is concerned with 'Natural Law'. Part 5 examines the artist as a universal human being. Part 6 is a critique of the *Vastushastra Upanishad*.

Dr Bonshek's book is a remarkable work of synthesis. It achieves a rare integration of the theory and practice of art with the sound, form and semantics of language. She emphasizes the primary role of higher states of consciousness in buttressing the different processes involved in the making and experiencing of art, irrespective of time and place.

Mirror of Consciousness is indeed an interdisciplinary achievement. It is a notable contribution to literary and art history and aesthetics.

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Tantra without Tears. Christopher S Hyatt and S Jason Black. New Age Books, A-44 Naraina Phase I, New Delhi 110 028. E-mail: nab@vsnl.in. 2001. 160 pp. Rs 175.

Tantra being an esoteric system of knowledge and worship, very few people have any correct idea about it. Though written mainly for Western readers, this book will be a help to all who are interested in knowing the basic concepts of Tantra. People outside tantric groups are mostly apprehensive of them and consider their practices and lifestyle not only strange but also abhorrent. Instead of understanding the principles behind the practices, one looks at them with fearful curiosity, and generally tries to avoid them.

Written in a question-answer form, *Tantra without Tears* attempts to remove many of the misconceptions about Tantra by explaining the so-called peculiar behaviour and practices of the tantrics.

There are about sixty questions, answers to each of which are given in one or two pages.

First of all, the book points out that tantric practices are found not only among Hindus and Buddhists, but command the interest of Westerners too. Keeping the Western reader in view, this book has been written in a simple language, mostly avoiding difficult technical terms. To the question 'What does the word *tantra* mean?' the answer given here is, '*tantra* ... broadly indicates action. It indicates unity between theory and practice.' (13) Self-development has been declared as the goal of tantric practices. But what is meant by 'self-development'? The book defines it as 'the development of the aspirant as he defines it without the cloak of external morality'. (15) However, after reading the book one gets the impression that by 'self-development' the authors mean the development of all the inner powers of man. These inner powers are also referred to as magical powers. (*Tantra* is sometimes translated by the authors as 'sex-magic'.) The awakening of these powers can be done by practising tantric rites. The individual mind contains all the universal powers in potential form. The only problem is that it is covered with too many external rules and regulations, customs and conventions. All these have hidden the real Self.

To start with, the individual has to discard all the norms that his society, his family upbringing, his surroundings have put on him. Thus, being absolutely free from all the bonds of external morality, customs and habits, social rules and regulations, he has to search for his inner being and its potentialities. The process of shredding off moral rules by the aspirant of the tantric goal is what ordinary men find horrifying and abhorrent. Morality teaches us what is good and what is evil, and on the basis of these moral principles, society makes laws for the individuals to follow. To destroy the fetters

of conventional morality and immorality, the tantric breaks these social laws, which the authors call 'de-programming'. He starts with the practices of actions that society considers evil. When evil becomes so natural to him that he stops making any distinction between good and evil, then only he crosses the barrier of customary morality. Living a socially unconventional life, he rises above fear and hatred. Eating prohibited things, doing socially forbidden acts, even killing—all are justified in Tantra.

The tantric believes that in man the supreme Energy or Power exists in the form of a sleeping, coiled serpent called kundalini. There are seven planes, or chakras, in human body starting from the bottom of the spinal cord to the top of the head. To gain supernatural power one has to awaken this sleeping serpent and push it upward towards the crown of the head. This is done through meditation and some mysterious tantric rites. In the last section of the book a description of the rites and an English version of the mantras are given for the benefit of Western practitioners.

A comparison has been made between the Buddhist Tantra of Tibet and Hindu Tantra of Bengal. The basic philosophical differences between the two schools—the theory of momentariness of the Buddhists and the theory of unchanging, eternal Reality of the Hindus—are also briefly discussed. Regarding the question of belief in gods and goddesses, the authors point out that both Hindus and Buddhists believe in these supernatural beings, but believing does not mean worshipping, hence there is no conflict there. The main purpose of a tantric is to obtain supernatural power, diving deep into the mystery of the universe, and all tantric rites are meant for that.

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Interesting Reading

Accordnig to a rseearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers
in a wrod are; the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteers be at the rghit pclae.
The rset can be a tatol mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the
huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Amzanig huh?

