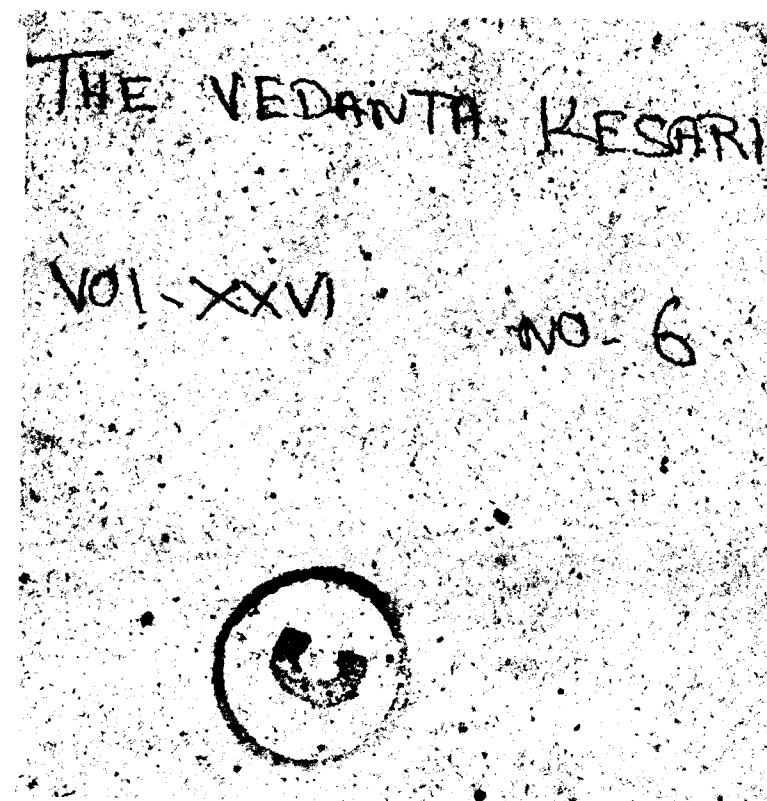




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THE VEDANTA KESARI

VOLUME XXVI

OCTOBER 1939

NUMBER 6

140

“नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः”

The Self is not realized by the weak

THE SAGES' APPEAL

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

THE DIVINE MOTHER

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN LIFE

MEISTER ECKEHART

HOW TO PRACTISE YOGA ACTUALLY?

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VEDANTA KESARI

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OCTOBER, 1939.

THE SAGE'S APPEAL

At a time when a large section of humanity is confronted with a calamity of the first order, the deadly consequence of which is beyond all calculation, we mingle our voice to that of the ancient poet who supplicated on behalf of mercy and justice.

यावन्तोऽस्यां भुवि नभसि वा भोगिनामालये वा
सत्त्वाः सन्ति प्रणयवचसा तान् सुहृत् प्रार्थयेऽहम् ।
मेत्रीपात्रं कुरुत हृदयं धर्मेबुद्धिं भजध्वं
धर्मादन्यत् तमसि गहने देहिनां नास्ति दीपः ॥
पापं विमुञ्चत निषिञ्चत पुण्यबीजं ; वैरं परित्यजत शाम्यसुखं भजध्वम् ।
ज्ञानामृतं पिबत मृत्युविषाणहारि ; नेये तनुः कुशलकर्मसखी चिराय ॥
लक्ष्मीश्रला तरुणता च जरातुयाता ; कायोऽप्यपायनिचयस्य निवास एव ।
प्राणाः शरीरककुटीषु मुहूर्तपान्याः ; नित्योदये कुरुत धर्ममये प्रयत्नम् ॥
सन्तः प्रणम्याः परुषं न वाच्यं ; कार्यः प्रयत्नेन परोपकारः ।
पापावपाते सततं हि पुंसाम् ; एतानि पुण्यान्ववलम्बनानि ॥
नेदं बन्धुर्नो सुहृत् सोदरो वा ; नेदं माता नो पिता वा करोति
यत् संसाराम्भोधिसेतुं विधत्ते ; ज्ञानाचार्यः कोऽपि कल्याणसेतुः ॥

In most affectionate terms, I supplicate to all creatures—with the exception of not a single being—that dwell on this terrestrial soil, or in the air, or in subterranean regions, as a dear friend, for this: O friends, make your hearts a fit vessel for friendly love and resolve upon treading the path of righteousness always. For the plodding soul, in this gloomy round of birth and death, there is no lamp but that of virtue. Cast away evil. Water the seeds of virtue. Let not hatred gain access over you even at a distance. Be peaceable and seek happiness. Imbibe the elixir of wisdom that acts against the poison of mortality. Lo! this body is not an ever-dependable friend to accomplish your good; wealth is not stable; youthfulness is soon swallowed up by senility; and the body is a prey to innumerable mishaps. The soul is the guest of the body only for a few hours. Therefore, take every care to achieve lasting glory, full of righteous promise. Revere the good and the saintly; drop no cruel word; help others with heart and soul,—hold on to these when you are washed off your feet by sinful inclinations. Neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor kinsmen, nor friends, could accomplish that which the teacher who confers upon you wisdom does,—for he, like an embankment, prevents your energies from overflowing into swamps of unrighteousness, and directs it to the beautiful and the good; he builds for you a bund over the troubled waters of transmigratory existence to walk towards your goal of peace.

—Aradanakalpalata.

THE DIVINE MOTHER

IN the editorial of *The Vedanta Kesari* for August a synthesis of religion from the Advaitic standpoint, together with the application of such a view in life, was outlined. According to the grand Advaitic doctrine, the supreme Worth of man consists in the realisation of Brahman, the unconditioned, immortal Bliss, which during man's wandering from birth to death, is only perceived as the Cause and effect of an eternally changing world-system. But in reality multiplicity never exists in Brahman. Brahman is incomprehensible by the mind and inexpressible by words, because It is beyond all relativity—beyond whatever is connected with Maya. The explanation for the Universe is sought by the Advaitin in the principle of Illusion which is neither real, nor unreal, nor both; neither related nor unrelated with Brahman; and therefore inexplicable. But when the spell of 'ignorance' is broken and the Supreme Experience is gained, no such Principle can be admitted as it would cancel non-duality. Entrenched in this acutely logical position, Advaita philosophy safeguards the crowning doctrine of the Upanishads and the divine destiny of man. Pragmatically, however, this leads to the admission of two levels of Reality—a conventional one and a transcendental one—the former composed of God, Nature and self, and the latter resulting from the sublation or 'correction' of the former in the Supreme Identity of Pure Intelligence. This experience comes only in Samadhi, a state in which the ego is tracelessly effaced. Intellectually the a-logical Reality is brought within the four corners of a logical formulation by admitting the inexplicable Illusion. The logical finality of this position, however, is not quite undisturbed, as two grades of reality are accepted to reconcile the contradictions of experience. Any attempt to reduce the inexpressible to a logical scheme cannot be a cent percent success. "Surely with our feeble power of ratiocination and discrimination we cannot reach the Absolute. Hence Revelation! Inspiration and not Reason!"¹ "The answer which revelation gives is conclusive."²

Nor is the negative method of spiritual discipline enjoined by this type of Advaita for realising the goal, entailing as it does a persistent denial of ego and all its products, an easy procedure for common man who knows little beyond the body to which he clings so fondly. "Man's life being engrossed in the physical world, how can he feel the reality of God and the unreality of the Universe? However you may reason it away, your body-idea re-asserts itself Verily the consciousness of the body cannot be killed. 'I am He'—this is not a wholesome attitude. If anyone entertains this idea, great harm comes to him, his progress is retarded and by and by he is dragged down. He deceives His Personal side, as Mahamaya, it is real, not an eternal falsity—It is

¹ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Vol. I, p. 107.

² *Ibid*, p. 110.

others and deceives himself."³ Therefore a slightly different presentment of Advaita is favoured by the practically religious seekers of Truth. The most beneficial and distinguishing feature of this approach is the worship of the Supreme Reality as the Blessed Mother of the entire universe and the Blessed Queen of all creation—*Srimata Srimaharajni*. This grand and ennobling conception spontaneously invokes in the mind of man holy sentiments natural and conducive to the worshipping mind. This month being the time for the Autumnal Worship of the Mother in Her benign and wisdom-bestowing aspects, let us reflect on Her nature and glory with a mind bent in reverence and adoration.

I

The life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna so closely coming upon us afford us a shining example and luminous commentary on the theme of the philosophy, worship and realisation of the Divine in the motherly relation. The more we ponder over the implications of the doctrine he lived and taught, the more we are surprised at their particular aptness for the present Age. He considered the worship of the Divine eminently suitable for this Yuga; and so let us follow in his own words the gist of his message on this important method:

My Divine Mother is no other than the Absolute, the Brahman of the Vedas.⁴ Be it known that my Divine Mother is both one and the many, and also beyond one and many.⁵ Mother is not different being from God, the Absolute. The Mother is the Personal side of the Absolute. When thought apart from His

works the Supreme Being is called God the Absolute. Again, when we think of God as creating, preserving and destroying, i.e., in relation to His works, we call the Supreme Being the Personal God⁶ (Kali, Sakti, Maya or Prakriti). Force in action is Maya, force in potency is Brahman. As the water of the ocean is now agitated into waves, so are Brahman and Maya. The ocean in the tranquil state is Brahman, and in the turbulent state is Maya.⁷ No one can say what Sacchidananda is like. He first took the form of Ardhanarisvara to show that both Prakriti and Purusha are Himself.⁸ Brahman is without any attribute in the eyes of the ratiocination of the Vedanta. What His real nature is cannot be expressed by words of mouth.⁹ According to the testimony, therefore, of these perfect men—these Vijnanis—the World-system (Maya or Sakti) is not an illusion, but the manifestation to the differentiated, but purified ego, of a Real Being as a Person who has created or from whom have been evolved the human soul and the soul of every created being as well as this universe. This testimony is infallible because it is based upon revelation.¹⁰ First by a process of negation one comes to feel that God alone is true and all else false. But he finds eventually that God himself has become the Maya, the individuals, the worlds and everything.¹¹ My Mother says: "It is the Brahman of the Vedanta who has caused this differentiation. So long as you say 'I know' and 'I do not know' you look upon yourself as a person. Being a person, you must take these differentiations as facts—not delusions. My Divine Mother again says, "It is only when I efface all personality that the undifferentiated (my Impersonal aspect) may be realised in Samadhi. And then it is all silence about delusion or non-delusion, fact or no fact, knowing or no knowing."¹²

⁶ *Gospel*, Vol. I, p. 373.

⁷ *Sayings*, No. 48, 49.

⁸ *Ib.* 885.

⁹ *Gospel*, Vol. II, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Gospel*, Vol. I, p. 99.

¹¹ *Gospel*, Vol. II, p. 204.

¹² *Gospel*, Vol. I, p. 110.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 70, 71.

⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 107.

⁵ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, No. 861.

If you postulate the Personal you must postulate the Impersonal; if you take the Impersonal, you must already have taken the Personal for granted.¹³ You cannot think of God the Absolute behind the Universe without thinking of the God of the Universe, the Divine Mother. The thought of the one must call up to you the thought of the other.¹⁴ God the Absolute Knowledge-Intelligence-Bliss is the same as the All-knowing, All-intelligent and All-blissful Mother of the Universe. The bright precious stone and its brightness cannot be separated in thought; nor can you think of the brightness apart from the stone.¹⁵ Brahman and Sakti are inseparable. If you do not accept Sakti the whole world becomes false,—you, I, the house, the family, everything becomes non-existent. If there are no supporting sidepoles, no frame can be made, nor can there be the beautiful image of Durga on it.¹⁶ The key to the realisation of the Absolute is with the Divine Person alone, the Saguna Brahman of the Upanishads, the Personal God of devotees. The power of discrimination which the philosopher relies on comes from Her, my Divine Mother, the Personal God. Prayer, meditation, devotion, self-surrender, are all, likewise, derived from my Omnipotent Mother. Such a person cannot be unreal. She is the Personal side of the one Reality.... Thus the Personal God reveals Herself. That Revelation is the proof of her existence.¹⁷ Do but come to my Divine Mother you will get not only Bhakti but also Jnana not only Jnana but also Bhakti—not only see Her in Samadhi manifesting herself in form divine but also realise her as the Absolute in Samadhi in which all self in the devotee is effaced by my Mother and there is no manifestation of Divine forms.¹⁸ Perfect knowledge is knowledge of one-ness—of only one Reality behind the many things—one God behind the phenomenal universe. The

knowing one sees again that this Reality—this universal Soul—has differentiated itself into living beings and the world—in short, into twenty-four categories of the philosopher. It is only Divine Energy which manifests itself more or less everywhere. The one Soul has differentiated into many things; in some the manifested energy is greater, in some less.¹⁹

The above standpoint is equally agreeable to the person who chooses the path of Devotion as well as he who chooses the path of Knowledge. If it may not be convincing to the professional philosopher, that is because any attempt to interpret the a-logical Reality rationally must always remain unsatisfactory. Experience alone can supply the key to the understanding of the supersensuous. It must be noted here that the view set forth above is different from that of the Sakta type of Advaita in the important respect that it does not in the least envisage the tenet that "world enjoyment is made the means and instrument of Liberation." Although Sri Ramakrishna practised the various Sakta methods of spiritual realisation and freely adopted the various Yogic and spiritual principles current in that discipline, he did not view the Sakta Philosophy as above others or with any special favour. However, there is no gainsaying the fact that the ideal of Divine Motherhood is the special glory of this particular form of belief. It is evident that he was not in the least in favour of the view that a Personal God is a figment or an expedient. Maya, too, in the above view is illusory only in the sense that it is passing and changing as ego and its products; but as the cosmic Power of the Supreme Being, as

¹⁹ *Ib.* 205, 206.

but the Form of the Formless. The Supreme Reality is unknown in the sense that it is beyond description and expression, as the Upanishads declare. The state of Samadhi, stated as identity between the individual and the Supreme Self,²⁰ or the generation of Supreme Consciousness,²¹ alone is its proof.

II

Although this view is evident even in the older Upanishads it is expressed clearly in some of the later Upanishads. Says the *Tripad-vibhuti-maha-narayanopaniṣad* ii, "The Supreme Brahman is with form and without form just as the Earth and other elements exist in visible form and as invisible deities. Parabrahman being the whole, there is not in Him the contradiction of form and formlessness. If the all-filling Brahman were formless in reality, that would have rendered it un-Conscious as the void space. Therefore form and formlessness are both real and natural to Brahman." The Divine Player—Lalita, the Mother of All—whose play the whole universe is, is the one Reality—the Supreme Brahman, the One without a second.²² 'My real form,' said the Mother, 'is the Absolute Brahman; the living and non-living world has proceeded from me. I am the entire universe; I am Vidya and Avidya; I am born and unborn; I am at all the points of the compass.' Mother is the Power of Atman; She it is who keeps the whole universe under Her spell.²³ Brahman alone remains

even in the form of the world.²⁴ The material of the world is Brahman itself and none else; therefore all the universe is Brahman itself.²⁵ We find among the one thousand names of the Mother²⁶ the following descriptive epithets: The Supreme Divine Mother is the Whole that exists for ever; She is unalloyed and unlimited Bliss; and She is Consciousness itself. She is the Supreme Power and Ruler of all. She is the Witness of all world-systems and also the witness of their dissolution; and the various forms also are Her own self. She is self-luminous, the immediate Self of all. She is the abode of all good, destroyer of all misery, bestower of immortal Bliss and granter of all desire. A veritable ocean of compassion She is—the splendour that routs the darkness lurking in the hearts of the devotees. She destroys the ego and confers the Bliss of liberation. The scriptures are Her commands, She is the bestower of wisdom, and dissolver of all doubts. She is the cure for all maladies. Through religious merit alone She is accessible; She is hardly worshipped by the extroverts; by the indrawn She is easily and properly worshipped. She is the Mother of all from the Demiurge to a worm, and the One adored by the whole universe.

III

The worship of the Divine as the Mother of all is the splendid legacy of the Agamic scriptures, revitalised by Sri Ramakrishna in recent times. Hardly there is an exception to the rule accepted by all the religions that worship is the most effective method available for the attainment of the

¹³ *Ib.*, p. 373.

¹⁴ *Ib.*, p. 210.

¹⁵ *Ib.*, p. 232.

¹⁶ *Gospel*, Vol. II, p. 83.

¹⁷ *Gospel*, Vol. I, p. 105, 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

²⁰ *Mahavakyopaniṣad*.

²¹ *Jabalopaniṣad*, 10.1.

²² *Bahvrchopaniṣad*.

²³ *Devayupaniṣad*.

²⁴ *Atmopaniṣad*, 2.

²⁵ *Yogasikhopaniṣad*, 4.3.

²⁶ *Lalitasahasranama*.

higher values of life. Unless through worship and adoration a certain transformation is brought about in the physical, mental and moral being of man, no man can rise in the scale of values—none can hope to get to the summit of all values, namely, Self-realisation or the realisation of the Divine. Even intellectual enquiry after Reality, if it is adopted as a practical method of realisation, and not mere arm-chair philosophy, it has to fulfil the antecedent conditions of inner purity and holiness through worship. By a mere Socratic dialogue with the self, in all abruptness, no one can realise his real nature—the Atman. Inner competency is emphasised everywhere in the scriptures for a candidate seeking illumination through the major text of identity. He who passes on to an ignoramus or a half-awakened person the instruction that all is Brahman has already consigned him to innumerable Hells.²⁷ This competency results from the worship and grace of God. And, genuine worship and devotion are not consistent with the idea that the object of worship (not a symbol or sign taken to represent) is itself an improvisation of the worshipper for a still higher attainment. The sentiment centering round any object which is not the greatest, the highest and the best in the view of a person wanting to worship it, is not worship of the truest type. Therefore Paramesvara as the object of worship and Parabrahman are not distinct or different on any showing. The richness and dynamism of such an attitude is amply evident in the view which considers the Supreme Reality

in two aspects, as Personal and Impersonal God.

The religious view that takes the Supreme as the Divine Mother in Her twofold aspect has therefore a significant standpoint in philosophy and an effective method of spiritual practice supported by genuine tradition embosoming the experiences of innumerable aspiring and realised souls. The method is psychological and devotional. The philosophy may be summarised as follows: The one changeless, relationless, ultimate, absolute being, according to the Upanishads, is a timeless, spaceless, stateless, partless, undifferentiated, self-existing, self-illuminating, Self-identity. This all-transcending Principle of Experience is beyond all categories and all the depictions of imagination. The existence of this pure Intelligence is learned only from the scriptures and experience in the supra-rational state of ecstasy born of rapt contemplation. Nevertheless, all know the expressions of It in every state of the mind. By the inscrutable power inherent in this Reality—Its own grandeur²⁸—the whole universe of matter, mind and life is evolved; i.e., by its own self-negating power it assumes a kinetic aspect without undergoing any essential change in the Conscious Reality itself. This polarisation into Power and Possessor of Power which, in actuality, are not different, is the root of the universe. The Whole, in the *being* aspect, is called Sacchidananda and in the *becoming* aspect Sacchidanandamayi, denoting thus the inseparableness of the aspects. The Mother has two powers in Her aspect as Sacchidanandamayi

or Mahamaya or Adyasakti, called Chit- or Vidya- Sakti and Achit- or Avidya- Sakti, the former leading to the Real Source and the latter veiling it and drawing away from It. Thus everything, in reality, is the Divine Mother Herself sportively appearing under Her own veil of Maya. Man, through the Grace of Her Vidyasakti,²⁹ or Personal aspect, attains Her pure, transcendent Being. By surrendering himself to this infinite magazine of Intelligence and Power man attains all his ends. Man is God every whit—his body and life are the product of the substance-energy of the Supreme Consciousness, because it is That alone that has presented as the universal form,³⁰ determined by Itself. Man's self is Pure Consciousness itself; by loosening the limitations of His psycho-physical existence he attains liberation, consisting in Immortal, Blissful identity with the Divine Mother beyond all change and becoming. The Universe is real so long as the perceiving ego is real and when the latter is effaced in the Divine, the former also presents in its true basis as the Divine.

IV

We shall conclude with a correction of a common misconception current in some quarters. Francis Thompson wrote:

"...all can feel the God that smites,
But ah, how few the God that loves!"

Few religions teach that it is the loving God Himself that smites with catastrophes and misery. Otherwise, how could we conceive of an all-good, all-merciful God creating beings out of nothing by his unbounded will, and,

being omniscient, handing them over to Devil to be spoiled and finally to be condemned to hell a good part of it? In fact, God is no rival of Devil. He is the Whole and in the Whole there is no defect; it is the partial view that presents antinomies. As the picture of Kali reveals, Her naked blue form, symbolic of the Immense and Immeasurable without the veil of Maya, is beyond good and evil; yet, at the same time, in Her Cosmic *becoming* aspect, in which the whole creation fluctuates between joy and sorrow, She has one hand lifted up in protection and the other wielding a sword of punishment. Man in his timidity turns away from actuality—from her terrible aspect. "The shadow of Death and Immortality:" said Swami Vivekananda, "Both these, O Mother, are Thy grace." A God that only loves is often worshipped by the fortunate who possess the good things of the world and are blind to the miseries of the world in their ostrich philosophy, and supplicates to the loving God for more enjoyment. Those to whom, on the other hand, God is only terrible, are still in the animal level of fear. She is both; yet in reality beyond both. Her sport is beyond human reason. The sage recognising it prayed, "Blessed Divine Mother, protect us on all sides."³¹

Manifestations of Her glory, show
In power of immeasurable might,
Through the universe; powers that swell
The sea of birth and death; forces, that
change,
And break up the Unchanged, and
changed again.
Lo! where shall we seek refuge, save in
Her?³²

³¹ *Deryupanishad*, 10.

³² Swami Vivekananda: *A Hymn to the Divine Mother*.

²⁷ *Mahopanishad*, V: 104.

²⁸ *Svetasvatopanisad*, VI: 1 and *Mundakopanisad*, I: 7, 8.

²⁹ *Durgasaptasati*, IV: 9; XI: 5.

³⁰ *Ibid*, IV, 3.

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN LIFE

BY A WESTERNER

[Here is a sincere and vivid picture of rural life in India drawn by a Westerner who has taken the view from an angle of vision hardly adopted by foreign visitors pretending to profess a superior culture. The present writer was attracted to India by her spiritual culture, which he imbibed to a remarkable extent; and today it is many years he has made this sacred land his adopted country, embracing the highest Hindu ideal of life. He has spent several years in Bengal and the following colourful rendering of his first impressions is drawn from his experiences there. Nevertheless they breathe the spirit of India as a whole. There is also a special appropriateness in presenting these glimpses to our readers this month; for its background is supplied by the period of the Autumnal worship of the Divine Mother falling in this month.—The Editors.]

It is Spring time. The Asoka trees are aflame with bunches of red flowers; tall, slender palms gently wave their feathery heads in an azure sky, and the soft air is fragrant with the delicate scent of mango blossoms. As the shadows grow and evening draws near, a cool breeze blows from the river and stirs the leaves of an ancient Peepul tree that shades my humble dwelling place. In a pond bordered by large Banana plants a buffalo lies almost hidden under the water; its black nose alone is visible. A bull calf stands knee-deep in the pond, a blue bird perched on its back. A red lily here and there attracts a belated bumble-bee. Seated alone under a mighty Banyan tree I watch this peaceful scene, and reflecting on my Indian experiences call up pictures of the past.

Many years have gone by since I landed on the shores of Bharatavarsha as the Hindus used to call India, their motherland. Now my Western mind has attuned itself to Eastern ideas. The process has been slow and the adjustment gradual. I entered upon a new mode of life. Old ways changed and previous ex-

periences demanded new interpretations. I found myself in a land of ancient religions and ancient civilizations, with ruins thousands of years old—tokens of a great and glorious past. Usages prevailing at the time of Buddha's advent on earth still continue, and ideals of the remote past mould the lives of the Hindus today. The atmosphere thrills with a mystic, religious consciousness just as it must have done in Vedic times when the ancient Rishis, the Indian sages, chanted their scriptures in shady forest retreats. In this land religion is the most vital fact, the chief inspiration. It is the basis of Hindu society and guides the lives of the people in every detail.

I live among the people of the soil, a guest at their hospitable homes, and I associate with the high and with the lowly. I move in a strange and fascinating world. I have donned the *dhoti*, or loincloth, and the *chaddar*, or shawl, the traditional costume in Bengal, and again the salmon-coloured robe of the Sannyasin, or wandering monk, that I might cultivate that close touch and sym-

pathy with the people that opened their hearts to me and made me understand somewhat of the culture of India, the heart of Asia.

I travel over the land and enjoy the varied scenes—men, women and children, bare-legged, with flowing white garments tucked in at the waist, transplanting the young rice in flooded paddy fields; rustic villages, nestled in mango groves, astir with the ingathering of the summer harvest; neat mud houses with thatched roofs sheltering their cheerful owners against the rays of a tropical sun; ancient temples full of mystery; mosques built of pure marble, and luxurious palaces. The bazars with their constant play of colour and movement and their crowds of brown humanity have for me a never-ending interest. Here, time is of little value, and chaffering and bargaining form part of the pleasures of life. I see magnificent sacred rivers, very ancient holy cities, awe-inspiring Himalayan vastnesses, roaring torrents, deep solemn forests, snow-crested mountain peaks. Wonderful are Indian art, architecture, literature and philosophy. Still more wonderful and of ever-growing interest are the brown, half-clad people with whom I associate.

These people are my friends. I love them for their simplicity. They are naive, grown-up children with clear minds and quick understanding. I love the little children, boys and girls, with bare limbs and large intelligent eyes. Unashamed they stare into my face. Men and women, young and old, are gracious in their welcome to a stranger. They know not how to read or write but they are dignified and courteous. It would be rude to refuse their offering

of hot buffalo milk. I drink it from the *lota*, the native drinking vessel of hammered brass.

Men of the same village call each other brother. The children call a stranger uncle. The women, gracefully draped in the long *sari*, address a stranger with son, and he answers with mother. The mother is the goddess of the Indian home. The children call her *mataji*, honoured mother. And when a son writes home to his mother, he begins his letter with the quaint salutation: "I bow to the lotus-feet of my worshipful mother." Mother is a sacred word to the Hindu, more sacred than father. A father, he says, may get angry with his son, but never the mother. She embodies the ideal of unselfish love and is looked up to as the representative on earth of the divine Mother of the Universe. The Hindus worship God as "Mother", though the conception of God the Father also appears in the Vedas.

Both the parents are highly honoured by the children. No son or daughter will go on a journey without first kneeling down before the parents humbly to touch their feet and ask their blessing. India is a land of decorum, not of hurry, as some Westerners discover to their dismay.

And again—so difficult is it to understand Eastern sentiment—to us it might often seem as if the son were rude toward his mother. There is not the restraint of manners that we expect from a child before a parent, and there are no words of formality in the daily intercourse, no "good morning", or "good night", or "thank you." The relationship between mother and son, the Hindu claims, is so sweet and intimate that

words of formality would only hurt as suggesting distance.

Very strange to the Western mind is the psychology of Hindu manners and customs. I remember my surprise one day when I learned that I had hurt the feeling of a Hindu friend of mine by thanking him for a little present he had brought me. Thanking him he looked upon as a formality. It had shocked him as coming from one whose friendship he considered too genuine to allow of ceremonies. And stranger still, the Hindu looks upon our way of saying "thank you" as a kind of payment for value received. For a business-like American it is certainly difficult to appreciate this viewpoint.

One day I unwittingly offended a priest by walking in the court of a small temple with my shoes on. A Hindu had just preceded me, and I pointed to his shoes to explain why I had not removed mine. Then the priest told me that the Hindu was wearing shoes made of canvas while mine were made of leather. It had not occurred that the one could be more pure than the other. But such is the case. Shoes made of any material but leather may be worn in holy places. That is why so many Brahmins wear the *kharams*, or pattens. Being made of wood, these are not objectionable.

Hindu families are often very large where the joint-family system prevails, for then the son brings his bride to his parental home. Families of forty or fifty members are not uncommon. In such large homes the children form merry groups and their laughter may be heard all over the house. The small ones are much petted and they parade through the house and precincts as naked as they were born. A golden or silver chain

around the waist blends beautifully with the child's soft, brown skin; but that is only in rich families and on special occasions. Others wear the pretty anklets with tiny, tinkling bells—a joy to every mother's ear. Sometimes a dark collyrium is applied to the child's eyelids and lashes to keep the eyes cool. This has the effect of making the bright, dark eyes appear still larger than they are. Of all the pretty babies in the world the Hindu baby, if properly cared for, is the prettiest. The children have few games, but they are inordinately fond of stories, and woe to the grandfather or grandmother whose stock of tales is limited. Kites and tops are popular with the boys and I have seen them play a kind of hockey. Little images take the place of dolls.

Early at dawn the women of high-caste families wend their way to riverside or pond for the daily ceremonial bath. Closely veiled they hurry along the narrow lanes, for the eye of man may not fall upon the face of a chaste woman in the street. A few flowers hastily gathered or purchased at the bathing ghat are placed, when they return, upon the altar in the prayer-room.

The Hindus eat with the fingers. With a certain dexterity they put the food into the mouth, the fingers hardly touching the lips. But as a rule eating with the fingers is not an aesthetic performance. The Hindus drink from metal tumblers; they do not use glass. Sometimes they drink from a little sun-baked clay cup which is thrown away after being used. The lips should not touch the tumbler. The head is thrown backward and the water is poured from the tumbler down the throat in a

steady stream. This is not an easy feat for one not practised. Coughing, sneezing, choking and blowing of the nose should be avoided during the meal. On the other hand no distress is felt when sound is made in the process of eating, nor at opening the mouth during mastication, nor at talking with the mouth full.

When the meal is over all rise and leave the room. The hands, feet, face, and mouth are washed, and each one takes a clove, or cardamom, or a little crushed betelnut to "make the mouth sweet." The men smoke the *hooka*, or hubble-bubble, and usually rest after the meal. The women after their meal retire to the *zenana*, or inner apartments, for a siesta.

Of the six seasons as they are counted in Bengal the winter season is the most delightful. Spring, full of colour and freshness, is followed by the enervating heat of summer; the summer heat gradually lessens during the rainy season when clouds obscure the sky and copious rains drench the earth. Next comes the "season of dew" to prepare us for a gracious autumn with its play of light and shade in the sky. Then comes winter to bring coolness and joy to all living things. The rising and setting of the days are perfect and there is none of the bleakness and cruel cold of the occidental winter. Day after day the sun glows in an amethyst sky. Green meadows wet with dew glisten in the morning sun. *Kokil*, the love-bird of Indian poetry, the finch, the golden-throated *Papiya* and the dove fill the air with their songs. Now and then we hear the tiny tun-tun, the maina, the twittering swallow or the kingfisher with his clear, loud call and a host of other birds. Even the crow is not

wanting. He is as impertinent and inquisitive here as is his brother in colder climes.

Most of the trees are evergreen, a few only shed their leaves entirely. Graceful above all others is the tall, slender cocoanut palm bearing a crown of gigantic, fretted leaves. The *Neem* with its fern-like leaves has healing properties and is worshipped by women with offering of sweetmeats and milk and a little open light. The *Bo*, or *Aswattha* became sacred when its spreading branches sheltered Buddha during the greatest moment of his life. The *Asoka*, it is said, withholds its lovely, crimson flowers till the slender hand of a woman has touched its trunk. The *Banyan* tree sends out from its branches aerial roots that form additional trunks till sometimes a single tree grows into a grove large enough to shelter a herd of cows. The tamarind tree is holy to the Mohammedans. Under the *Palash* tree with its red flowers poised on leafless branches, some tribe used to offer human sacrifice to the Earth-Mother. Of fruit trees the mango bears the most delicious fruit. But who shall count the trees and flowering bushes of Bengal!

Winter is the season for domesticated flowers. The chrysanthemum, rose and hibiscus are then at their best. Most of the indigenous flowers come between spring and autumn—the fragrant *Champaka*, *Bakula*, *Kanchana*, or gold-flower, *Kadamba*, the cuckoo-eye, china-rose, and many others rich in colour and deliciously fragrant. But even in winter marigolds, milk-white *Kundas*, and lapis-blue *Aparajitas* are daily gathered in large numbers as offering to the Gods.

It is during this lovely season that Bengal celebrates her Pujas, or reli-

gious festivals. The Sephalika bushes drop their tiny blossoms early in the autumn to give warning betimes that the greatest festival of the year, Durga-puja, is approaching. Kali-puja comes a few weeks later, and still later Sarasvati, goddess of learning, is worshipped. No one is supposed to read or study on that day. The boys place their books and earthen inkwells at the feet of the Goddess, and pray that they may be successful in their studies. So all through the year, but especially during the winter months the Gods and Goddesses are worshipped.

It is on the day of new moon in Asvin (October) that Durga-puja commences. This festival commemorates the victory of the goddess Durga, Mother of the Universe, over demon Mahisha, the incarnation of Evil, the tyrant and oppressor of the whole world.

The walls of the houses are decorated with artistic painting, mostly done by women. Earthen jars filled with Ganges water and covered with cocoanuts stand at the entrance door. Young palm trees are placed against the wall and mango leaves are fastened to the door post.

Mother Durga resides at Mount Kailas. But this day she has descended from her lofty retreat to bless the homes of her children, to remove their misery and to fill their hearts with joy. In every home she is visitor, wherever her image is placed—a crowned figure, ten-armed, sword in hand. One foot rests on the lion that carried her through the battle, the other on the shoulder of demon Mahisha, the conquered demon. Close by her side stand her sons and daughters, Kartik, the warrior-god, Ganesh, the giver of success, Lakshmi,

goddess of fortune, and Sarasvati, goddess of learning.

The priest, dressed in white and seated cross-legged before the image, recites the *Durgasaptasati* which relates the exploits of Mother Durga. Then he performs the installation ceremony, after which the Goddess enters the image which henceforth is considered to be alive with her presence and is treated with all the love and consideration that the Hindu mother receives. Fruits, flowers, Ganges water and sweetmeats are placed before her. How beautiful the Mother looks! The children clap their hands, they touch her holy feet, and offer garlands of fresh flowers to be placed around her neck. The air thrills with songs of love and affection for the Mother. Young and old worship. "Ma Anandamayi!"—"Mother, blissful Mother!" is the greeting. Then they pray: "O Mother, blessed Mother, enter into our hearts that we may carry Thee with us always."

Three days the Goddess remains. Presents are given to the children, friends are entertained, the poor are feasted. Then comes *Vijayadasami*, day of universal rejoicing, when all differences are settled and animosities made up in a warm embrace. The divine Mother returns to her mountain retreat and the image is borne to the Ganges in a great procession and consigned to the waters with music and waving of banners.

During the Pujas the rigorous social customs are loosened and Hindu women enjoy a greater freedom in going about their friends and neighbours to see the Image or to help in the household work connected with these feasts. Daily cares and

troubles are forgotten during these few days of festivity.

One beautiful evening, after a hot, sultry day I am by the side of the Ganges. A fresh breeze blows from the North. It is cool near the water and still. I watch the sun sink below a purple horizon, and hear the lapping of the sacred stream against the bathing ghat. Then comes floating on the air the soft, dreamy music of a flute. Up and down the notes run in the sweetest cadences. A cluster of delicate bamboo hides the player. From afar the cows draw slowly towards the river. They bend their heads and drink. After drinking their fill they swim across the strong current to the other shore. The cowherd, a mere stripling, unloosens his little loincloth and winds it around his head to protect it from the water. He enters the river, and holding on to the tail of the last cow swims across. He shakes his perfect limbs, fastens the dry cloth around his waist and leads the cows home.

I hear the chattering of monkeys. They come running from the jungle towards the river. Now and then one raises himself on his hind legs, stretches his neck and looks at me. The baby monkeys ride on their mothers' backs holding on with all their might. Others play and jump, and chase one another. When I throw them a little grain they come near, and some eat from my hand. A saucy little fellow pulls my coat, and when I drive him off he runs up a tree and from an overhanging branch jumps into the river. Others follow and their water-sport begins. They swim and dive and duck one another exactly as boys might do.

One little fellow is sick. He limps towards the river, but he makes

little headway. A bigger monkey carefully smells his body, then takes him in his arms, and strokes him gently. After a while he sets him down and tries to play with him, but finding no response, he carries him towards the river to let him drink. Then he picks him up and carries him off, and I see them no more.

A mother-monkey carries her dead baby wherever she goes. Three days I have seen her now carrying her sad burden. When will she wake up to the fact that her young one is dead? Or does she know it? Does she suffer from the same delusion that makes man cling to the body of the dead? She is an affectionate monkey, but she is not wise. The poor monkey is bound by Maya, the Hindu would say. She clings to the unreality.

All through the year Hindus may be met on the roads—happy groups of men, women and children—on their way to one of their innumerable sacred places on the plains or in the mountains. The almanac is consulted, and on an auspicious day the pilgrim sets out alone or with his family and friends, each one carrying a little bundle or a blanket. Thus they travel on foot sometimes hundreds of miles away from their homes.

Wherever there is a Mela, or religious fair, pilgrims come by the thousands from all parts of India. Men, women and children wear their best attire, the picturesque costumes of their provinces, displaying every conceivable colour. It is a happy, motley crowd out on a holiday. Fakirs perform their well-known tricks: they rest on spiked boards, have their heads buried under the sand, and hold the body in the most difficult postures. Venders prepare popped

rice and confections and offer fruit for sale—oranges, limes, mangoes, custard apples, pine apples, grapes, papayas, loquets, pomegranates, jack-fruits, lichis and other fruits procured from different parts of India. In the little booths and open stalls images are sold and all kind of eastern merchandise—bangles, beads, cheap jewelry, small looking-glasses, palm-leaf fans, pottery and a variety of nondescript articles. Boys and girls enjoy a ride in the Jhula, or merry-go-round. They watch the trained monkeys and goats and perhaps a dancing-bear. The snake-charmer and juggler can also count on a good audience.

The Hindus do not use liquor. At the fairs they drink soda-water and sherbet made of fruit juice. Tea has become quite common in later years. The Chabils supply the thirsty wayfarer with cool and sometimes sweetened drinking water. Rich merchants usually supply these Chabils. A Brahmin seated under a huge umbrella pours the water through a bamboo pipe into the hands of the thirsty pilgrim.

Long before the Mela commences pilgrims begin to gather. This morning the sun will be eclipsed. Holy day! How wonderful are God's works. Rahu, the great celestial monster, will slowly swallow the sun and then just as slowly throw him up. Awful moment when the sky is darkened. This is the time to reconcile ourselves with the Almighty;

this is the time for holy ablution. "Salutation to Thee, Lord Vishnu, most ancient, primeval Lord! May through this bathing ceremony all my sins be destroyed." Every one must take the bath—once, twice, thrice immerse in the holy waters. From far and wide the pilgrims have come, for the spot is sacred. It is the confluence of two mighty rivers. Before the bath the head has been shaved, offerings have been made to the priests and the dead have been remembered. After the bath a visit to the many shrines and the sacred tree. One more loving glance at the rivers and then homeward again, singly, or in groups, singing, laughing, shouting.

In the villages curious, anxious faces meet the home-comers. "Did you bathe at the right moment? Did you bring the holy water? What did you see? How many pilgrims were there?" What a time answering questions! What stories to relate! Evening after evening the fortunate pilgrim forms the centre of a curious, questioning, admiring group.

The *melas* play an important part in uniting the Hindu nation, creating a bond of fellow-feeling among the people throughout the length and breadth of India. On these joyous occasions the people put aside the rigid restrictions of their everyday life and all mix freely. They realize that all India has common hopes and common loves.

PARABLES AND SAYINGS OF MEISTER ECKEHART

BY WOLFRAM H. KOCH

[Mr. Koch is a master of several European languages and a friend of the Vedanta Movement in Europe. He has contributed valuable papers to the *Vedanta Kesari*. The following article presents a collection of a few striking passages selected and translated from the original writings of Meister Eckehart, one of the soaring mystics of Europe. Eckehart, like Sankara, is hard to understand; but when understood, he is as satisfying intellectually and emotionally as the great Indian saint, philosopher and hymnologist. To a certain person who complained about the difficulty of understanding his sermons, Eckehart himself is recorded to have replied: "To understand my sermons a man requires three things. He must have conquered strife and be in contemplation of his highest good and be satisfied to do God's bidding and be a beginner with beginners and nought himself and be so master of himself as to be incapable of anger." This reads almost like an echo of Sankara's *Sadhanachatushtaya* or the four-fold preliminary qualification enjoined upon the religious aspirant who treads the path of Divine wisdom. In the following selections we get a glimpse into Eckehart's spiritual genius.—The Editors.]

Six centuries have passed since the Dominican monk Eckehart of Hochheim lived and taught a life of highest spiritual realisation in a mighty unbroken struggle against the forces in the Church which tended more and more to fossilise Christ's teaching. Nothing in this great teacher and mystic of the 14th century is antiquated, and we might well say that no one among the later German mystics ever attained the depth of his Divine knowledge and his tenderness, in a world of increasing ossification in matters spiritual. Among his great fellow-mystics, Tauler, Seuse, and Ruysbroeck, he shone like the guiding light which tried to free all that was tender and ever-lasting from the burden of lifeless ritualism and priestly self-righteousness.

It was characteristic of Meister Eckehart that his God was not a menacing, irascible one, but a God full of gladness and laughter radiating joy and bliss and fulfilment; and

his words never hit us so directly and clearly as when he speaks to us about the nearness of this Divine delight to all of us. So on our part it needs but one courageous and unconditional step to reach Him and enjoy Him to our heart's content. God, for Meister Eckehart, longs to overwhelm us with His immense joyfulness. He yearns a thousand times more for us than we ever do for Him; for He wishes to give us gladness and infinite plenitude. For Meister Eckehart life was no life unless it was a life in God, with God, and through God, in every beat of our heart, in every thought of our mind, in every affection and longing of our soul.

In Western mysticism no one else has approached the great Sri Sankaracharya in depth of thought and the great Indian Bhaktas like Sri Chaitanya and others in the intensity and purity of feeling so much as Meister Eckehart has done.

In this short sketch we shall deal only with a few of his telling and highly original parables and sayings and shall reserve a deeper study of his many-sided personality for a later paper.