—from cyberspace

ॐ Reports ॐ

Celebrated. Platinum jubilee of Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur; from 26 February to 3 March. The functions consisted of public meetings and a 3-day spiritual retreat.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban; by Sri Vishnukant Shastri, Governor of Uttar Pradesh; on 29 February 2004. Sri Shastri addressed a meeting organized by the centre.

Inaugurated. A new indoor stadium; by Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore; on 3 March.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi; by Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; on 11 March.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji; by Mr Ratu Jope Seniloli, Vice President of Fiji; on 12 March. Mr Seniloli unveiled the newly installed statue of Swami Vivekananda at the college run by the centre.

Laid. Foundation stone for a nurses' hostel; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban; on 18 March.

Inaugurated. A nurses' hostel building; by Swami Smarananandaji; at Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi; on 19 March.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi; by Sri Karia Munda, Union Minister for Non-conventional Energy

Resources; on 19 March.

Inaugurated. A guest house for pilgrims; by Lt Gen S K Sinha (retired), Governor of Jammu and Kashmir; at Ramakrishna Mission, Jammu; on 21 March.

Felicitated. The polyclinic run by Ramakrishna Math, Pune; jointly by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and the Stop-TB Partnership Forum; for its outstanding work in the treatment of tuberculosis cases; on 24 March. The felicitation ceremony was held in New Delhi and presided over by Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India.

Dedicated. Two newly installed statues of Lord Shiva and Swami Vivekananda; by Sri T N Chaturvedi; at Ramakrishna Math, Ulsoor; on 25 March.

Visited. Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Porbandar; by Sri L K Advani, Deputy Prime Minister of India, and Sri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat; on 30 March.

Bagged. 5 gold medals and 3 silver medals; by students of the Viveknagar Ramakrishna Mission school; at the First International Child Art Exhibition-cum-Competition 2003 organized by Kshitij Art Society, Gurgaon. The Society also awarded the Kshitij Ratna prize to the school's arts and crafts teacher for his extraordinary training ability.

Secured. 3rd and 10th ranks, respectively; by two students from the schools run by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sarisha, and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur;

at the state-level secondary-school examinations 2003.

Won. 6th place; by a Class V student of the school run by Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar; in the junior category of the United Nations Information Test 2003 organized by the United Schools Organization; in March.

Selected. A Class VIII student of the above-mentioned school; for national scholarship; at an examination conducted by the Cultural Resources and Training Centre, New Delhi; for his brilliant tabla performance; in March.

Distributed. 260 saris and 140 dhotis by Ramakrishna Mission, Agartala; 200 blankets by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Bankura; 65 saris by Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar; 200 blankets, 150 dhotis, 150 saris, 127 chadars, 1162 pairs of pants and 399 assorted garments by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji; 1394 warm garments by Ramakrishna Mission, Jammu; 35 blankets and 150 warm garments by Ramakrish-

na Mission Ashrama, Kishanpur; 500 blankets, 1000 warm garments, 1520 kg maize and 151 kg oil by Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi; 5050 kg rice and 2500 kg dal by Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai; 50 blankets, 48 saris, 16 dhotis, 35 chadars, 40 mosquito-nets and 40 lanterns by Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur; 800 saris, 460 dhotis, 200 chadars, 200 mosquito-nets, 240 kg milk powder and 1280 biscuit packets by Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Silchar; to poor and needy people of nearby areas; during February and March.

Distributed. 2393 kg rice, 364 kg dal, 1922 kg potatoes, 381 kg salt and 125 kg biscuits; by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Malda; among 13,967 people affected by violence at various tea gardens in Jalpaiguri district; in March.

Distributed. Buttermilk to 30,000 pilgrims; by Ramakrishna Math, Rajahmundry; over five days during the annual festival of a local temple; in March. *

The Dive

A young man who had been raised as an atheist was training to be an Olympic diver. The only religious influence in his life came from his outspoken Christian friend. The young diver never really paid much attention to his friend's sermons, but he heard them often.

One night the diver went to the indoor pool at the college he attended. The lights were all off, but as the pool had big skylights and the moon was bright, there was plenty of light to practise by.

The young man climbed up to the highest diving board and as he turned his back to the pool on the edge of the board and extended his arms out, he saw his shadow on the wall.

The shadow of his body was in the shape of a cross.

Instead of diving, he knelt down and finally asked God to come into his life.

As the young man stood, a maintenance man walked in and turned on the lights.

The pool had been drained for repairs.

—from *cyberspace*