THE POWER OF DESIRE

"Whoever wants to see Jesus must pass beyond all objects. How is it that a man does not pass beyond all things at a quick pace? It means that he has not yet tasted of God. Had he tasted of God, he would pass beyond all things very quickly. Yea, not only would he pass beyond them, but he would break through all creation and all creatures. What his love was able to leave, he would break."

That we are not able to see God comes of the littleness of our desire and of the manifoldness of creatures. He who has high desires, is high. He who wishes to behold God, must be of high desire. Know that earnest longing and deepest humility work miracles. On my body, I declare that so it is. Even if God is able to do everything,—this He is not able to do, viz., to deny anything to a man who is of high desire and is humble. And if I myself do not compel God to do all I want, there has always been a lack of either humility or desire. I say this on my body and affirm it with certainty: A man filled with longing or eagerness might get so far that he could pass through a wall of steel, as we read of St. Peter that he, seeing Jesus, was able to go out on the waters owing to his intense desire." "Now I say, a thing which steadily grows while it is being filled, never becomes full. If a great barrel into which one poured gallons and gallons, should grow big-

ger while being filled, it would never become full. Such is the soul's desire. The more it desires, the more it is given. The more it receives, the greater is its capacity."

HUMILITY

"Everything must of necessity be fulfilled in a truly humble man. The humble man and God are not two, but they are one. God cannot but flow into a very humble man. A humble man need not beg God, he can command God. A humble man is as powerful over God, as God is powerful over himself. Were such a man in hell, God would have to come to hell, and hell would have to be the kingdom of God. God would of necessity have to act in this way. He is forced to do thus, because the being of such a man is the Divine Being, and Divine Being, one and the same Divine Being, with his own being."

"My humility gives God His Godhead. This can be proved in the following way: It is God's most essential quality to give. Now, God cannot give unless He possesses something which is receptive to His gift. Through my humility I make myself receptive for His gift. Therefore, through my humility, I make God a giver and give God through my humility what is His, because giving is the most essential quality of God. It is just as in the case of a master who wishes to be a giver: such a one must seek a person who accepts. If there be acceptor, the master could never become a giver. He who accepts thus by accepting makes the master a giver. Similarly, if God is to be a giver, He must seek a person who receives. Now no one can be a receiver of the gift except he who is humble. And there-

fore, if God is to exercise His Divine quality by means of His gift, He thereto certainly needs humility. For without humility He cannot give me anything, because without humility I am not receptive for this gift. And therefore it is true that I with my humility give God His Godhead."

"My humility raises God, and the more I humble myself, the more I raise God, and the more I raise God, the more tenderly and sweetly He infuses His Divine gifts and His Divine influence into me. For the higher is that which flows in, the more tenderly and sweetly does it flow. But why God is being raised through my humility, I explain in this way: The more I press myself down and downwards, the higher is God above me. It is just as in the case of a well: The deeper it is, the higher does he become who stands at the well. Similarly, the more I humble myself in humility, the higher does God become, and the more tenderly and sweetly does He pour His Divine influence into me. Thus it must be true that I can raise God by my humility."

GRACE MUST BE TAKEN

"We should bring ourselves so far that we have no need to ask God to give us His grace and His Divine Goodness. But we shall work for ourselves, so that we take it ourselves and do not in the least ask Him for it."

THE LOAD-STONE AND THE NEEDLES

"Someone has raised the question, how it could ever be that the senses should have to obey reason?"

"If reason is wholly attached to God and remains thus, all the senses must be obedient to reason. It is as

in the case of someone hanging a needle to a load-stone and to this needle another one and so on; in that way one can well hang four needles to a load-stone. As long as the first needle adheres to the load-stone, the other needles also remain attached to it; and when the first needle loosens itself from the load-stone, all the others also detach themselves from it. Similarly, as long as reason firmly cleaves to God all the senses must be obtained to it. When however, reason separates itself from God, all the senses drop away from it, so that they become disobedient to it."

EMPTINESS DRIVES ME ON TO GOD

"I will never pray to God to give Himself to me. I will pray to Him to give me emptiness. For were I emptied, God, of His own nature, would have to give Himself to me and be locked up within me."

"All Holy Scripture cries out that man must empty himself of himself. For as far as thou becomest empty of thyself, so far art thou master of thyself, so far dost thou belong to thyself, and as far as thou belongest to thyself, God, too, belongs to thee with everything He ever created. Truly I tell thee, as truly as God is God and I am man: hadst thou become as empty of thyself as thou art empty of the highest angel:—the highest angel would be as much thy very own as thou thyself art thy very own. In this exercise man becomes master of himself."

TRUTH

"What is Truth? Truth is something so noble that, if it were possible that God could ever turn away from Truth, I would cleave to Truth and leave God."

THE HARDEST VICTORY

"Never was there truer and greater manhood, more manly strife or struggle, than where a man forgets and denies himself."

EVIL CANNOT BE LOVED

"God is Love. With His love He gives all creatures their being and their life, and with His love He sustains them. The colour which is on the wall is sustained by the wall. Thus all creatures are sustained in their being by Love which is God. If the colours were taken from the wall, they would lose their being. Similarly, all creatures would lose their being if they were taken from love, which is God. God is Love and so lovable is He that all that can love, must love Him, whether He likes it or not. There is no creature so vile that it could love something which is evil. For, whatever one loves must be either good, or at least seeming to be good."

GOD ALONE GIVES BLISS

"Everything that God ever created or could ever create, if God were to give all that at once to my soul, but not Himself, even should He remain a hair's breadth distant from it, would not suffice for my soul, and I would not be full of bliss. But if I am full of bliss, the whole world is within me and also God, and where I am, there is God, and where God is, there am I."

HEIGHT AND DEPTH

"Whoever wants to come into the ground of God, in his greatest, must first come into his own ground, into his smallest. For no one can know God who has not first known himself. He must step down to his lowest

depths and into God's innermost, and step into his beginning and his highest peaks, for all that God is able to do meets there."

CHALLENGE GOD HIMSELF

"When the soul lives in its innermost part where it is the perfect likeness of God, it possesses perfect union, and no creatures can ever again separate it therefrom. Challenge God! Challenge the angels! Challenge all creatures! They can no more separate the soul from the original image wherein it is one with God. This is perfect union, and therein lies true bliss."

GOD IS A NEGATION OF NEGATION

"The Divine One is a negation of negation and a longing of longing. What does 'one' mean? Something that can be added to. Now the soul grasps the idea of the Godhead, when it stands alone, when nothing is added to it, when there is no thinking at all to be done. The One is a negation of negation. All creatures carry a negation within themselves. One negates that it is the other. An angel negates that he is another creature. God, however, possesses a negation of negation. He is one and negates all else, for there is nothing at all except God."

WHY WE ARE NOT TO FEAR GOD

"Our Lord cannot bear that any one who always loves Him should be afflicted. For, 'fear hath torment.' St. John also says, 'Love casteth out fear.' That is why love can suffer neither fear nor pain. For the more man increases in love, the more he decreases in fear, and when he is perfect in love, he loses all fear completely. It is true that at the beginning of a good life, fear is help-

ful for man, for then it is an access to love for him. Just as the puncher or the awl makes room for the wire, so it is this latter and not the iron that binds the shoe; and just as the bristle at the end of the wire makes the wire pass through, while the bristle remains outside and the wire stitches together, so does fear lead right on to love, but only love binds to God, whereas fear must depart."

IN GOD THERE IS NEITHER
HENRY NOR CONRAD

"When I am united to God in Whom all things, past, present and future, are present, they are equally near and in an equal way One; they are all in God and all in me. There one need neither think of Henry nor of Conrad. If one prays for anything else but God alone, I can only call it idolatry, an offence to God. But those who pray in spirit and in truth, they pray aright. If I pray for anyone, for Henry or for Conrad, I am least of all really praying. But when I pray for no one, I am praying best. And when I no longer desire anything at all or ask for anything at all, then I am most truly myself, for in God there is neither Henry nor Conrad. If one prays to God for anything else than Himself, this is not proper. It is a sign of imperfection and infidelity. For then one wishes to put something beside God, wants to annihilate God, and make a God of nothing."

HOW GOD ANNIHILATES HIMSELF
IN THE SOUL

"Now I wish you to understand me rightly as I am going to bring out a thought of which I have never spoken yet."

"The worthy Dionysius says, 'If God no longer exists for the mind, then the original eternal image also no longer exists, which yet is its everlasting source.' I have asserted and still declare: God has only done one work in all eternity. And in this work He has also created the soul for Himself. From this work the soul has come forth into a creaturely being, has become different from God and estranged to its own eternal original image. But only in this creatureliness God became really posited, so that He did not really exist at all before this soul became creaturely. I also sometimes said: The fact that God is God depends on me. God receives His existence from the soul, His Godhead, however, He receives from His own nature. For before the creature came into being, God was not yet God, but He already was the Godhead, and this He has not received from the soul. Now when God finds an annihilated soul that has become nothing in its self and all its characteristics, through grace, God works His own eternal work which is above all grace in that soul and lifts it up out of its creatureliness. Here, however, God annihilates Himself in the soul, and thus there remains neither God nor soul! Be certain: This work is most of all God's very own. Has it come to pass that the soul is able to suffer God's working within itself, it is also enabled no longer to have any God at all. Now the soul has returned to the eternal original image in, which God beheld it in all eternity: His Eternal Word."

I LIKE TO LIVE

"Sometimes I have said: He who seeks God and something else as well

as God, does not find God. But he who truly seeks God alone, never finds God alone, for together with God he also finds all God can offer. If thou seekest God and seekest Him for thine own profit or for the sake of thine own bliss, truly, then thou dost not seek God! Therefore our Lord says that the true worshippers worship the Father, and he speaks well. If one would ask a good man: Why dost thou seek God? He would answer: Because He is God. Why dost thou seek Truth? Because it is Truth. Why dost thou seek justice? Because it is justice. These people are right. For all things which have their being in time, ask a question. For instance, he who would ask a man: Why dost thou eat?—would receive the answer: So that I may have strength.—Why dost thou sleep? For the same reason.—And thus it is with all things which have their being in time. But he would ask a good man: Why dost thou love God?—would receive the answer: I do not know, it is just because He is God.—Why dost thou love Truth.—For the sake of Truth.—Why dost thou love justice?—For the sake of justice.—Why dost thou love Goodness?—For the sake of goodness.—And why dost thou live?—Indeed, I do not know, I like to live.”

GOD AS THE MILCH-COW

“Some people are so constituted that they wish to see God with their own eyes as they would look at a cow, and they want to love God in the way in which they love a cow. Thou lovest the cow because of the milk and the cheese and their own profit. Thus also do the people who love God for the sake of external riches or inward consolation. They do not love God properly but they love God

for the sake of their own profit. Every intention of thy mind, if it be not God alone in Himself may be as good as it possibly can be; but it will all be an obstacle to thee and to thy innermost Truth.”

THE CENTRE OF ACTION

“I frequently say: Those who wish to begin a good life, should do like one who describes a circle. When he has rightly placed the centre of the circle, and when it is fixed, the line of the circle becomes good. This means: Man should learn first to keep his heart firmly centred in God, for then he will also become steady in all his works. For when his heart is unsteady, whatever great things he does, it will all come to nothing.”

In a time like the present when all values are indiscriminately thrown into the crucible and the opposing currents in their blind and self-willed struggles for supremacy seem incapable of bringing to the world a constructive order, it is well to turn to the pages of the spiritually great men of the East and the West. Modern life has grown so much into outward mechanical things that its tremendous dynamism tends to become more and more aimless,—dynamism for the sake of dynamism, movement for the sake of movement. And the blind dynamism is bound to lead to a catastrophe, because it does not go down to the essentials of life and culture. An age which gives up all supra-temporal and supra-spatial values and takes the ephemeral activities of its outward mechanised life to be the all in all, to be Life as such, is doomed to bring chaos and untold misery. And in the great work of reorientation that is the task of the present day, the contribution

of the saints and sages of humanity they above all who can show humanity the true path of evolution should not be pushed carelessly aside as antiquated and illusory. For it is and attainment.

HOW TO PRACTISE YOGA ACTUALLY?

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

[These are the notes of the class-talks given by the Swami to a group of spiritual aspirants at Wiesbaden, Germany, in December 1933.—The Editors.]

I

MANY people want to begin from the topmost rung of the ladder; but that cannot be done. There are no long jumps in spiritual life; neither can anything be achieved without first finding out where one really stands. High philosophical flights and wonderful metaphysical dreams do not mean realisation, and by themselves they never lead to realisation, but only to abstract and superfine speculations that have no connection at all with real or practical life. They do not change the life of persons who indulge in them in any way. We should know where we stand and then proceed from there. We must begin as beginners and go on step by step. As an ideal Monism may be all right for us; but when we come down to the practical aspects, we are dualists and shall remain dualists for a long time to come. I am always amused when I hear everybody talking in high terms about the Absolute, the Principle, etc., because in our case all these are nothing but empty speculations and frothy words. They do not even mean that that particular person is fit for the Monistic path. Nobody who stands in Dualism, in whatever way this may be, is a Monist, whether Monism appeals to him or not. Very often the mind of the modern man revolts against the

idea of any particular discipline. It says, “Why should we busy ourselves with that? Haven’t we got enough drudgery in the world? So why should we follow practices which do not appeal to us? We want the Absolute, so what is the use of Japan, of attributes, of personal forms? Let us reach the Absolute. Let us worship the Divine ‘in spirit and in truth!’” All this, no doubt, sounds very grand and highly spiritual; but as soon as we come down to realities, we find out it does not mean anything at all. Mostly such people are convinced dualists as far as their own actions in daily life go. To worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’ is all right. It is very good, but where is the beginner who can do so? This is the point. For most people it means just haziness, vagueness,—hazy feeling and hazy thinking and acting in a way that has no connection at all with the Divine.

Our mind is always out to deceive us and play tricks on us. Therefore we need strict daily discipline in everything we do.

How to begin?—That is the point. How to get the necessary mental training?—That is the problem before us. Different thoughts constantly keep cropping up in our minds. When we wish to make the mind calm, the mind becomes most disturb-

ed. It revolts the very moment we try to concentrate. It suddenly takes the form of a mighty ocean in which we are in danger of being drowned. The whole surface of the mind is disturbed by mighty thought-waves, and the more we try to calm it, the mightier these become. So meditation makes us very tired in the beginning instead of soothing us and bringing us light as it should.

As in the case of a horse-trainer, who has to take great trouble to break the horse, similarly we shall have to follow a certain definite system of discipline, from which we should not deviate, to break the mind. In our spiritual discipline there must be great definiteness regarding everything. It won't do for us to put two legs in two different boats. We must learn to follow one course definitely without vacillating, to proceed step by step, if we wish to reach the goal one day.

II

What are the conditions for meditation? For meditation and for all forms of spiritual practice the first point is a steady posture (*asana*), usually a sitting posture. So Patanjali says, "Any posture that is steady and pleasant." Squatting, no doubt, is very helpful, because the weight of the body is perfectly balanced in that posture, but it must be easy, otherwise it disturbs the mind of the person trying to attempt spiritual practices. For us, it is natural, but for many Western people it may take quite a lot of practice, and some may not even be able to do it at all. Anyway, for those who can, it is the best posture for spiritual practice.

The second most important point is continence. Without Brahma-

charya (continence), there is no real spiritual life. When you allow the water to flow out through the rat-holes of the body by wasting it through sex and sensual desire, there will be no energy left for the higher forms of spiritual practice. No use rowing a boat while it is tightly anchored near the shore. Sri Ramakrishna said, "What we want is communion with the Divine." If there is any obstruction in the form of sexual desire or intercourse, communion is not possible. It is just like the case of the broken telegraph-wire. The electricity may be there, the operator may be there, but the communication will never reach its destination as long as the broken wire is not repaired, or as long as some obstructing non-conductor is not removed. "In heaven there is no marriage nor giving in marriage."

Our cravings of the flesh, our desires, usually stand in the way of real religion. The sham thing you ordinarily see in life, going to places of worship and hearing religious instruction and doing as one pleases is not true religion. This kind of thing may have proved highly profitable for the Church, but it is not Christ's teaching. The right mood is essential for all forms of spiritual practice, and without spiritual practice there never can be anything like spiritual life. The early Christians knew this perfectly well. So did many of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. But now the whole tradition seems to be lost in the West; and that is why the West is sinking to the level of the brute.

Without ethical culture we can never come in close touch with the Divine. If, after creating a perfect void, we are able to have the right

thought, well and good. Then this kind of practice is very useful. But it is very dangerous for the beginner, because he does not succeed in having the right thought after creating the void, but just falls asleep or is dominated by his subconscious mind. In the case of the beginner there is always the great danger of his mind falling below the threshold of consciousness.

As has been mentioned above, the mind is very much like an unruly horse which has to be broken. The horse acts in two ways: When we want to drive it, it either becomes dreadfully restive or it simply lies down and refuses to move. It does not wish to be steady. So in order to break this unruly horse of our mind a certain amount of ethical culture is necessary. So long as the thought of sex and money is allowed to dominate it, it cannot be broken.

III

What are the virtues to be practised in spiritual life? First comes, as Manu says, Ahimsa or not harbouring any ill-feeling towards others whether they are good or bad. Realise these ill-feelings as they arise in the mind. With a disturbed mind it is not possible to have any form of concentration. It is not possible for us to have a concentrated mind and at the same time to cherish an evil thought against anybody. I am speaking of higher concentration.

Next comes Non-stealing. This must never be taken in the gross sense only. Anything that we wish to possess at the cost of anybody else, anything that we get by unfair means, is stealing.

Third: Purity. Physical as well as mental purity is absolutely necessary.

Sometimes we commit the mistake of stressing only physical purity, because it is so much more difficult to achieve true mental purity. There are many who satisfy themselves by taking baths, but who do not trouble themselves to have a pure mind. It is, however, impossible to concentrate a dirty mind on higher things. So long as there is the impure thought of a woman in man or of a man in woman, real higher concentration is out of the question. There may not be any gross physical relations, but it is sex all the same, and so long as there is any form of sex, purity has not been achieved, and without purity having been achieved the higher spiritual life remains very far off.

Fourth: Sense-control. One who abandons himself to any form of sense-enjoyment cannot have any calmness or peace of mind. So he cannot do his practices well, however hard he may try. And there is this great point to note: Before the aspirant takes up the practice of *asana* (posture) he must already have gone through the whole of this ethical culture. So highly do the teachers of spiritual life value purity and non-attachment.

IV

Now let us sum up what we have to do and what we have to practise in spiritual life.

(1) We must practise a steady posture (*asana*);

(2) We must calm the mind;

(3) We should make salutations to all the teachers of the world or to one particular teacher if this appeals to us more.

And what is necessary for really calming the mind has already been

told. The mind can be calmed only by good and perfectly pure thoughts—only by holy thoughts, not connected with the body or the world.

The Upanishads say, "We must worship the Lord with a calm mind." So this calming of the mind is most important for all aspirants. In spiritual life especially we should follow the footsteps of the Great Ones.

We generally find it helpful to pray not only for our own spiritual welfare but also for that of others. Pray intensely for concentration, for calmness, for singleness of purpose, and for your own spiritual welfare as well as that of all other beings, so that they too may become pure and calm and concentrated and given to the higher life.

That is why Swamiji (Vivekananda) taught, "Immediately after sitting for meditation send thoughts of love South, East, North, West, to all creatures. You will find this immensely helpful."

As I said, during all our prayers we should also pray for the good of others. This sort of prayer, if done with a certain amount of concentration, brings to us in a general way a feeling of love for our fellow-beings who are struggling for the Higher Life and passing through great anguish and difficulties. The expansion of the soul is very essential for truly calming the mind and concentrating it on Divine things.

There are some people who find rhythmic breathing very helpful. Mind and breath are always inter-related and always act on each other. While doing Pranayama the proportion should be 1: 4: 2, but mere breath is not enough. If it were so, the football bladder would be the

greatest of all Yogis of the world. Along with this breath we must have the intense thought of overwhelming purity. "Everything is purity. I myself am purity, I am purity." Give strong suggestions to your mind. Inhale purity, exhale purity, fill yourself with purity. Inhale calmness, exhale calmness, fill yourself wholly with calmness. Inhale peace, exhale peace, fill yourself wholly with peace. Inhale peace, exhale all mental disturbance. Inhale dispassion and renunciation, exhale all attachment, passion and desire. Inhale purity, exhale all that is impure in your body and your mind. Inhale strength, exhale all weakness and fear. Go on giving these intense suggestions to your mind again and again before coming to your real practices.

V

What next? After this the thought of the Divine must be taken up. Where to think of the Divine? Where to have the centre of one's consciousness? Either in the head or in the heart. These two centres are safe for everybody. Never should a centre below the heart be taken. Here instructions can be imparted only to individuals, because they differ from one another, but both head and heart are always safe. If we do not consciously raise the nervous current at least up to the level corresponding, more or less, to the place of the physical heart, no spiritual meditation becomes possible. This conscious raising of one's nervous currents leads one beyond all sensual temptations and establishes one firmly in morals and ethical culture. For very dry and over-intellectual people it is advisable to take the heart. For emotional people the

heart-centre is very dangerous and should be avoided.

Think intensely of the particular centre and imagine it to be a centre of Divine Consciousness. Have the thought that the Divine Consciousness which is within you is also outside, part and parcel of a mighty Consciousness which is undivided and indivisible.

In the beginning you may think of it as light, but really speaking what is meant is the light of Intelligence, i.e., the Divine Light; and this Divine Light, which is in me, pervades at the same time the whole universe and is one, and eternally indivisible. This body of ours is like a temple of Brahman; remember, each body is like a temple of Brahman!

Having done all this, try to merge your consciousness in the Divine Consciousness as in the case of the salt-dolls getting merged in the sea. You know the parable of Sri Ramakrishna. This body-consciousness stands in the way, and as soon as we try to merge it in Divine Consciousness we get the idea that the soul is not the body.

Meditations should not be focussed on the void. There should be no creating of a void in the beginner. This is very dangerous. Meditations must have some definite, positive, spiritual content. Those who find meditation on the formless too abstract should centre their feelings on some holy form. This is very effective in two ways: it leads them away from their too personal affections and aversions and, at the same time, intensifies their feelings in a good sense, makes them more definite and leads them on to the light of the spirit. If ever any picture of any

person you used to love or to hate troubles you, set a very vivid picture of the holy form you have chosen as your Ishtam, against that picture and the feeling you have for your Ishtam against the feeling you have for that person, be it affection or aversion. Vivid pictures and memories must be counteracted by vivid pictures, strong feelings by stronger and purer feelings.

There is too little attempt at sublimation. We must learn to think in terms of the soul. Never stress the body-aspect. Never think of yourself as a man or a woman. It is very necessary and very helpful to deny the body as much as possible. Sublimation is of the greatest importance. Think intensely, "I am not a man, I am not a woman. I am not even a human being."

Repeat all these grand passages from Sankara's works. He says:

"I am neither a human being, nor a god, nor a demi-god. I am neither a Brahmin, nor a Kshatriya, nor a Vaisya, nor a Sudra. I am neither a student nor a householder nor a forest-dweller nor a monk. I am the Self, the infinite Consciousness.

"I am neither the mind nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the mind-stuff. I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell, touch or sight, nor am I earth, fire or air. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute. I am the Self, I am the Self.

"I am neither male nor female nor neuter. I am the Beneficent Being, the Light Supreme."

Just blast this rotten personality with these grand passages from Sankara by bombarding it with them at the time of meditation. It must

be blasted, and if it does not go, nothing can be achieved.

Go on repeating sincerely "I am He, I am He."

"I am neither the body nor the senses, neither the mind, nor the ego, neither the vital energy nor the intellect. Husband, wife, child, wealth or prosperity are free from me. I am the Witness, the Eternal Indwelling Spirit, the Being Beneficent."

"I am the light of the Atman, the Light that is inside, the Light that is outside, the Light that is the inner Self. I am the Supreme Being, the Light of lights, the Light self-existent."

All these ideas are always associated with Mahadeva (Shiva) the Great White God of Renunciation, of Purity, of Dispassion, Who has always been the Ultimate Ideal of spiritual men in India.

"I am the Being Resplendent, and none else. I am Brahman, not subject to misery. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute, eternally free by nature." (Sankara)

And then there is the beautiful prayer in the Upanishads:

"May my mind become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May my soul become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realize myself as the Light Divine."

VI

Different forms of meditation without human form may also be practised:

(1) The aspirant imagines he is a fish swimming in the one undivided and eternally indivisible ocean of Existence—Knowledge—Bliss, without any obstruction whatsoever.

(2) The aspirant imagines he is a bird flying in the infinite sky without anything to stand in its way anywhere.

(3) The aspirant is like a full pot immersed in water. Water inside and outside.

(4) The aspirant is like an empty pot floating in ether, ether inside and outside.

(5) The aspirant imagines himself to be a point of self-conscious light immersed in the one indivisible Ocean of Light.

You identify yourself with the point of light, then you feel it to be part of an infinite sphere of light, and after that everything becomes just light everywhere. Nothing but light is left. Either make this point of light expand or merge it or let it move wherever it goes, because wherever it goes, there is the one infinite light. Try to expand during the time of your meditation. Keep your body-consciousness hanging on a peg, as it were, at least for a time. Thus you raise counter-currents against all your false conceptions and feelings which lie at the root of all your troubles. All such ideas as, 'I am So-and-So, I am a husband, a wife, a child, a lover, etc.' come from this mistaken identification with what is non-self. Really speaking, worldly love is nothing very grand. Association with others in bodies is nothing very fine. Learn to be realistic.

If one follows such a path, it is just like being a yeast-cell which goes on dividing and dividing itself, but never becomes big. The impulse of creation remains. It is the same impulse which leads to sex and physical creation on the animal plane that leads us to the highest on the

spiritual plane. The man, forgetting the real background of his manhood, goes and associates with the bubble of a woman-form, feeling himself to be a man-bubble. So bubbles merrily associate with bubbles. Yeast-cells go on dividing themselves eternally and never become big.

All these relations based on the body are bosh and nonsense. "O, I have been longing for you all my life. You are the star of my life." All nonsense! Afterwards, when all is over, when your body is satiated with enjoyment, each goes again his own way. Inwardly we all remain strangers, however hard we may try to deceive ourselves on this point. Never can our void be filled by a man-bubble or a woman-bubble,

nor by any bubble-star, by anyone who has always been "my life." All this sounds very grand and romantic, but there is no ultimate truth in it. To the child, the dolls are something very real. It loves them and caresses them and for a time feels very happy in the company of its dolls. Then, one day, it has lost all interest in them and sees them merely as absurd-looking, shabby dolls, hardly being able to understand how it could have cared for them so much. This happens to the grown-up man-child or woman-child also, sooner or later, after many lives, or in this life. But to all this awakening comes one day, and in the beginning this means terrible pain and misery.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE BHAGAVATA

BY SWAMI JAGADISWARANANDA

[To use a simile borrowed from the confectioner, it may be said that the *Bhagavata* is a sweet preparation fried in the Ghee of Knowledge and soaked in the syrup of Devotion. The writer of the following paragraphs endeavours to remove the misconception that it is exclusively a work of Devotion.—The Editors.]

SRIMAD BHAGAVATA is well known as a great classic of Devotion or Bhakti, and to the Vaishnavas it is a scripture of supreme authority. However, this grand Purana is equally important as a work expounding Divine Knowledge also in an emphatic manner, which fact is often overlooked by many who value it only as an excellent devotional work. It is stated in the *Bhagavata* itself (XII: 7.24) that it is one of the eighteen Puranas; and it is an established fact that the Puranas are only an illustrated explanation of the truths taught in the Vedas. Just as there is a graduated

syllabus in any course of study, in religion too, there are scriptures suitable to the needs of various aspirants. All are not competent to study all the scriptures because they are intended for different types of seekers. Those who are barred from the study of the Vedas, therefore, find a supreme scripture in the *Bhagavata*, to understand the same lessons of Bhakti and Jnana taught in the Vedas, set forth at length with narrations, discourses, stories, hymns and such other aids to meet the requirements of such seekers. It naturally follows that the *Bhagavata* is not merely a scripture

of devotion, however elaborate a treatment that aspect of religion may have received in it.

The above thesis is sufficiently substantiated by the evidences found in the *Bhagavata* itself. In the very first chapter of *Bhagavata* it is described as a luscious fruit fallen from the wish-yielding tree of the Vedas, Nigmakalpataru. In the tenth Book, which is a dissertation on Prema-tattva, (the nature of Divine Love), there is towards the close the section called Veda-Stuti, which is considered to be the hymn sung by the embodied Vedas, and which presents the essence of the Upanishads or the crux of the Veda. Again, to any careful reader the identity of ideas, phrases and whole passages of *Bhagavata* with those of the Upanishads is patent throughout. For instance, *Mundakopanishad* II: 2.8 and *Bhagavata* XI: 20.30 are nearly the same. The verses in *Bhagavata* VIII: 1.9 to 16 are called Mantropanishad in the next verse itself; and verse 10 there is almost a quotation of the first verse of the *Isa-vasyopanishad*. The famous allegory of the Birds of golden plumage occurring in *Mundakopanishad* III: 1-2 is reproduced in the *Bhagavata* XI: 11. 6-7. Many more submerged quotations from the Upanishads may be easily detected in the *Bhagavata*, with only slight difference in the wording. There is also a tradition that the *Bhagavata* embodies a metrical commentary of the *Brahmasutras*. The earliest commentary available on the *Bhagavata* is by Sridharaswami who has explained the verses from the non-dualistic viewpoint. Jivagoswami, Visvanathachakravarti and others who commented upon it after him,

from the purely devotional viewpoint, were indebted to him more or less. It is therefore fairly clear that the claim of the *Bhagavata* to represent the Upanishadic ideas of knowledge is beyond all criticism.

Another important point deserves our attention in this connection. In the colophon attached to each chapter of the *Bhagavata* in some editions the work is designated also as Paramahamsya-samhita, a work for the Paramahamsas. It helps the aspirant to attain the state of Paramahamsa or a Knower of God, i.e., a Jnani. This is aptly so, because we meet in almost every part of the book dispassion for the world, renunciation and disinterested love of God taught repeatedly, in the most forceful manner. The incident which occasioned the recital of *Bhagavata* itself is a circumstance highly powerful to inspire the spirit of dispassion and renunciation; for, Sri Suka, the prince among Sannyasins or world-renouncing Jnanis, was the teacher and Parikshit, condemned by a curse to die within a period of a week, was the pupil to receive the instructions imparted. Nothing less than the highest goal of man conceived as the highest devotion, Para-Bhakti, or highest Knowledge can be worthy of treatment in a work engendered by such a crisis. Because pure knowledge and pure devotion as Sri Ramakrishna taught by word and example are the same.

The opening verse of the *Bhagavata* embodies the second Sutra of the *Brahmasutra*, and, at least according to the Advaitins (non-dualists), the verse is supposed to contain all the salient features of the Advaitic system, chief of which is the reference

to the fact that the universe is an appearance on the background of the Supreme Truth (yatra trisargo mrisha). It is an accepted fact borne out by a number of examples that the theme indicated at the very outset of a work, and with which it concludes, must be the main purport of the whole work. So we find again in *Bhagavata* XI: 5.2-12 which is the very close of the dialogue between Sri Suka and Parikshit, the same idea clearly expounded. Says Suka: "O king, give up this notion, fit only for a brute, that you will die; you are not born from nowhere and you will not perish as your body will. Like the fire that is apart from objects it consumes, you are other than the body which obeys the law of growth and decay. A man may dream of his own beheading; so also he may witness the death of his body. The soul is therefore unborn and undying by nature. At the breaking of a pot, the space enclosed by it merges into undivided space; similarly at the destruction of the body the soul merges in Brahman. Mind creates the body and its attributes, which in its turn is a product of Maya; thus from Maya and its products the Samsara is produced. The flame lasts only so long as it has association with a wick soaked in oil; the flame goes out when it is burnt up. So, too, birth is brought about by association with the body. In this conjunction between Atman and body the Atman does not perish at the destruction of the body. It is self-luminous, distinct from the subtle and the gross universe, changeless, all-pervading like ether and the abode of all. Enquire after the Atman by reasoning and by meditation upon the Divine.

Takshaka, the Serpent, cannot harm you. Realising that "I am Brahman, the supreme abode and the highest goal to be attained," and merging in the partless Brahman, you will not perceive the biting Takshaka, your own body and the whole universe separate from the Atman which you yourself are." Thus in the view of Paramahamsa Sukadeva Atmajnana or realisation of the Self is the cure for all sorrows and suffering as well as for all fears and frailties. As shown above, the opening and closing of the *Bhagavata* strikes the same note. Is this not the same as what is taught in the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-gita*?

In the *Bhagavad-gita* and in the eleventh Book of the *Bhagavata* the path leading the aspirant to perfection is laid out by the great Teacher Sri Krishna. In both these works, although the persons who are instructed are two, namely, Arjuna and Uddhava, the teacher and the teachings are exactly the same. This is amply evident from the contents of the two books themselves. Moreover, it is not at all likely that the same teacher has two entirely different doctrines on a subject of such great importance to be taught in two places, although there may be variations of emphasis. The paths of Knowledge, of Devotion and of Yoga are met with in both the scriptures. In *Bhagavata* XI: 13 Lord Krishna admits paths other than that of Devotion for the attainment of the goal. The three-fold Yoga taught in the *Gita* is what we find in the *Bhagavata* also. "In order to help men to realise liberation," says Bhagavan Sri Krishna in *Bhagavata* XI: 20.6 et seq,

"I have inculcated three methods, i.e., Jnana, Karma and Bhakti. Of these, knowledge or Jnana is for those Sannyasins who are disgusted with Work and have renounced it. Those who are still seeking the fulfilment of desires have the path of Work. But the man who by chance has contracted faith in the stories about the Lord and who is neither disgusted with, nor grossly attached to, work has in the path of Devotion the way to Success."

The *Bhagavata* in one place definitely points out that a man should dispense with the sacred Books at the dawn of spiritual experience, as a peasant throws away the stalks after storing the corn. The idea is echoed in the *Gita*.

In the eleventh Book where the Avadhuta describes how and what he was taught by his Gurus, he mentions that he learned from the first and finest of the primordial elements, ether, the trait of the omnipresent Atman, which runs as a substratum through all movable and immovable things. The Akasa being indivisible and all-pervasive is a fit illustration to give a conception of the Atman.

A psychological study of the Madhurabhava and its supreme state called Mahabhava reveals certain points which have not attracted sufficient attention. According to Sri Viswanathachakravarti, an accepted authority on Bhakti philosophy, Mahabhava is that state of intense devotion wherein established a devotee considers that all the happiness of the Crores of worlds is not even a fragment of the joy of divine union. The happiness of this world or the next or of any world there may be, is simply nothing in compa-

risson with Divine bliss. To a saint in the state of Mahabhava the pain caused by the bite of all the snakes and scorpions that ever existed can never equal the burning pang of separation from God. What is the psychological relation between God and the devotee when his devotion is so deep and intense? The Gopis hungered and thirsted for union with Sri Krishna as all devotees do for their chosen Ideals. This means that love implies essential unity and spiritual identity between the lover and the beloved. What one is not, one never desires to become. "Like is known only by the like," says Porphyry, the mystic philosopher. "Simple people," remarks the great German mystic, Eckehart, "conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so. God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him." When love reaches its acme, man and God are unified and identified. In other words, man becomes spiritually God. It is a psychological fact that the human mind cannot think two things at a time. Extreme rapidity of the succession of mental acts, i.e., thoughts, deludes one into thinking that thoughts are simultaneous. Mind is characterised by the temporal order of succession, not by the spatial order of simultaneity.

Now, in Bhakti the idea of 'I' is totally obliterated and that of 'you' (God) takes possession of mind. The thoughts of 'I' and 'you' cannot together exist in the mind. Deeper the devotion, lesser 'I' and more 'you' in the mind. Annihilation of individuality is followed by the divine fulfilment. The fundamental teaching of Rasalila or Madhurabhava is

that, in order to realise God, an aspirant must cultivate the divine madness like a Gopi. That Divine union born of love aims at eventual identity is a truth that derives corroboration from the Rasapanchadhyaya of the *Bhagavata*. When the divine emotions were highest the Gopis were so much absorbed in the thoughts of God Krishna that they thought themselves to be Krishnas, nay more. Their bodies too were moulded into the likenesses of Krishna. Thoughts that dominate the mind influence the body as well; for it is the mind, says Hindu Philosophy, that creates and colours the body.

In *Bhagavata* XI: 14 are set forth the methods of personal and impersonal meditations. Krishna teaches therein that first of all concentration should be practised on one part of

the Divine Form and then it should be distributed all over it. In the higher stage of meditation one should think less of the form and more of the divine attributes, and when the highest stage is attained, meditation culminates in Samadhi in which the meditator loses his own identity in God like light united with light. This, therefore, is the verdict of the *Bhagavata*: As light united with light becomes one, so man absorbed in God becomes God. Rightly observes Bernard Bosanquet in his *What Religion* is that what is united with the Eternal becomes Eternal. Bhakti should never antagonise Jnana and vice versa. They are twins and are wedded to the same destiny. According to mentality one chooses one; the other, another. The *Bhagavata* is as great a classic of Bhakti as of Jnana. Both are taught in it.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Indian Realism: By Jadunath Sinha, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, Meerut College; Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., London. Pages xvi+287. Price 10s. 6d.

As stated by the author in the Preface, "This book is an attempt at a reconstruction of the Yogacara *Vijnanavada* (Subjective Idealism), and an exhaustive criticism of it by different schools of Indian Realism." In the first chapter we have an exposition of *Vijnanavada* based on the accounts of Madhava, Santarakshita and Kamalasila. The rest of the book is taken up with a criticism of Subjective Idealism. Beginning with the Sautrantika realism, we pass in review the Jaina, Sankhya-yoga, Mimamsaka, and Nyaya-Vaisesika schools of realism. In the last chapter is given a criticism of Subjective Idealism by the schools of Vedanta.

The main thesis of Subjective Idealism is that external objects do not exist, that mind and its modifications alone are real. There

is nothing extra-mental. Everything is not only mind-dependent but also mind-constituted. Cognition alone is real; and there is no object of cognition other than the cognition itself. The various schools of Realism aim at refuting this metaphysical theory. There is an external world independent of mind. Experiencing makes no difference to the facts experienced. The objects are *out there*, real and independent. They are not mental fictions. Sankara's Advaita also criticises Subjective Idealism, but for quite different reasons. The Yogacara denies empirical reality to the external world; but that is wrong. The mind is as much a fiction as the object. In the relative world of existence there cannot be a subject without an object. There are, however, schools of Advaita bordering on Subjectivism; but they are not seriously regarded.

Dr. Sinha's work is masterly. The presentation of the various views is lucid. It appears to us, however, that the title of the

book might have been more apt. The book does not expound the schools of Indian Realism directly. It is throughout a *Critique of Vijñānavāda*. Some of the arguments urged by the Realists are repeated in almost every chapter; and the exposition of the Yogācāra Idealism is given in each chapter (though from different sources and from the points of view of different schools of realism). On the whole, the plan is well conceived and well executed. In simple and intelligible language Dr. Sinha reveals to us what has been said by many great thinkers in India. By quoting parallel passages from western philosophers he also shows how philosophy has no boundaries; modes of thinking are the same everywhere. The work under review is a valuable addition to the books in English on Indian Philosophy. And it is in keeping with the Time-Spirit—the challenge of Realism to Idealistic ways of thinking.

DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, M.A., PH.D.

Sri Ramakrishna Kavyalahari (Bengali): By Swami Shyamananda, Rangoon, Burma. Pages 624. Price Rs. 2-12-0.

This new book in Bengali is a metrical attempt at the biography of Sri Ramakrishna. The writer has taken advantage of most of the authentic materials available in the preparation of this life-history. In many places, of course, the book has halting metre, limping rhyme and faulty diction. But these do not in any way reduce the value of the book. As Rabindranath Tagore puts it in the foreword of the book, "Its true value consists in simple devotion." No doubt this appeal of devotion will enter straight into the hearts of the masses of Bengal for whom it is really meant, and the book will have an abiding formative influence on their character. The book is nicely got-up and an index greatly enhances the utility of the book.

P.C.

Who am I: By Sri Ramana Maharishi, Published by Sri Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai, S. India. Pages 36. Price As. 2.

This small brochure is the fourth edition of the book. This proves the merit and the usefulness of the book. It presents a few Vedantic thoughts in an unassuming and unembellished form. As such it has a direct appeal to the heart.

We hope the book will be helpful to the disciples of the Maharishi, who obviously follow the path of Knowledge, like their master. The book is nicely printed and got-up and contains a picture of the Maharishi and a translation of a poem by him on the easy accessibility to God through Knowledge.

P.C.

Truth, A Sati's Message, and other poems: Written and published by K. S. Seshagiri, B.A., Mylapore, Madras. Price As. 3.

The book under review contains seven verses dealing with different topics of religious interest. Sentiments expressed in them are lofty and noble and it is hoped that they will find a place in the discerning hearts.

P.C.

Narada's Aphorisms on Bhakti: By Y. Subrahmanya Sarma. Published by the Adhyatma Prakash Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore Ry. Pages 26.

The path of Devotion is said to be the easiest path and has perhaps the largest number of adherents among the religious seekers. But it cannot be gainsaid that with most of them, it is a sentimental outburst, an effusion of emotion—a momentary effervescence of feeling—which, though elevates for a time, really degenerates in the end. It is for the breaking of such indisciplined and untrained emotion that a scientific treatise on Bhakti is necessary. Narada Bhakti Sutra is one such and the best. Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of the modern era, prescribes: In Kaliyuga, Bhakti of Narada is the way. But the original being in Sanskrit, the present edition of the text, together with a translation and topical headings, will be helpful to people whose knowledge of Sanskrit is little or nil. The translation is lucid and faithful. The foot-notes are illuminating and useful. We hope this book will be widely made use of.—P.C.

The Battle of China or the Day of a Chinese Girl: By Dr. K. R. Menon, Ph.D. Printed and published by the School of Printing, Printers' Association, Cecil Street, Singapore. Pages 99. Price \$1.00 or 2s. 6d.

Herein in sweet and easy-flowing verses, the young poet Dr. Menon honours the self-denying effort of a Chinese girl of Singapore, who offered herself as a prize in the lottery for raising funds for the

ill-starred victims of Japanese aggression in China. He has also paid glowing tribute to the gallantry of Chinese soldiers and sustained patriotism of the Chinese people in such a protracted struggle for national freedom.

The intrinsic merit of the book makes it a delightful study. The sale-proceeds of this book will go to the Red-Cross fund of China. This laudable object is a further incentive to the purchase of the book, besides the lofty sentiments contained therein and fine printing and decent get-up.—N.C.

The Great Cremation Ground: By Elizabeth Sharpe. Published by Luzac & Co., London.

The book under review is said to be a critical dissertation on Indian philosophy. But in reality it deals with the Upanishads and Jaina philosophy only. The book has been given a strange name—meaning Mahasmasana, the Great Cremation Ground. The motive in the choice of such a peculiar name is not very far to seek. The Upanishadic philosophy, according to the writer, is not original or logical, but a hotch-potch of some older and more influential school of thought. As such it is barren and desolate like a cremation ground. But, one wonders how, if this assumption is correct, does the authoress reconcile the inclusion of Jaina system which she unequivocally praises, into the body of the same work? Of course this unusual high colour used for the painting of Jainism betrays a motive for acquiring a darker hue for the Upanishadic silhouette. But really this book is neither critical, nor a dissertation, nor on the whole of Indian philosophy. It is a puny treatise where ideas from various Upanishads have been culled, bereft of contextual setting; misinterpreted to a greater or less degree, and addled into a stinking hotch-potch. Her linking up of Semitic eucharist doctrine with the Vedic and post-Vedic sacrifices, her comparison of Upanishadic reply to the question: what is truth, with that of Christ; her strange thesis, putting forward the state of superconscious as absence of consciousness and many others betray a lack of sensible understanding, to say the least. The authoress in conclusion says that the Upanishadic philosophy being pessimistic is no good philosophy, for 'philosophy must of necessity be optimism of

the truest and highest order.' But if philosophy be a search after truth and truth be pessimistic, how can it be made into a bubbling optimism without tampering with truth? After all, truth, and therefore philosophy, cannot be made to order. Of course we do not admit that the Upanishadic philosophy is pessimistic. It is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but a factual representation of truth. Our authoress remarks that the philosophy of the Upanishads may well please the heart of a Schopenhauer as he was a pessimist. But what does she say to a Max Muller, a James or a Deussen? Well might Schopenhauer have remarked for the jibe hurled at him and the Upanishads, "When a head and a book come into collision, and one sounds hollow, is it always the book?"—quoting for the second time the witty remarks of Lichtenberger.

P.C.

Conquest of Sorrow: By Swami Sachidananda, Published by K. L. Basu, 43, Badan Roy Lane, Beliaghata, Calcutta.

"Verbal Consolation," says the author, "has but a transient effect," but to our mind it seems that bookish consolation has also no better chance. For consolation, we must always have to fall back upon the old healer Mr. Time. But no real consolation can be achieved unless and until we have transcended the limitations that cause sorrow. And here the author of the book under review points to the real direction by laying down the principles of spiritual practices. We hope the book will be helpful if people take this unmistakable hint.

P.C.

What is Hinduism: By D. S. Sarma, M.A., Printed by G. S. Press, Mount Road, Madras, Pages, 136.

Hinduism is not a religion, but, as has been aptly remarked by Mr. Sarma, a League of religions, not always friendly in their outlook; sometimes in open hostility to one another. And half a century ago who could have thought about a single treatise bringing under a generalised survey the whole motley crowd? But thanks to the era ushered in by the twin personality of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, a common meeting ground has been discovered, not on a convenient and artificial eclecticism but on an extension of our heart, and a broad-

ening of our understanding. Taking his stand on this sure ground Mr. Sarma presents us with his brilliant survey of Hinduism. He studies the problem from the standpoint of the Scriptures, Rituals, Ethics, Sadhanas and Philosophy. And his disquisition is well-proportioned, well-thought-out and well-written. It will be a handy compendium on Hinduism for our young hopefuls whose god-less education leaves them as blind to the glories of soul as the mole, in spite of all the lights of scientific and artistic variety focussed on their precious heads. It will be of much use to the wider public, as well, who have neither the time nor the inclination to have recourse to the source books. An index will greatly enhance the value of the book.

P.C.

The Buddhist Way of Life: a booklet by Devapriya Valisinha, General Secretary, Maha Bodhi Society, Calcutta. Price As. 2.

This is an excellent little book which contains in a nutshell the essence of the Buddhist Doctrine. Mr. Valisinha possesses the happy faculty of expressing much in a few words,—an art which many exponents of the Dharma might well try to cultivate.

The English is clear and written in a free and easy style, which gives the little publication a double value. College students, while getting well acquainted with the principles of Buddhism in reading these nineteen pages, will, at the same time, find here a great help in learning to express themselves in writing their essays.

A.G.A.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Swami Abhedananda's Diary

The following paragraphs are from the Diary of Swami Abhedananda recorded while he was in America working as a Hindu Missionary:—

On my arrival at Boston Station, Dr. Lewis Janes came to meet me and took me to Mrs. Ole Bull's studio house in Cambridge, Mass., in pouring rain. Dr. Janes, who was the President of Brooklyn Ethical Society and Director of Cambridge Religious Conferences, invited me to be one of the speakers before the Free Religious Association of Boston. He was living in Mrs. Ole Bull's studio house, where I was accommodated as his guest.

On May 26th it rained all day and night. I took a stroll in the afternoon with Dr. Janes, who showed me some places of interest in Cambridge.

On the morning of May 27th I spoke before the Free Religious Association on the Vedanta Philosophy. Col. Higginson was the president who introduced me to the audience as the accredited teacher from India, on whom had fallen the mantle of the illustrious Swami Vivekananda. In the evening I dined with Dr. Janes and after supper I spoke in the evening festival of the Free Religious Association.

On May 28th Dr. Janes took me to the Harvard University where I met Prof. Royce, who taught idealistic philosophy, and Prof. William James, the noted psychologist and pragmatist. As it was the last day of the session of the University before summer vacation, I was allowed to sit in their class rooms and listen to their last lectures in which they summed up the lessons of the whole season. It was extremely interesting to me. At first I heard Prof. Royce and after an hour heard Prof. James. Seeing us in the midst of the audience Prof. James began to refute in his discourse the arguments in favour of unity, of which I took notes.

Afterwards he asked me to speak on "Unity," when I said it had already been announced that, on the following Sunday, I was going to address a meeting on "Scriptures, what Do They Teach?" at Mrs. Ole Bull's house before the members of the Cambridge conference. But I would be delighted to speak on "Unity," if he would kindly attend my lecture. He agreed to be present and so in compliance with his request I changed the subject and announced that I would speak on "Unity in Variety" instead.

Then I went with Dr. Janes to see Boston Public Library, State House, Com-

mon's Park and other places of interest in Boston.

On May 29th I went with Dr. Janes in the morning to Mt. Auburn cemetery where the remains of the celebrated Bostonians were interred. We walked up to the top of the tower from where we got a beautiful view of the surrounding country.

In the afternoon I delivered my lecture on "Unity in Variety" at Mrs. Ole Bull's house. Dr. Janes presided. Prof. William James and Prof. Lanman, the great Sanskrit scholar, who afterwards edited Whitney's translation of the Atharva Veda, were among the audience. It was a very learned lecture which the audience listened to with rapt attention. In my discourse I brought out Prof. James' points against unity and logically showed how fallacious they were.

Dr. Janes announced, after my lecture was over, that the Swami would be glad to answer questions. Prof. James had his students with him sitting by his side. He then whispered to them to ask his own questions, which I answered without any hesitation. After I had answered several questions of his students, Dr. Janes remarked, "Swamiji will be very happy if Prof. James puts questions to him directly." To this Prof. James replied that it was not the place for him to ask questions. I supposed that the Professor was rather afraid lest he should be refuted in his arguments in the presence of his students.

At the close of the meeting Prof. James shook hands with me and congratulated me for my lucid and logical discourse on the subject of Unity and invited me to come to lunch with him in his house next afternoon. I accepted the invitation and thanked him for coming to my lecture.

In the evening I went with Mrs. Brocklesby to her house in Newton, a beautiful suburban town near Boston, and spent the night there as her guest.

On May 30th I returned from Newton to Cambridge and went with Dr. and Mrs. Janes to hear Prof. Shaler, the author of the scientific book entitled "Matter, Motion and Mind," at the Memorial Hall. Then went with Dr. Janes to lunch with Prof. William James in his house. There were Prof. Royce, Prof. Lanman and Prof. Shaler with us at the table. After

lunch, Prof. James started a discussion against unity with me because he believed in the plurality of the infinite and was against the idea of the unity of the ultimate truth of the universe. I on the other hand supported unity (Advaitavada) and refuted his pluralistic arguments. The discussion lasted for four hours, in which Prof. Royce, Prof. Lanman, Prof. Shaler and Dr. Janes supported my arguments against Prof. James, who was at last convinced that the Vedantic point of unity of Brahman, the ultimate Truth, was unassailable. Dr. Janes remarked to me after the discussion was over that he never heard such a learned and wonderful discussion before and that he wished that there were a stenographer to take the whole discussion in shorthand writing.

Then Prof. Lanman invited me with Dr. Janes to his house where we spent the whole afternoon. Prof. Lanman showed me his private library in which were all the Vedas and Sanskrit scriptures, philosophy, Kavyas in Sanskrit and works of Sankaracharya, etc.—a rare collection which he collected from India and other countries. He showed me the Vedanta Sutras with Sankara's commentary (Bombay edition) in three volumes, and asked me whether I read them and could understand Sankara Bhashya. I answered in the affirmative. Thereupon he said putting his fore-finger on his head, "My brain cannot understand it." To this I replied, "You needed a Guru, a preceptor, who would have given you the key to open the secret door of your Buddhi, the faculty of understanding, to realise the spiritual oneness of Vedanta." The learned Professor bowed to me saying: "You were lucky to find such a Guru."

In the course of our conversation when I repeated the Sanskrit sloka:

Ananta-sastram bahu veditavyam
Alpas cha kalo bahavas cha vighnah
Yat sarabhatam tad upasaniyam
Hamso yatha kshiram iva ambu-

misram.

Prof. Lanman asked me how it was possible for a swan to drink the milk and leave the water as it was mentioned in that verse; he could not understand this. I explained that some aquatic birds possess some kind of acid in their mouth which curdles the milk there. Then it would be easy for the bird to swallow the

curd of the milk without drinking the water. Prof. Lanman was very pleased to hear my explanation and said that it had never occurred to him. How true and wonderful was the illustration! The Professor in his article on "The milk-drinking Hamsas of Sanskrit poetry," on June 7, 1898, says: "Now by a singular coincidence, Swami Abhedananda calling at my study last week while my mind was upon the subject of this essay...had explained the Hamsa-fable...by saying that there was a secretion in the bird's mouth which coagulated the milky part of the mixture (somewhat after the fashion of rennet), so that the resulting curdy portions became easily separable...The Swami's theory seems to be essentially like that of Sayana." From that day Prof. Lanman became a good friend to me and attended my lectures in Boston and later on became an Honorary member of the Vedanta Society of New York after I had organized it and had it incorporated.

—From *Visva Vani*.

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York Acquires Permanent Home

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, after six years of successful activity at 200 West 57th Street, New York City, has recently moved to its new quarters at 17 East 94th Street. The building, a five-storey grey sandstone house, is located in one of the most aristocratic and fashionable parts of the city, just a few doors from Fifth Avenue. It fills a long-felt want of this organisation for a larger and more permanent home, where students and devotees may gather.

Founded by Swami Nikhilananda in 1933, at the insistent request of a number of friends and followers of Vedanta, the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center had rapidly outgrown its old quarters. A larger chapel, library and reading-room space, and ampler apartments for the Swami were sorely needed for some time past. Several years ago, a building fund was inaugurated, and through the generosity of the students sufficient funds were donated to make possible the beginning of negotiations for a house in some less congested part of the city. By the grace of the Lord, a most suitable house was finally located.

After extensive repairs and alterations, it was made ready for occupancy about August 1, 1939.

The five floors are arranged as follows: The basement, with separate door to the street, is used for the housekeeper's quarters. Beneath it is a large cellar. On the first floor is the beautiful main chapel, occupying the entire width and almost the entire length of the building, except for a small entrance hall and book-room in front. The chapel contains shrines for Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, together with pictures of Christ and Buddha. On the second floor are the library for members, and the Swami's dining-room. Above this, on the third floor, are the Swami's study, bed-room, and private chapel. The top floor contains guest-rooms for visiting Swamis.

It is certain that the new building will greatly help not only the extension but also the intensity of the Center's activities. No effort has been spared to make this a fitting center for the wider dissemination of the universal gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Arrangements are being made for the daily meditation of the students. Members of the Center will meet a number of times every week in the library, and will be given facilities for reading magazines and books from India, seeing magic-lantern slides and moving pictures, and developing a healthy social life.

The Swami has also been arranging to start an Indo-American Association in connection with the Center, where lectures will be delivered by eminent Indian and American scholars on spiritual and cultural subjects. He has already received assurances from several American scholars of their sympathy with the aims of this organization.

The new house will further help the Swami to fulfill one of his dreams, namely, to bring young monks of the Ramakrishna Order to this country, from time to time, and train them in one of the leading universities of the city. Such training will give them far better equipment for work in East and West alike, and will aid in a practical manner in the consummation of Swami Vivekananda's ideal of understanding between the peoples of the Orient and the Occident.

The Vedanta Work in Seattle, U.S.A.

Seattle is the premier city of the North-west coast of the United States of America and a gateway to the Orient. Having a cosmopolitan population it is a good field for the spread of the Universal teachings of Vedanta. Swami Vividiah-ananda went to this city and gave a series of lectures in September, 1938. The response was more than satisfactory. The Swami was requested by many of the audience to establish a permanent Center. Since then the Swami continued his work there delivering lectures every Sunday, dealing with the various aspects of Hindu Philosophy and Indian Culture in general. Feeling the demand for a serious study of original texts of Hindu Scriptures, a group was formed in October and two to three weekly classes were held. In these classes lessons on Rajayoga and Karmayoga also were given.

As people came to know more about the Swami and the great message he was endeavouring to promulgate, he was asked to fill several outside lecture engagements. In Everett, a neighbouring town, about thirty miles from Seattle, the Swami gave four lectures. The small town mustered strong to hear the Swami and were greatly impressed. On invitation, the Swami continued his work there for two months by paying a flying visit once a week. Besides, the Swami spoke on "Women of India" under the auspices of Phi Delta Theta Mothers' Club one afternoon, which was highly appreciated. The Swami on another occasion spoke at the Women's City Club, an influential women's organisation of the city, on "India and Her People" and illustrated the lecture by lantern slides. The lady in charge of the programme and several others from the audience complimented the Swami by saying that the talk was quite informative and interesting and that they did not have anything like this for a long time. The audience consisted exclusively of ladies and was largely attended.

Birthday anniversaries of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna were celebrated at the Swami's residence with Sanskrit chants, prayers, devotional music and discourses. For want of accommodation only members of the group and their friends could be invited. The Hindu dinner cooked by the Swami was a special

feature on Swami Vivekananda's birthday.

A public meeting was held in connection with Sri Ramakrishna's birthday at the Mayflower Hotel Hall. Besides the Swami two distinguished guests addressed the meeting and they were Mr. Z. Ying doh, Chinese Consul, and Prof. E. P. Horowitz. The hall was literally packed and many had to be turned away for want of standing space. The audience was visibly moved by the deep spiritual significance of the meeting and left with a feeling of reverence for Sri Ramakrishna, the modern Hindu prophet whose soulful message aims at bridging the gulf between the East and the West. A meeting was also held in memory of the Lord Buddha. The meeting also was well-attended.

The work started in September, 1938, as an experiment, continued till the end of June, 1939, which marked the close of the season. The work seems to be progressing. The Swami hopes to return in fall and concentrate his energies upon the small nucleus that has been formed.

The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Batticaloa.

In the palm-fringed east coast of Lanka stands the town of Batticaloa where the Ramakrishna Mission Swamis are working silently and steadily for the making of man. Religion, which has been the central pivot of the national life of India for the past millenniums, serves as the foundation on which are being built the lives of the future hopes of Ceylon. And the atmosphere of the orphanage, known as the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home with its appendages, the Shivananda Vidyalaya and the Shivapuri and Kamalalaya, which are the residences of the Swamis and paying boarders, is surcharged with the energising influence of Ramakrishna's teachings which rest far above the narrow sectarianism, nay, far above the grudging eclecticism even, broad-based upon a principle which accepts all religions as true. As a result, Muslim inmates can use one room of the boarding house and the Buddhists the other and each can observe their respective rituals without let or hindrance. The shrine which is attached to the orphanage is open to all for offering worship, the only condition laid down being purity of both body and mind. So much for the spiritual side.

पीयूषं स्वस्वितार्चवर्णललितालापैः शिशुर्वर्षति

प्रीतिं स्फीततरां मनोरथशतैर्धत्ते विनेयस्ततः

पश्चादुत्कटयौवनोऽध्वविकटाहङ्कारवादी पटु

दुष्पुलः स्फुटकालकूटकटुकः कष्टां करोति व्ययाम् ।

वंशः स कोऽपि विपुलः कुशलानुबन्धी ; यश्चारुवृत्तमुचितं गुणसङ्ग्रहस्य ।

रत्नं विशुद्धरश्मिचूचितसत्प्रकाशं ; मुक्तामयं जगदलङ्कारणं प्रसूते ॥

The blessed One gifted with the constant vision of Righteousness instructed them as follows: It is the duty of all reasonable men to serve and worship their parents who have caused their body, the home of all good and desirable ends, and who deserve respect above all. Those who fail to adore always these prime incarnations of their previous merits, their parents, will have their virtue transformed into vice, their shining erudition smudged beyond recognition. Parents must be viewed as supreme; they are the living embodiments of merit accumulated in previous births (for a virtuous soul elects its noble parents). Those families are really lucky the members of which worship their parents as a rule. No austerity can be compared with truth; no vice can outbid cruelty; no person deserves greater respect than one's own father; no god demands a superior honour than what is due to the mother. Those who are not devoted to their parents with exceeding, unfailing loyalty perform in vain pilgrimages to all holy places; their endeavour ends only in the tasting of different waters. Who can hold back reverent salutation for the preceptor who gives noble lessons and puts a man on his way to virtuous activity? Would it ever be possible to neglect the father, who is the most worthy object of adoration for a son, and who has given him birth? Who, again, is fortunate enough to get that intense delight born of the merit which one might earn by paying off the debt one owes to one's mother, a moment of whose pain of travail is so unbearable? They are the unfading joy of the world and indeed demand the respect of the world—who shine in the splendour of spiritual merit which wears well with them as an ornament, who advance in far-flung glory and brilliance, and who look upon their mother as the auspicious garland carefully worn on the head and father as the diadem of flowers when their feet are in contact with the heads as they respectfully prostrate before them. The darkness of sin can never touch them—whether of this world or of the prospective one—who follow the laudable and majestic day: for the day is dear to all; it is ever intent on the manifestation of light; the splendour of dawn, the mother of the day, is always an object of worship for it; and with an unfailing solicitude, before anything else, it receives the feet (rays) of its father, the dazzling sun, for obedient service. Those excellent men educated in righteous conduct pay obedience to worthy elders in due order by prostration at the feet and polite behaviour proper to their age and eminence; but those who are arrogantly stiff, as they are deluded, hasten to their own fall. To these that transgress the standards of noble behaviour fixed for one's relation to elders, life here and beyond is fraught with fear. The child's babblings are like nectar in the parents' ears; as it comes to the state of a boy or girl and is put to school greater joy is afforded by pondering over its bright prospects; afterwards perchance the boy turns to be an expert braggart drunk with false pride, as an effect of unbridled youthfulness; and what a painful deadly poison he proves himself to be! A great and virtuous family alone gives birth to that jewel of a son who may become an ornament to the world by being blemishless and who will give a hint of his exquisite brilliance by his pure tastes, who will be a repertory of excellences and who will be noble in conduct and sensible in behaviour.

—Avadanakalpalata.

THE INNER REALITY *

BEHIND the immense heavenly dome sparkling with the light of countless stars, behind the mysterious veil of darkness that enshrouds the enchanting multiplicity of the objective universe, behind the resplendent sun who reveals at dawn the glories of our wonderful planet,—the vast heaving emerald ocean, distant stretches of sparkling sand, extensive prairies splashed with clumps of waving trees, dark-green hill-forests with interstices of gray earth and gaunt promontories, serried mountains rising tier after tier in meditative stillness, glinting streams and bracing breeze—behind all this awe-inspiring Nature and behind the life that pulsates in every sentient being, the sages of India realised long, long ago by their spiritual vision an Inner Reality, the intelligent divine Principle which projects, maintains and reabsorbs the entire universe. "Verily all this is the immortal Brahman! He is everywhere, above, below, in front, at the back, upon the right, upon the left! All this world is indeed the Supreme Brahman Everything shines reflecting His glory. This whole world is illumined by His light." (*Mundakopanishad*). Both religion and philosophy have this Reality for their central content.

Vedanta emphasises that the Essence behind man and the universe is the same Consciousness which is infinite and, therefore, eternally free. Freedom being the essence of joy, this Consciousness is Bliss absolute also. Man is lured by the ever-widening horizon of knowledge and perfection; he is pulled by the fleeting and

mingled joys of the world; and he peers into the mystery around and within; because this Infinitude of bliss and intelligence is his by birthright. His aspirations are never belied and his long quest through lives will end in the realization of Truth because he is essentially That. To the materialists who count upon a pluralistic world, Reality is nothing but the sum total of finite experiences; but to the monist there is only one Inner Reality. To him this world is neither a horrible den to be shunned nor a bed of roses to be listlessly lingered on; earthly life for him is a splendid opportunity to educate his soul to its divine destiny, to be realised here and hereafter. That education consists in spiritual living and putting oneself in such a relation with the whole world as is naturally brought on by the realisation of Divinity as the one existence. Karma, reincarnation, methods of spiritual realisation, duties and stations of life, knowledge, devotion, concentration, renunciation, self-enquiry and all other details of religion take their proper place in the light of this central understanding. It is the special pride of India that here these have formed the subject of enquiry, discussion and practice on a nation-wide scale for several centuries and even today life in India is not bereft of them but only receives greater impetus through new conditions.

I

In the following paragraphs we shall critically view how the author

* Paul Brunton: *The Inner Reality*, Rider & Co., London. Price 12s. 6d. nett.

of the above book, recently published, appraises and presents the Inner Reality and the problems allied with it. The question is rightly put at the outset: What is God? God must be viewed, the author goes on to say, in two ways, either as the personal God or as the unoriginated impersonal God. The personal Gods are as many as there are universes, and all of them have emerged from the unconditioned ultimate Absolute Darkness which is also called ultimate Root, Creative Power, Great Void, Infinite Consciousness, Inner Reality and Overself, identified with the Father spoken of in St. John's *Gospel*. The images which men worship are their own *ides* of God suggested by tradition, and they are therefore illusory as they are not eternally true and abiding. Such faith has come from the superstition of the past ages; the real God is "directly inside." We are to go by life, science and knowledge and not by "faded bibles or yellow parchments." We want what is scientifically true, and science has begun to perceive "that there is no room for a personal God in the universe." "Hence God must be an Infinite Force." Finally it is asserted that "God, the Sun, and Light are synonymous.....Light is the element in the material universe which is nearest to divinity." We are reminded again "that it is Light alone that is God." During recent years science has informed us with increasing confirmation that all matter is ultimately the condensation of radiant energy or Light. The author says that it is possible to convert Light into matter and matter back again into Light; and "If God be Light and if all material objects.....are nothing but condensations of that

radiant energy of Light, do you not see that God is, therefore, everywhere present?" God is the Light-substance and forms the Overself atom in each man's heart. Thus it is scientifically verifiable that God made the world out of His own Light-substance. Light is the form of God and space is His home. This 'true' concept of God is far removed from other 'barbaric notions.' And this, it is stated, is more satisfying than the theologian's notion of a God who is just a glorified human being. "You will never 'see' God otherwise than as Light." Although it is amply evident from this analysis that the description owes a heavy debt to Hindu ideas, it cannot be accepted as a true and exact representation of them. Hindu scriptures do not speak of God as Light except as symbolically. To confuse the photic experiences of mystics with the Light experimented by physicists is unwarranted. A Hindu religious aspirant must accept only after scrutiny these and similar assertions.

II

There are six chapters in *The Inner Reality* interpreting some of the outstanding conceptions of the Bible and the Bhagavad-Gita called here 'The Scripture of the Yogis.' The Sermon on the Mount contains the kernel of the Bible and the Beatitudes embody the most significant spiritual ideas of Christianity. The nine Beatitudes are compressed into seven—which suggests the *Saptabhumikas* or 'seven planes' of Hindu philosophical works. The interpretation given to them is purely Indian and is clean of all the ideas which the Church associates with them. The "poor" are not the financially poverty-stricken, but those

who withdraw the mind from the external surroundings into the divine element behind it or whose consciousness is not dominated by the sense of possession. It is the recognition of the impermanence of the universe—the discovery that "life, the universe, human life, are nothing but a dream, a phantom, an illusion." The "peacemakers," of whom Jesus speaks, "have nothing to do with patching up the quarrels of other people." They are those who have found utter peace inside. Blessed are they that mourn, not for the dead or for possessions, but for returning to the spiritual home that is inside. Meekness consists in a temperament which combines veneration and receptivity. Hunger after righteousness means the adjustment of oneself to Truth. Mercy is taught to avoid retribution of bad, if not here, in the next life. The purity which is taught therein is taken as the quality which comes by relinquishing the personal. It results from the practice of discrimination. And when personality is released you "pass your mind into the divine Overself-atom hidden away in the human body on the right side of the physical heart." Christ symbolised the Overself as the Kingdom of Heaven which is an eternal absolute state and not an Utopian state on this material earth; it must be the same as the Absolute of the philosopher and Nirvana of the Buddhist. An orthodox or religious heaven must be an illusion; the Kingdom is the greatest mystery within the cosmic mystery. The Gospel of St. John lends itself to this view more than any other Book of the Bible and one chapter is constructed on it. The "Mystery of Jesus" is unravelled in conclusion. Some of the facts given there are un-

documented and are arbitrary. Mr. Brunton advises: "You must beware first of all of becoming captive in dogmas implanted in your mind by others. You must beware of persons who dupe themselves and deceive others by unscientific speculations which cannot prove themselves, which are wrapped in unnecessary mystery. You must refuse to give uncritical credence to them." (p. 227). But it is stated that the Sun is the heart of the Supreme Creator; that there are more intelligent beings in some other planets who feel a great compassion for those on the backward planets and that Jesus came from a star where men live an infinitely higher life and for whom it is an infinite sacrifice to come to this earth. He was only an instrument in the hands of the Sacred Four. If one is to accept these as scientifically ascertained facts, it is difficult to say what is hierological romance. The author narrates how Jesus embarked for India from Alexandria with a merchant who became his friend and reaching the south-west coast travelled slowly in India, came to Benares and to the mountain wilderness of the Himalayas on the southern side, where he stayed in a cave for some time learning Yoga and receiving training from Brahmins. He was twenty-eight at that time. We are very unlucky not to find even the least indication of the source of this valuable historical knowledge, which is so vividly presented, even in a foot-note of the book.

III

The depth and popularity of the Gita invites interpreters every year, to many of whom the first thing to be said in that connection is that

India today does not exemplify the material-spiritual balance of existence taught by the Gita. The Gita certainly is a gospel of activism and contemplation; but one has to be very careful when the modern interpreter extols it for satisfying the needs of the present day; because he is often likely to forget that the activism of the Gita is based on participation in the Divine and not merely as a successful way of doing work. The chapters may be helpful to those who have not made any special study of the book. The chapters on "Practical Help in Yoga" and "Errors of the Spiritual Seeker" contain some useful knowledge given in a lucid manner, though not very accurately always. Karma is interpreted as destiny—a term which may be easily understood in the West. The chapter on "Psycho-spiritual Self-analysis" gives a well-reasoned exposition of the method of *Vichara* or self-scrutiny to realise the hidden Truth. This search following up the question 'Who am I?' is very widely canvassed in Indian scriptures and is specially advocated by one of her great living saints with whom the author of the book had close contact.

IV

A work dealing with the inner quest has to devote some space for asceticism in one form or other. A self-denying contemplative life as well as a ferocious self-torturing life may come under asceticism; but monastic life does not necessarily denote self-torture. Unwillingness to be contented with the purely animal or social level of consciousness is the first essential stage of true spirituality. True asceticism is a gymnastic of the mind. The author of *The Inner Reality* does

not advocate "a cowardly renunciation of the world;" but he strongly recommends to "place one's worldly life on the most solid of all foundations;" also according to him it is not common sense to demand complete renunciation of sex life, because that is a perfectly natural function of the body. Some amount of celibacy and a few minutes of meditation alone are enough to attain spiritual life. The most one need do is to retreat occasionally to a monastery. Running away to monasteries and solitudes is useless; you can enjoy all that nature and human ingenuity have invented. The ancient ideal of Hindu spirituality, according to him, saw nothing but evil in the world and nothing but holiness in monasteries. Defects of human character are found even in monasteries; so better they are avoided. Cold intellect and hot sex may even become the cause of uplift to the enlightened aspirant. This represents briefly the view on monasticism expressed in the book. If there is any spirituality in the world which saw that domestic life can be spiritualised, it is the Indian ideal of a Brahmana who was the spiritual head of society. Monasticism is never practised on such a large scale as to threaten the existence of society; and the ancient ideal of India was that the monk should not establish a retreat but live upon alms and wander about bringing spirituality to the door of the householder. Mr. Paul Brunton's appraisal of Hindu spirituality is sadly untrue. The disappearance of monasticism sentenced Europe to spiritual death. Corruption and abuses are found even in Governments and social institutions; does anybody therefore think of advocating a riddance of these institutions

themselves? Why then is he so much in disfavour of monasticism alone because he may have seen some corruption somewhere? Buddha and Christ and a host of holy saints were all wrong on this computation. If monastic ideals are loathsome to the modern world it is because modern man wants sense enjoyments perhaps more than the people of all past ages. As our author himself puts it in another connection, "any attempt to spiritualise materiality"—of course, we should add, without perfect moral strictness,—“would end in materialising spirituality.” It is all very easy to panegyris the life in the world like “blue-green lotus leaf floating on the surface,” or “wandering through the materialistic civilization of the world from Moscow to Madagascar unaffected.” If any one has actually done it, it is after a long period of hard spiritual life in retirement. If any one of the author's knowledge was unfit to withstand the trials and temptations of the world after solitary retirement, does that mean monasticism is useless? If asceticism makes men fanatical and unbalanced and hypocritical, are not the chances the more when a man plays the double role of a saintly religious teacher and a hard-headed business man,—say, a trader or a lawyer or a pot-boiler? It is a ridiculously flat criticism to say that donning of the yellow robe of a monk will not free one from evil qualities. By donning a lawyer's gown stolen, will one become a lawyer? Is there any ordinance in the statute book penalising the wearing of a mere yellow robe by a rogue, if there is no chargeable crime?

Indian readers are specially to be warned against these and other simi-

lar statements. On page 153 we read, “Nothing that you do with or by the body is going to affect your spiritual state drastically.” It doesn't matter you think of worldly things or spiritual things; you may meditate on a carved image of Jesus or a shining door-handle. (p. 110). The first statement lays the axe at the root of morality and therefore of spirituality too; the second one is just the opposite of *Isvarapranidhana* advocated in Hindu Yoga. According to the method forestalled here, “No church, no temple is necessary.” (p. 36). Yet the author whose aim is to put “the mysterious feats and doctrines of the Yogis and Fakirs upon a scientific basis” speaks of planetary Overmind, Sacred, Four, etc. He speaks of reincarnation, grace, Guru and help of other powers as unscientific theology does. Long meditation is harmful; so just in the midst of busy life one may dip into the “pure white radiance of consciousness inside,” hanging on a peg outside, like a coat, all worries and desires. Yoga, as it is put down in the book, is certainly not emptying of mind but calming the modifications of the mind. It is the violent attempt to empty the mind that makes meditation irksome. Meditation is not laborious only when the mind is deeply interested in the object on which the mind is fixed. Such interest can be engendered only by cultivating the worshipful attitude taught by religion. “The material world,” the author says, “is the great lethal-chamber of the soul.” Yet enjoyments need not be forgone. The universe is an illusion; yet financial security is the first thing one should seek. There is no room for a personal God; yet grace and help will come. If you want

to find the Kingdom you must give up your personal ego, and if you give up your personal ego you give up desire for material things (p. 236). One is asked to entrust them to the Father in Heaven; yet renunciation is only an attitude of mind and not the giving up of luxurious possessions one may have. It is hard to circumvent these sharp contradictions.

On page 277 of the book the author rightly says, "a true sage.....does not advertise himself, and he never labels himself as such." Yet this book has an interesting egotistical flavour throughout. We read here the author's autobiographical revelations: "I have unconsciously become more and more a tutor and less and less a seeker" (p. 10). "I have....put on the prophet's mantle...." (p. 12). "I have indeed practised meditation for many years....." (p. 14). "Personally I have slept on the rock floor of Yogi's caves as well as on the regal bed of palaces and felt equally

....." (p. 141). ".....I hold thought at rest in its infinite source; London or New York is as quiet to me as that solitary Indian hill where I found my Master" (p. 147). "Once I stood under the tree where young Jesus had been carried while his mother rested on the flight into Egypt." (p. 273). Good wine needs no bush. Though the book is attractively written in an unconventional style and contains some useful information, there is very little originality except in the manner of writing. To a person well-read in Hindu religion either in its ancient texts or in authentic modern translations and expositions of them, there is nothing new in the book except some strange notions which are likely to mislead the genuine Sadhaka. We do not perceive in this book either scholarly exactitude, or the inspirational quality characteristic of the utterances of a saintly personage.

REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

BY A DISCIPLE

Sri Saradamani Devi, known also as the Holy Mother, was the consort of Sri Ramakrishna. She was wife and nun at the same time. Though possessed of great spiritual attainments and respected and worshipped as a divine personage by the devotees of the Master, she was always simple and unsophisticated in her life and ways of thought. In these reminiscences of a great woman of modern India, the reader will get intimate glimpses of a glorious type of womanhood through the little acts and simple talks of everyday life.—The Editors.]

Disciple: Mother, the Master has designated many as his 'own.' What does that mean?

Mother: The Master used to say that some of them came out from his body and some from the pores of his

hair, hands and feet, and that they were his eternal companions. It is like a king taking with him his retinue whenever he visits a place. When I go to Jayaramvati, do not my companions go with me? Likewise, those

who are the Master's 'own' accompany him in different ages when he is born on earth. He used to say, "Those who belong to my 'inner circle' feel pain in my distress." Pointing to his intimate disciples, the Master would say, "They are happy in my happiness, sad in my sadness and distressed in my distress." Whenever he comes to the earth, all are born with him. He brought down Narendra from the plane of the "Seven Sages", though the whole of him did not come down. While meditating in the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar, he saw Sambhu Mullik behind the image of the Divine Mother. He had seen Balaram as he appeared later on. At the first meeting with him, the Master remarked, "I saw him exactly as I perceive him now—fair in complexion and with turban on." Next is Suren Mittra. The Master used to say that these three were the suppliers of his needs. One day the Master asked, "Why have they placed the food-offering before my picture instead of before Mother Kali?" We were frightened thinking that it might harm him. The Master replied, "Don't be worried about it. You will see hereafter that I shall be worshipped in every house....."

Disciple: You once told me at Jayaramvati that the Master would incarnate next time among the "white people." Is that true?

Mother: No. I said that he would have many devotees among the "white people." Don't you see that many Christians devoted to him are coming here nowadays? The Master said that he would be born again. Till then he would dwell in the hearts of his devotees. From the round porch

of his room he said to me, pointing to Bali and Uttarpara, that he would be born again in the north-west. I said to him, "I will not come again." Lakshmi said that she would not come back again to this earth even if she were chopped to shreds like smoking tobacco. The Master said to us with a smile, "Where will you stay? You are all like the ramifications of the Kalmi creeper. If one end is pulled, then the whole thing moves in that direction." Well, what is the need of so many words? The Master used to say, "You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Satisfy that desire of yours. What will you gain by counting the leaves and branches?"

Disciple: But, Mother, what shall we achieve unless we have direct vision? Once I asked a Mussalman fakir, "One sits with an angling rod on the bank of a lake or a river in the expectation of catching fish. He never does so near a mud-puddle. Have you got a glimpse of that for which you have become a religious mendicant?"

Mother: What did he say?

Disciple: What could he say?

Mother (after a little reflection): You have said the right thing. That is true. What does it avail a man unless he gets some kind of realisation? But one should continue to have faith in things spiritual.

Disciple: The other day Sarat Maharaj said that Swami Vivekananda also had remarked, "Suppose, there is a lump of gold in the adjoining room and a thief sees it from this room. There is an intervening wall which prevents his taking possession of this precious metal. Under such condition can he ever sleep? All the time he thinks how he can get that

lump of gold! In the same way, if a man is firmly convinced that there is such a thing as God, then can he ever indulge in a worldly life?"

Mother: That is true, indeed.

Disciple: Whatever you may say, Mother, renunciation and dispassion are the chief things. Shall we ever acquire them?

Mother: Certainly you will. You will gain everything, if you but take refuge in the Master. Renunciation, alone, was his splendour. We take his name, eat and enjoy things, because he renounced all. People think that his devotees also must be very great as he was a man of such complete renunciation.

"Ah me! One day, he went to my room in the Nahabat. He had no spices in his small bag. He used to chew them now and then. I gave him some to chew there and also put a few in a paper and asked him to take the small packet to his room. He proceeded towards his room; but instead of going there, he went straight to the embankment of the Ganges. He did not see the way, nor was he conscious of it. He was repeating, 'Mother! shall I drown myself?' I became restless with agony. The river was full to the brim. I was a young woman and did not go out of my room. I could not see anyone about. Whom should I send to him! At last I found a Brahmin of the Kali Temple coming in the direction of my room. Through him, I called Hriday, who was taking his meal. He left his plate, ran to the Master, caught hold of him and brought him back to his room. A moment later, he would have dropped into the Ganges."

Disciple: Why did he go south to the river?

Mother: Because I put a few spices in his hand he could not find his way. A holy man must not lay things by. His renunciation was one hundred per cent complete.

Once a Vaishnava Sadhu came to the Panchavati. At first he showed a great deal of renunciation. Alas! Finally like a rat he began to pull and gather various things—pots, cups, jars, grain, rice, dal and so forth. The Master noticed it and said one day, "Poor thing! This time he is going to be ruined!" He was about to be entangled in the snare of Maya. The Master advised him strongly about renunciation, and further asked him to leave the place. Then, he went away....

Disciple: The daughter of a devotee has written from her father-in-law's place that she would like to come here to see you. She has sent you her salutations. She has, further, requested you to be careful so that her husband's relatives might not know about her writing to you.

Mother: Then do not write any reply to her. Again she wants me to conceal it from her relatives. I do not know such a game of hide and seek. At Jayarambati, Jogindra (the postman) used to write letters for me. Many complained saying, "Does the postman read our letters?" They did not like my asking a man like him to read their letters. Why? There is no deceit in me. Let anybody who likes see my letters.

Another devotee inquired when the Holy Mother would return to Jayarambati. I said to her, "Let me tell the devotee that you will return

there in the autumn at the time of the Jagaddhatri-puja."

Mother: O no, no! Can one be sure of it? As to where I shall be—that remains entirely in the hand of God. To-day a man is, and to-morrow he is not.

Disciple: O Mother, why should you talk like that? It is because you are alive that so many people are able to see you and get peace of mind.

Mother: Yes, that is true.

Disciple: Please do live for our sake.

In a tender voice, choked with emotion, she said, "Alas! How fond they are of me! I am also very fond of them." Her eyes were moist with tears. The disciple was fanning her. She said to him in the most compassionate voice, "My child! I bless you from my heart that you may live long, attain devotion and enjoy peace. Peace is the principal thing. One needs peace alone."

Disciple: Mother, one idea crops up in my mind constantly: Why do I not get the vision of the Master? As he is our very own, why does he not reveal himself to us, for he can do so by his mere will.

Mother: That is true. Who can say why he does not reveal himself when you suffer from so many miseries and sorrows? Once Balaram's¹ wife was ill. The Master said to me, "Go to Calcutta and visit her." "How shall I go?"—I said, "I don't see any carriage or other vehicle here." The Master replied in an excited voice, "What! Balaram's family is in such trouble and you hesitate to go! You will walk to Calcutta. Go

¹One of the chief householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

on foot!" At last a palanquin was brought and I set out from Dakshineswar. Twice I visited her during her illness. On another occasion I went on foot, at night from Shyam-pukur. Where, indeed, will man be, if God does not protect him in his trouble?

Disciple: I know sorrows and sufferings are inevitable as long as a man lives in the physical body. I do not ask the Master to remove the sufferings. But can't he console us by revealing himself to us in the midst of our troubles and sorrows?

Disciple: A man whose spiritual consciousness has been partially awakened and who wants to realize God, suffers a great deal, if he does not see Him. They alone know how much they suffer!

Mother: Ah! How true! Ordinary people are quite happy. They eat, drink and make themselves merry. The devotees alone have no end of suffering.

Disciple: Don't you suffer at the suffering of the devotees?

Mother: Why should I? He who has created the world looks after all.

Disciple: Don't you want to come back to this earth in a human form, for the sake of the devotees?

Mother: Oh! Such suffering in a human body! No more! May I not be born again! At the time of his illness, the Master expressed the desire to eat an Amalaki fruit. Durga Charan procured some after searching for three days without food and sleep. The Master asked him to take his meals and ate some rice in order to turn the food into Prasada. I said to the Master, "You are eating rice quite well. Why then, should you eat farina pudding? You should eat rice

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rather than pudding." "No, no," said he, "I would rather eat farina during these last days of my life." It was such unbearable suffering for him to eat even farina! Every now and then he would throw it out through his nose. I went to the Shiva temple of Tarakeswar for divine intervention. I vowed to get medicine for the Master or end my life there. I lay down in the temple without touching food or drink. One day passed away and another also. My efforts proved futile. During the night I was startled to hear a sound. It was as if someone were breaking a pile of earthen pots with one blow. I woke up from my torpor and the idea flashed in my mind, "Who is a husband and who is a wife? Who is my relative in the world! For whose sake am I about to kill myself in this place?" All my attachment (Maya) for the Master disappeared. My mind was filled with utter re-

nunciation. I groped through darkness and sprinkled my face with holy water from the pit at the back of the temple. I drank also a little water as my throat was parched with thirst. I felt refreshed. The next morning I came to the garden-house at Cossipore where the Master lived at that time. No sooner did he see me than he asked, "Hallo! Did you get anything? Well, everything is unreal." At that time too the Master saw in a dream that an elephant had gone out to bring medicine for him. The animal was digging the earth to procure it when he woke up. The Master asked me if I ever had any dreams. I had seen in a dream that the neck of the image of the Mother Kali was bent to one side. I had asked her, "Mother! Why do you stand like that?" The Mother said, "It is because of this (pointing to the cancer in the throat of the Master). I also have that in my throat."

THE ADVAITA AND THE MORAL PARADOXES

BY Dr. P. T. RAJU, M.A., Ph.D., SASTRI.

[Dr. Raju is a philosophical writer of distinction and professor of that subject in the Andhra University. In the following paragraphs he refutes the commonplace criticism that the Advaitin's philosophical belief cannot be consistent with his daily behaviour as his physical and psychical reactions are often not far removed from those of any ordinary man.—The Editors.]

Often it is asked of the Advaitin why, if he regards the world as unreal, he behaves as if it were real. The story is told of Sankara that, while he was going through the streets of Benares, he was attacked by a tusker and began to run for his life; and that some put him the question, why he was afraid of the elephant if it was unreal. It is also said that the

same test was proposed by Ramanuja to decide the issue between his philosophy and the Advaita. The Advaitin, like Sankara before him, is reported to have answered that the elephant and his running for life were both unreal. The same question is put by a large number of the critics of the Advaita, and usually the same answer is given.

The truth of the Advaitin's answer is that so long as the finite individual is regarded as real, the elephant of which he is afraid is also to be treated as real. They say that both belong to the Vyavaharikasatta or empirical reality, and not to the Paramarthikasatta or absolute reality. And as belonging to the Vyavaharikasatta each is as real as the other. But the critic may still ask why, if we know that the elephant belongs to the empirical reality, and we to the absolute reality, we should be afraid of the elephant, which cannot harm our true self. The answer seems to lie in the idea of Abhinivesa or the sticking to life or finite existence. In spite of the theoretical knowledge one may have of the final untruth of the world, one may still cling to it as if it were the truth. This is the paradox of the Advaita. One may try to defend this attitude in various ways. It may be said that it is our duty not to knowingly allow our body to be destroyed, because that is the instrument with which we have to realise the "Ought" or Dharma; and that we have to allow our Prarabdha-karma or the action that has begun to fructify to work itself out, and that to destroy the body meanwhile is as good as committing suicide, which amounts to fear of life, which is a *dvandva* to be avoided; for fear, love, hate, etc., are obstacles in the way of liberation. In spite of all these defences, the critic may remain dissatisfied. For if we know that the elephant is unreal, why am I afraid of it? Though the elephant and the finite self belong to the empirical reality, I really know that the "I" in its essence belongs to the absolute reality, and so cannot be destroyed.

The answer to this question is to be sought in human nature itself. There is a split in our conscious life between the actual and the ideal, the theoretical and the practical. Only because of this is there the separation between what is sought after and the seeking after it,—the knowledge and the admiration of an ideal life and the inability to follow it, our knowledge of the good and our attachment to the evil. Our emotional, affective and volitional nature does not change as our knowledge grows; or it may develop without a corresponding development of intellect, as is evidenced by some of the great saints who were not Pandits. Whether Sankara was attacked by an elephant and whether he actually ran for life are disputable questions. On the other hand, there is the story that when Sankara was requested by a Kapalika to be his sacrificial victim, he willingly agreed, saying that none can take his life if he is not destined to die then. The story runs that when the Kapalika raised his sword to chop off Sankara's head, the latter's disciple suddenly appeared on the scene, and, seeing his master in danger, killed the Kapalika. In this story one can see the indifference of Sankara towards empirical existence. Leaving the incident in Sankara's life, we can see that the question can be put to every one who believes in the Advaita. The final answer lies in the nature of our conscious life itself, which is a bundle of divisions and, consequently, of paradoxes. Our theoretical life is separated from the practical and so we know what is good and long for what is bad. The intellectual side is detached from the emotional and the affec-

tive and so our mind may run after the unreal, though we know it to be such.

Further, it would not have been a duty for us to realise the Brahman and emancipate ourselves, if not for our paradoxical life. The fundamental paradox of our life is that we are finite and yet infinite. But we are not always conscious of our infinitude. Hence our duty to realise it. This realisation is not merely a logical understanding of it. It is an Anubhava or experience in which the whole of our conscious life, including the intellectual, emotional, conative and affective, is involved. Hence to know logically that the phenomenal world has no absolute reality is different from the actual experience of it. So in spite of our knowing intellectually that it is unreal, we may treat it as real in our practical life.

Though Moksha or liberation, as it is eternally present, is not something to be produced, it is something to be realised. And it is the duty of every human being to realise it. Sankara in the beginning of his *Aparokshanubhuti* exhorts every man to seek for liberation, saying that it is very difficult for one to be born a man, and that every man therefore should make the best use of his life. It is thus the highest ideal for man to seek after, whether we call it the object of duty or not. But everything that is to be sought after must be known beforehand. Therefore Moksha, the nature of which is the essential identity between Jiva and Brahman, and so is Brahman itself, must be known before it is realised. Hence the peculiar contradiction and scope for the critic to put the question: Why, if you know that you are identical with

Brahman which is the only reality, are you afraid of the elephant?

There is another answer coming from the Advaitin. He distinguishes between what he calls Paroksha- and Aparoksha-Jnana, that is, indirect and direct knowledge. Our knowledge of the ideal, so far as it remains an ideal, is always indirect. Aparoksha-Jnana is direct experience, and it can be had only when the ideal is realised. Hence so far as ordinary people are concerned, their knowledge of Brahman, in spite of the greatest possible intellectual conviction that may accompany it, is always indirect, and so long as our knowledge is indirect, our practical life will be at variance with our theoretical life.

A similar paradox is to be found in our moral life as well. Nothing is morally binding upon man if he does not know that it is morally good. That is, morality appears only when a man knows that something is morally good and yet does the opposite. Children and mad people who do not understand morality are not held morally responsible for what they do. So one essential condition of moral responsibility is that the agent should know what his moral good is. But the wonder is, why, if he knows the good, does he perform evil? On the other hand, it is unreasonable to say that he is immoral if he does things without knowing what is good. This is no less a wonder than the fact that all people know that they are sure to die, but few care to think of it; they go about their work as if they are eternal—a fact pointed out by Yudhishtira as an answer to one of the questions of the Yaksha. Curiously enough Socrates identified morality with knowledge, and said

that to be ignorant of the good is to be immoral. This view of Socrates may be defended by distinguishing between various meanings and implications of his statement. It is true that one cannot be moral if one does not know the good; but it is equally true that simply to know the good is not the same thing as to be moral. But we may go further and add that to be ignorant of the good is neither moral, nor immoral, but amoral. That is, in such cases the question of morality does not arise at all. The prick of conscience is not felt at all after actions done unknowingly. One may blame oneself for not having known, but not for having done it without knowing. So the mistake of Socrates was that he overlooked the divorce between the theoretical and the practical life of the average man. Everybody does not strive after what he knows to be good. In spite of his knowledge, he may hanker after the evil. Only because of this wonderful nature of man does morality appear at all. We may ask, Why is his nature so? But the question can be answered only when we can answer: Why is there this creation at all? Why has God created this universe? Why is man created as he is?

Seeing the similarity between the Advaita and the moral paradoxes, we may ask, Is the Advaitin refuted when questioned why he runs away from a charging elephant, though he knows that it is unreal? The answer can be only in the negative. To refute a philosophical theory by practical devices is unphilosophical. If a scientist tells us that food is nothing but carbon, oxygen, etc., and we ask him why he does not eat charcoal, we do not refute his theory. Johnson

kicked at a stone, and asked, in order to refute Berkeley's idealism, how that can be an idea. But we all feel that Johnson's refutation is unphilosophical. Similarly, when the Advaitin, who is living his mundane life, is asked why he treats this world as real, why he cares for his body, his food and so forth, it is really no refutation. A philosophical theory, because it is a theory, can be refuted only philosophically.

But it may be asked, Is not the Advaita philosophy a philosophy of life also? If so, are not its preachings to be put into practice? But there are ways and ways of putting theory into practice. When the scientist tells that food is a compound of so many elements, his theory is not put into practice by eating those elements pure and simple. We try to understand what food is suitable for human beings, and then ascertain whether the food we are taking contains all the necessary ingredients. And if any is found wanting we try to introduce it in an edible form. But we never say that the scientist is a liar, because he does not eat the elements as they are. But when a man tells us that lying is immoral and drinking an evil habit, we are justified in finding out whether he himself is a truth-speaker and does not drink. Here the test as well as the application of the teaching is direct. But the application of a philosophical theory which determines the highest end of man and speaks of things beyond the world, can never be so direct. If we do not bear this in mind, we shall be very unfair to the philosopher and his theory, and shall miss the truth by caricaturing it.

The application of the Advaita to life is to be done only by stages, and

generally by the four Asramas. It is only in the last Asrama, that is of the Sannyasa, that one is asked to treat the world as unreal. The previous stages are stepping-stones to it. By the time one reaches the fourth stage, the gulf between the theoretical and the practical life must have been bridged, and emotions and affections must have been following the lead of the intellect. Even in Sannyasa there are various stages which are preparatory to final emancipation. In the final stage, *i.e.*, when one feels his absolute identity with the Brahman, one does not perceive the phenomenal world at all. An elephant may attack him, a tiger may devour him; he remains indifferent. It is so not only with the Advaitin, but also with the Dvaitin or Visishtadvaitin; for even the latter in deep devotion to the Lord forgets himself so completely that he cannot perceive what happens to his body. But in the ordinary state everyone feels his identity with the body and tries to protect it when he finds himself in danger.

The unreality with which the phenomenal world is credited is not ab-

solute unreality like that of the horns of a hare. It is only relative. That is, when the phenomenal world is compared with the Absolute, it has to be declared unreal. And when not so compared, it is real. Further, we should not forget that the Advaitin calls this world neither real nor unreal. So the Advaitin can reply that he saves himself from the elephant because it is not unreal.

Of all the answers that can be given to the critic's question, the one that goes to the root of the matter lies in the dual or paradoxical nature of man. We have eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We know the good and yet do the evil. Otherwise, we could not have been moral beings. Similarly, we know that we are infinite, and yet act as finite. Why is this so? Because we are what we are. We have been created thus. We are all houses divided against themselves. Our intellect leads us one way, our passions another, and emotions a third. Hence the conflict within us, and hence the appearance of morality, and hence also the exhortation to realise our true self, which is identical with Brahman.

PREPARATION FOR SPIRITUAL REALISATION

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

[These are the notes of the class-talks given by the Swami to a group of spiritual aspirants at Wiesbaden, Germany, in January 1934.—The Editors.]

I

IN the beginning of our Sadhana we do not get any spiritual experience, because that is only the scavenging period when loads and loads of dirt and impurities have to be removed. Only when the mirror is clean does

it begin to reflect. Evil thoughts arise even if the mind has already been made strong to a certain extent, but then they no longer harm it and can easily be conquered. If a boat has a good and experienced helmsman, it can face the storm without fear of

perishing. Unless this phenomenal world has been effaced completely, desires and passions, attraction and aversion, can never be annihilated in their subtlest form. "When he realizes the Atman as dwelling in all things and finds all things dwelling in his own Self, the sage ceases to hate." Until then the passions rise in the mind, but if we have strengthened our moral fibre through our Sadhana, we are able to withstand them and drive them away.

Love need not take always the calm, peaceful method. True love can often be as hard as steel, can use harsh words. The knife of the surgeon cuts, but then it cuts in order to heal. These Great Ones may appear cruel and heartless in some of their advices, but through the kindness of their 'cruelty' they heal and bring life.

Until we feel the coming of grace, we must strive. Self-effort has its place in spiritual life, and never can real self-surrender come unless we have really striven our utmost.

When the devotee has caught a glimpse of the Transcendental, he no longer troubles and bothers about the right breeze, whether it is a hot breeze or a cold breeze or no breeze at all. He need not unfurl his sails any longer.

The two tests of vision are: Bliss, certitude. Then the mind knows Truth is real. Then something in us knows it is true and it carries with it its own unmistakable light and conviction.

Let the teacher be merged into your own Ishtam, let the form-aspect get merged into the formless. By so doing, you will avoid all fanaticism and bigotry and always remain conscious of the One Principle standing at the

back of all teachers and all teachings.

Once Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great dramatist of Bengal, said to Sri Ramakrishna, "The Lord has created you with His own hands. Us He has created with His machine."

Brahmacharya alone is real Tapasya, and there can be no Tapasya whatever without perfect Brahmacharya in thought, word and deed. This has to be stressed again and again.

II

Let us try to be as hard as possible against ourselves without any unnecessary or destructive self-condemnation.

I should always use my discrimination even with regard to non-violence. The scorpion, no doubt, follows its own law of being when it stings, but I, too, should follow my own law and protect others from its sting if I can do so.

Buddha taught, "Hatred cannot be conquered by hatred. It is by love that hatred can be conquered." Christ taught, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Evil can never be conquered by evil. Violence can never be conquered by violence. The only weapon that conquers all is love and loving kindness to all creatures.

And what an amount of strength and undauntedness true non-violence requires! We should not be weak, we should not be cowards, but we should at the same time be kind. The person who does not retaliate, however he is hurt, however he is offended by others, is a person of terrible strength, and he alone is a man. All others are miserable cowards hiding their fear and abject cowardice under a cloak of braggardism, physical and

mental, and never rising to the stature of a man.

III

Struggle, struggle, struggle. There is no other way. Let us not be afraid of struggles.

Success largely depends on the regularity and intensity of our daily practices. Very often we are so careless in this. Without steady practice nothing can be attained in spiritual life. Spiritual life must be a life of dedication to the highest, a life of consecration and sacrifice and one-pointedness. So we should be more wide-awake and more careful about our own thoughts for our own benefit and for the benefit of others to whom our thoughts may become a danger. Our thoughts, if they be thoughts of lust or greed or violence, are worse than poison gas, and the havoc created by them is far worse than the havoc created by poison gas. By our impure thoughts we affect people who do not even know impurity. By our pure thoughts we help others in their struggle after purity.

It is essential for us to create the right mood before sitting for meditation. There must be steady, regular practice. Let us rather die in the struggle with our body and our impure mind than give it up. What does it matter if I die or not? What matters is that I realise the Truth, that I attain my full stature, my true being. If we struggle our utmost, if we do our utmost, we have fulfilled our duty. Then the rest must be left to the Divine. Here true self-surrender and resignation to the Lord have their place.

IV

Turning the mind constantly and without any break to God, whatever

you may be busy with, is the most efficient of all forms of spiritual practice. But you must be able to raise the plane of thought. See that you do not tie your boat to the bank by not fulfilling the preliminary conditions of Yama and Niyama. If you allow your boat to remain tied to the bank, no amount of rowing and exertion on your part will move it even an inch onward.

Try to make the individual ego subservient to the Cosmic Ego. The ego is very difficult to subdue. It is like a monster with hundreds and hundreds of heads.

Never try to face the enemy in the open at the beginning. Never give him a frontal attack. The enemy is still too strong for you. Let us first save ourselves even by flight. Later, we come back with greater strength, with the strength of the Lord, because some day the enemy has to be openly faced and vanquished. Eternal flight won't do.

V

Once Ganesa was sitting on the lap of his mother Durga, when he happened to touch Her back and found there to his great astonishment a deep scar. "Mother," said he, "who did that?" "My boy," the Goddess replied, "you ill-treated a little cat, and so I got this mark, everything being My own body." When the question of Ganesa's marriage arose, he refused to be married, because the experience of the little cat he ill-treated and the scar of his Mother's back had taught him a great lesson and had made him realise that all women were but his own mother.

There is another story about Ganesa which is illustrative of a high lesson. Once Mother promised a

beautiful necklace to that one of Her boys who would be able to go round the universe and be back first. Kartikeya departed at once with all possible speed, but Ganesa just remained sitting on the lap of his Mother, and after some time quietly got down, went round Her once, and got on to Her lap again. So when Kartikeya came back he found to his great astonishment that Ganesa was already sitting on Durga's lap and had received the necklace. Ganesa had realised that, his Mother being all-pervading and omnipresent, it was sufficient to go round Her once without going round the whole universe as his brother had done.

All these symbolical stories and representations of truths are highly instructive if we but know how to read them aright. See Mother in every woman, then you, too, will say like Ganesa, "How is it possible for me to marry?" Through the infinite grace of Mother our whole attitude towards men and women can change, just as it had changed in the case of Ganesa.

The more we progress, the more we cease to love ourselves and to identify ourselves with our physical form. In the same way we cease loving others as bodies or feeling any sex-attraction for them. In India, Ganesa is one of the greatest symbols for perfect purity.

VI

Self-realisation is a very difficult process, and it takes a long time to attain it. But as soon as you come to feel the tide, you know that you are approaching the ocean. And then you should be glad that there is any tide at all. The ocean may still be distant, but if the tide makes itself

felt, you know you have travelled a good way down the river. The old impressions must be attenuated, erased through rubbing and rubbing and rubbing, till they have completely disappeared.

Just as the thickness of a cloud in the sky differs, just as this cloud may be only a very thin veil or a dark black cloud which does not allow the sun's rays to penetrate, similarly in this world of Maya there is a thin coat or a thick coat covering Truth.

Some manifestations of Mother are to be saluted at a very safe distance so long as we ourselves are not yet fully immune from their influence. The Mother's play has two aspects, one which binds, and one which frees; but both are within Maya, not beyond Maya. Never think that the freeing aspect is beyond Maya. It, too, is within the ambit of Maya.

VII

"Whenever you come across a person who is of a different ideal of life, do not speak out your thoughts." (Sri Chaitanya).

First there must be physical control, then mental control, and once mental control is attained, thought can never again come down or be dragged down to the sensual plane. This only happens if we have led a controlled life, physically and mentally, for many, many years without any break. Then impure thoughts may now and then arise, but they are no longer able to stain us.

There must be a completely new attitude towards ourselves, towards the world, towards all mental pictures and memories in our mind.

We should feel sorry when an unclean thought wells up in our mind,

but this should spur us on all the more and make us more dogged than ever. We should be thankful that we have come to know that such unclean things exist in our mind. If we did not know this, we could never fight them successfully. The greater the trouble, the more manly the fight; the greater our determination to remove them, the greater our relentless tenacity!

If really there is dirt and filth in our mind, let us know this fact, and know how bad it is. To know an evil as it is, is half the battle won. It

is always good for us to know the possibilities of our mind to do us great mischief, so that we may be on our guard and become fully aware of its wily attempts at deception. What a terrible amount of misery man creates for himself and others by giving in to the impulses of lust, anger, greed, violence, etc.! And all these impulses lie deeply hidden in our mind too, if we do not come to know them and annihilate them. Unless we turn our mind consciously to the higher life, it will always remain full of these.

MODERN CIVILIZATION NEEDS CORRECTION

BY G. A. CHANDAVARKAR, M.A., M.R.A.S.

[The title of this short writing explains its contents. Mr. Chandavarkar pleads for a revival of the study of the humane and the spiritual in Sanskrit culture so as to amend the wrongs of modern society.—The Editors.]

IN this age of science and democracy man's eyes are dazzled by his glorious achievements such as the steam-engine, the telegraph, the telephone, the motor car, the aeroplane, the radio, the Parliaments and the League of Nations. All this means to him progress in civilization and the consequent increase of human happiness. How far such a civilization has advanced the cause of soul culture is still a moot question. A school of thought whose origin can be traced in the history of English literature even back to Cowper, Pope, Carlyle and Emerson has now arisen which presents a diametrically opposite view. Thinkers like Bertrand Russell and Dean Inge argue with considerable force that a civilization based on materialism is doomed. What did the ancient Hindu thinkers believe?

What was their criterion of progress and happiness?

They firmly believed that human life can be full only when there is harmony between the internal and the external life. For such a purpose they argued that Dharmic life was essential. The modern civilization emphasises the external, while they laid great force upon the control of the external by the internal. If the external life is dominated by notions of increase of wealth, power and aggression, they argued that all the beneficent activities of the human heart would be atrophied. Soul would be crushed by the weight of matter. The rule of the Dollar, almighty as it is supposed to be, has enriched man externally perhaps but it has made him poorer in matters of the mind and the soul. The doctrine of utilitarianism

has again dried up the eternal founts of fellow-feeling and harmony. If the modern civilization prides itself on the doctrine of "the survival of the fittest," the ancient Hindu thinkers stood up for the amelioration of the weak and the fallen. The "Tat Twam Asi" ideal preached that even the humblest had the divine spark within him and had all the elements of divine glory within him. He was a microcosm of the macrocosm. Such an ideal meant that the civilisation had the Dharmic ideal or basis for its progress. Else they held under the cloak of material prosperity the seeds of ruin.

Even in the material West a reaction has set in. The preachings of Vedanta have ushered in a new era of thought. It proclaims from the housetops that unless a civilisation is based on the progress of soul culture, there is no hope for it. Vedanta never stood for inaction. The institutions of Varnas and Ashramas clearly indicate that a life of beneficent activities only was meant to be lived. The first three Ashramas were only the preparations for the last, Sannyasa. Even the much-maligned caste system had Guna and Karma for its basis. Such a rational system meant communal harmony and social welfare. But now in the West where the caste system is thrown to the winds the caste of wealth has taken its place. The Ashramas of old, four as they were before, are now reduced only to one of incessant money-making and money-spending. Naturally there is no peace. Dictators stand for power and the State for God. Democracies degenerate into mobocracy. The whole society seems to stand on the brink of a precipice.

Individualism means self-aggrandisement. Struggle for power means the destruction of the weaker nations. Even such a good institution like the League of Nations with all its noble ideals has lost its ground. A war of nerves has heralded a huge war of wholesale destruction of humanity. The armed camps of the western countries should cry halt. Else the whole edifice of culture and civilisation will topple down like a house of cards. The message of Vedanta which includes the truth of "Love thy neighbour as thyself" preaches, "Love thy neighbour because he and you are all one." Unless such notions guide the thinkers and the moulders of the destinies of the nations and the civilisation is based on the ideals of Dharma, there seems to be no hope for mankind. The day when it is realised that the soul of culture is the culture of soul, will be the brightest day in the history of man. The Hindu philosophy says in quite unequivocal terms that by Dharma alone the universe will stand and without it everything will go to rack and ruin. The dawn of that bright day may come with the radical changes introduced in all our systems of thought including the educational and social systems. The changes should be radical and the reforms root and branch. The task is no doubt Herculean but one need not despair of the future. A new type of civilisation may grow on the ruins of a tottering system of present-day feverish activities of worshipping Mammon and Power in all its erudities. Perhaps a sympathetic study of the eastern systems of thought and rational philosophy may set the erring humanity on the right path. To start with, an earnest revival of them in the

must also be. There is a common understanding that these demigods get jealous when they find any man becoming spiritual and put obstacles in their way of realisation. Stories relating to such obstruction from these demigods like Indra, which we find in the Puranas must not be taken as referring to a sincere devotee's spiritual struggles. The stories relate only to those who are doing sacrifices and other ritualistic practices in expectation of heaven. They do not and cannot even touch a sincere devotee, for God is always at hand to help his devotee. No doubt some obstacles are found even by sincere spiritual aspirants, but they are provided by God himself so that the devotee may grow stronger by such opposition.

3. *This earth gets a saviour.* Only a real saint can save the world. All others are interested only in seeing that the world caters to their own self-aggrandisement and enjoyment. They never have the welfare of the world at heart. Their interest in the world is only like the interest of the butcher in his kid or the agriculturist in his cattle. It is only the loving services of the selfless saints that really lead human beings to their destination, viz., the footstool of God, far away from the troubles and tribulations of this worldly life and death. From the poetic and mythological standpoint of the Puranas, the earth or Bhudevi is one of the wives of Vishnu or God. When virtue subsides and vice prevails, she is said to be feeling as if she is deserted by her Lord and protector. When some saint takes his birth in this world, he must necessarily be followed by God himself and so Bhudevi may be poetically des-

cribed as regaining her Lord and protector whenever devotees appear on earth. Thus according to this Sutra, the devotee satisfies the denizens of all the three worlds.

नास्ति तेषु जाति-विद्या-रूप-कुल-धन-
क्रियादि-भेदः ॥ ७२ ॥

तेषु in them जाति-विद्या-रूप-कुल-धन-
क्रियादि-भेदः distinction based on
caste or culture, beauty or birth,
wealth or profession, and the
like. न अस्ति there is not.

72. In them there is no distinction based on caste or culture, beauty or birth, wealth or profession and the like.

Note.—In spite of the reproach of exclusiveness based upon caste and other factors that is generally levelled against the Hindus, it ever remained the glory of Hinduism that all privileges and distinctions remained only in social matters and never transgressed its bounds into the field of religion and spirituality. Even caste-ridden orthodox people have not been slow in recognising the spiritual greatness of a low-born Nanda or Kannappar, a Nammalvar or Tiruppanalvar, a Chokamela or Ravidas, a Mirabai or an Avvayar, a Dharma-vyadha or a Sabari. Even Parasara, Vyasa, Kavasha, Satyakama Jabala and Mahidasa Aitareya were all born of insignificant non-Brahmin parentage. The Upanishads record that the Brahmins were eager to sit at the feet of Kshatriyas like Ajatasatru, Pravahana Jaivali, Chitra Gargya-yani, Asvapati, etc. (Brihadaranyaka, II: 1.15 and VI: 2.7, Cchandogya V: 3.1 and V: 11.4, etc. record some of these facts). Manu says in II: 238, "that one may learn Vidya sit-

ting at the feet of one lower in caste or status than himself and that Dharma may be learnt even from a man of low caste." Thus it does not behove us to make a distinction between one devotee and another, they also do not feel any distinction between man and man. Cf. Gita V: 18 and Bhagavata IX: 29.14. They see the same God in everybody.

यतस्तदीयाः ॥ ७३ ॥

यतः because तदीयाः they are His own.

73. Because they are His own.

Note.—This gives the reason why there is no distinction. All the Bhaktas are one in God, and to every Bhakta every one in this world belongs to God and as such should be looked upon with the eye of equality.

वादो नावलम्ब्यः ॥ ७४ ॥

वादः controversy न अवलम्ब्यः must not be had recourse to.

74. It is not proper for one to enter into a controversy about God, or other spiritual truths, or about the comparative merits of different devotees.

Note.—One who has reached this stage of devotion never cares to enter into a controversy about God or his devotees. They have seen God face to face, and there is no necessity for them to think of name or fame gained by a victory over other opponents in a religious controversy. They do not stand in need of any support from reason either, because their faith is based upon spiritual perception itself. Vain disputations do not therefore find a place in their

lives. If any controversialist challenges them for a discussion, they would refuse to take up the gauntlet.

बाहुल्यावकाशोऽनियतत्वात् च ॥ ७५ ॥

बाहुल्यावकाशत्वात् as there is plenty of room for diversity in views अनियतत्वात् as no view based upon mere reason is conclusive in itself च and.

75. As there is plenty of room¹ for diversity in views and as no view² based upon mere reason is conclusive in itself.

Note.—1. *Plenty of room etc.* It is quite possible for one and the same truth to be looked upon from different standpoints; and views may change with differences in the angle of vision, capacities, tendencies, etc. of the observer. Two apparently contradictory views may not be really contradictory at all. Hence there is no sense in one's trying to controvert another's views honestly and sincerely believed in. As Bhagavan says in the Gita, it behoves a real saint, therefore, not to unsettle the honest and sincere views of others but to allow them opportunity to honestly follow what they considered right. *Vide* III: 26 and 29.

2. *No one view etc.* Mere reason may be made to support two entirely opposite views. Therefore it does not follow that a view is true merely because it has got support from reason. What one man considers well-established by reason, can easily be shaken by a more intelligent man. As we often see in law courts, lawyers taking opposite sides try to prove their contention based on the same evidence; reason may thus be used

even in proving a false thing to be true. Therefore it is quite unreliable as a guide. Again what appears as reasonable at one time may appear quite unreasonable when we gather more experience. Thus no one view based upon mere reason can be considered true once for all, for there is always a possibility of its again being proved, by sufficient reason itself, or by further observation, to be untrue. Moreover, when the intention is to secure victory over an opponent and not to establish truth, the chances are that one may be carried far away from truth and truth may thus be thrown overboard for the sake of a victory.

भक्तिशास्त्राणि मननीयानि तदुद्धोषककर्माणि करणीयानि ॥ ७६ ॥

भक्तिशास्त्राणि teachings of scriptures dealing with Bhakti मननीयानि may be discussed and meditated upon तदुद्धोषककर्माणि spiritual practices prescribed by them करणीयानि may be undertaken.

76. The teachings of scriptures dealing with love and devotion to God may be discussed¹ and meditated upon, and spiritual practices prescribed by them may be undertaken.²

Note.—1. Discussed. Although vain controversies may not be entered into, there is nothing to prevent a devotee from discussing the teachings of scriptures dealing with love and devotion for the benefit of others, so that their disciples may be convinced of the truths of the scriptures. Manana or the use of reason to establish faith in the teachings of the scriptures for the benefit of others is not only not prohibited but should be undertaken. Reason thus has its place in spiritual practices. As Manu says, "Only he who understands the teachings of Rishis with the help of reason, not opposed to scriptures, knows what is Dharma and not others (XII: 106)." Thus the prohibition contained in Sutra 74 is not directed against the use of reason in spiritual matters, but against its misuse.

2. *Spiritual practices may be undertaken.*—The spiritual practices are all based on love and devotion; therefore they will only be favourable to a life of devotion. There is therefore no need to give them up. Not only that; one should not give them up. For there are so many people who look up to a devotee for guidance and imitate whatever he does. He should therefore practise them to set an example to others as mentioned in Gita, III: 25, 26.

GREAT THOUGHTS

The throne of God is in the mind of man.—*Macarius*.

Reputation for Holiness is one of the worst weapons of Satan.

None so empty as those who are full of themselves.

Self-abasement is a subtle form of arrogance.

From true humility comes godliness which makes a man gentle, docile and patient.

Lack of fervour, love of comfort and intellectual pride choke growing spirituality.

Contemplation is not an orgy of spiritual emotions; it involves the serious activity of the whole man—reason, feeling and will; it involves the stilling of the vehement passions and restless imaginations—a sober concentration of the faculties.

In a narrow heart God cannot bide;

Where the love is great, the heart is wide;

Poverty, great-hearted, dignified,

Entertains and welcomes Deity.

Aims of a higher order, even though they be not fulfilled, are in themselves more valuable than lower ones entirely fulfilled.—*Goethe*.

An honourable death is better than an inglorious life.—*Socrates*.

If you pursue good with labour, the labour passes away, but the good remains; if you pursue evil with pleasure, the pleasure passes away but the evil remains.—*Cicero*.

Men would live exceedingly quiet if those two words, mine and thine, were taken away.—*Anaxagoras*.

It is better to be unborn than untaught; for ignorance is the root of all misfortune.—*Plato*.

He who fears death has already lost the life he covets.—*Cato*.

The best keeps from anger, who remembers that God is always looking upon him.—*Plato*.

He is truly rich who desires nothing; and he is truly poor who covets all.—*Solon*.

He is sufficiently learned, that knows how to do well and has power enough to refrain from evil.—*Cicero*.

Bear and blame not what you cannot change.—*Publins*.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Sayings of Muhammad: *Translated and edited by Allam Sir Abdullah Al-mamun Al-suhrawardy and published by Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, 3 Suhrawardy Avenue, Calcutta. Price Rs. 2. Pocket size.*

Along with the *Imitations of Christ*, *Gospel of Buddha*, *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* and *Analects of Confucius* this *Sayings* deserves to be on the table of all who believe in moral and spiritual values. Besides the Koran, Islam has an enormous collection of Ahadith or traditions of the sayings of the Prophet, genuine or apocryphal. They prescribe how a good Moslem should discharge his duty in different situations in which he finds himself. They are the source of the present beautiful compilation. This work is the result of the burning zeal for pan-Islamism which its compiler, a well-known Bengal Muslim leader and legislator in the Central Assembly, had in his younger days, when he was a student in London, many years ago. The form of the book is quite suitable for the educated men of the present day.

The Muslim's unswerving faith in the unprescriptible and final authority of the words of Mohammed makes all his sayings and acts, without any question of importance, equally binding on a faithful Muslim, so much so that it is stated of Iban Hanbal that he 'would not even eat water-melons because, although he knew that the Prophet ate them, he could not learn whether he ate them with or without the rind, or whether he broke, bit or cut them.' This passion to imitate the Prophet is similar or more than what is found in the imitation of Christ among Christian saints. Mohammed was not only a teacher by words but a great moral exemplar. His internal and external personality supplied the driving power to his message. He had a commanding presence, piercing eyes and a gracious smile; he was 'of medium height, broad-shouldered, and strongly built, with fine features, coal-black hair and eyes, and a long beard.' Of manners he was reserved, affable and courteous. "His countenance painted every sensation of the soul and his gestures en-

forced each expression of his tongue." He was more modest than a virgin behind the curtain, while being supremely brave and liberal. He did not consider it a condescension to serve his family by milking goats or mending shoes or stitching. He used to wait upon himself. He never struck anyone or anything with his own hands; and on his own account never felt revenge. The rule of life laid down by him for his followers is simple and grand.

Mohammed was not an obscurantist as his adversaries suppose. He exhorted his followers to go for knowledge even to the edge of the earth. "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." Knowledge illumines the way to Heaven, affords society in solitude, escorts one to happiness, sustains one in misery, adorns one in the company of friends, serves as a companion in a friendless condition, guards one against the enemies and enables one to distinguish wrong and right. The Prophet therefore declared that the ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr. But knowledge without conduct is to be deplored, if not despised. The worst of men in the eyes of him was a learned bad man. Strive always to excel in virtue and truth—this is the instruction inculcated into the minds of Muslims. Religion, he said, is admonition, and it means being pure. "God is pure and loves purity and cleanliness." He who boasts only of his pedigree will be more abominable near God than a black beetle that rolls on filth by its nose. The proud will not enter Paradise, nor a violent speaker. "That person will not enter Paradise who has one atom of pride in his heart." True modesty is the source of all virtues. All kinds of modesty are best. Humility and courtesy are acts of piety. Backbiting vitiates ablutions and fastings. Abuse nobody; for the exercise of religious duties will not atone for the faults of an abusive tongue. Never utter a curse. It is unworthy of a Muslim to talk vainly. Speak what is good, he admonished, or remain silent. 'Much silence and good disposition, there are no two works better than those.' Envy is to be abjured, it consumes and des-

troys. The ill-tempered are God's enemies; they are far from Him. Be not angry, advised Mohammed. He is strong who withholds himself from anger. Suppression of effective anger merits divine reward. God is gentle and loves gentleness. A man cannot be a Muslim till his heart and tongue are pure.

The people among whom Mohammed came were nomadic, and were not so developed in social and domestic virtues. He therefore emphasised these virtues in clear voice. Yet his teachings have the value for all time to those whom it may concern. Their ethical and spiritual quality is universal—the hall-mark of all great teachings. Apropos domestic virtues he said: A man's first charity should be to his own family, if poor. God does not favour one who deserts his kith and kin. God's pleasure is a father's pleasure; and God's displeasure is in a father's displeasure. A man is bound to do good to his parents, although they may have injured him. The duty of a junior to a senior brother is as that of a child to his father. One who does good to his parents, looks after them with kindness and affection, gets a reward that equals the fruit of a properly performed pilgrimage. A virtuous wife is a man's best treasure. Wife-beating is denounced. The rights of women are sacred, they should be maintained. Children should be taught good manners—that is a fitter patrimony. No father has ever given his children anything better than good manners. Meet your brother with an open countenance. Let him be apprised in time of his vice so that he may mend it. A Moslem should be affectionate to little ones and respect the reputation of the old. Let not one speak ill of the dead. Respect people agreeable to their eminence. Being kind to the bad is to withhold them from badness. Forgive your servants seventy times. Give the labourer his wage before the perspiration is dry. He who visits the sick insures the mercy of God and heavenly bliss. Guests should be honoured. Do not turn the poor away, without giving them, if but half a date. That person is not a perfect Muslim who eats his fill and leaves his neighbour hungry. "Shall I tell you the worst amongst you? Those who eat alone and whip slaves, and give to nobody." Kindness must extend to all living things. One

should ride the dumb animals only when they are fit to be ridden; get off from them when they are tired. Whoever is kind to the creation, God is kind to him. "Do you love your Creator?—love your fellow-beings."

The following incident gives an insight into the heart of the Prophet. "A man came before the Rasul with a carpet and said, 'O Rasul, I passed through a wood and heard the voices of young birds; and I took and put them into my carpet; and their mother came and fluttered round my head, and I uncovered the young and the mother fell down upon them; then I wrapped them up in my carpet; and these are the young which I have.' Then the Rasul said, 'Put them down.' And when he did so their mother joined them; and Lord Mohammed said, 'Do you wonder at the affection of the mother towards her young? I swear by Him who hath sent me, verily God is more loving to His creatures than the mother to those young birds. Return them to the place from which ye took them, and let their mother be with them'." Kindness is a mark of faith and whoever has not kindness has no faith. To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful and to remove the wrongs of the injured are most excellent actions.* A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe. God is not merciful to him who is not merciful to mankind. No one should oppress another. "If people do you good, you will do good to them; and if they oppress you, you will not oppress them." The greatest enemies of God are those who have entered into Islam and do acts of infidelity and who without cause shed blood of man. The greatest of crimes is to vex father and mother, to murder one's own species, to commit suicide and to swear to a lie.

According to Mohammed purity of speech and charity are Islam in a nut-shell. "When you speak, speak the truth; perform when you promise; discharge your trust; commit not fornication; be chaste; have no impure desires; withhold your hands from striking and taking that which is unlawful and bad. The best of God's servants are those who when seen remind of God; and the worst of God's servants are those who carry tales about, who do

mischievous and separate friends, and seek for the defects of the good. The brotherhood in Islam is proverbial. All Muslims are as one person. "God is a unit and liketh unity." The slave that says his prayers is a brother to the Muslim. Mohammed commanded to obey his successor though he be a slave. Any service done to others comes under charity. Doing justice between two persons, answering questions with mildness, removing the thorns and stones that may cause inconvenience for another—all these are charity. Your smiling in your brother's face is charity. To feed a cat or a dog, or to plant a tree or sow a field from the yields of which birds, beasts and men may eat—certainly all these form charity. If one is not sore pressed by need one should not beg; even then he should beg of the virtuous. A rich or robust man should never beg. Begging is allowed only for an indigent person. "It is better for anyone of you," he said, "to take your rope and bring a bundle of wood upon your back and sell it, in which case God guardeth your honour, than to beg of people." But every Muslim must give alms. The least charity is to desist from doing harm to another.

Someone described Islam as the 'greatest of all temperance societies.' Although this may be true as far as Mohammed's project of moral reform goes, it must be said that the Prophet's influence did not stop with the improvement of manners. His spiritual vision and the divine command which he translated into life go to the heart of religion. All true religions start with a feeling of the insufficiency of this world. Love of the world is the root of all evil, said he. He repeated the words of the poet Labid: Know that everything is vanity save God. "My followers love me more than they do their parents and children." Cursed is the world and cursed is all that is in the world except the remembrance of God and that which aideth it. The world is a magician to be avoided. The world is a prison for the faithless and a paradise for the faithful. "Desire not the world and God will love you, and desire not what men have and they will love you." Be in this world like a traveller, or like a passer-on, and reckon yourselves as of the dead. Death is a favour to a Mussalman. "My condition," said Mohammed, "is that of a man on horse-

back, who standeth under the shade of a tree, then leaveth it." The world is a prison and famine to the Muslim.

There is no monasticism in Islam, but Mohammed said: Poverty is my pride. It never happens poverty will become a cause of infidelity. It is difficult for a man laden with riches to climb the steep path that leads to bliss. So he prayed, "O Lord, keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor, and raise me among the poor." Mohammed said that poverty would reach that man who loves him, quicker than a torrent to a sea. However, 'wealth properly employed is a blessing, and a man may lawfully increase it by honest means.' There is no monopoly in Islam.

Prayer is the key to heaven and the soul of religion. He to whom you pray is nearer than the neck of the camel on which you ride, he said. Everything has a polish; the polish for the heart is the remembrance of God. One should say his prayers standing; if not able, one may do so sitting or lying down. One must suppress his carnal desires before he asks of God. Mohammed's heart rejoiced in prayer more than in anything else. To facilitate prayer he enjoined fasts at least three times a month. More important is the general advice: "Kill not therefore your heart with excess of eating and drinking." Only a messenger of God could teach: "He who knoweth his own self knoweth God." The paradise of Islam is not a crude one as many think. "It is," according to the Prophet's description, "what the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor ever flashed across the mind of man." We shall conclude this review by citing the grand prayer which Mohammed addressed to the Almighty: "O Lord, grant to me the love of Thee; grant that I love those that love Thee; grant that I may do the deeds that win Thy love; make Thy love dearer to me than self, family or wealth."

From this cursory survey of the book, mostly in its own words, the preciousness of the collection is amply evidenced. The book is well produced with Index, Appendix and a short account of the life of Mohammed. However, the compiler's jaunty assertion in the preface that 'one will miss in this collection the hyperbolic teachings of other masters', can be endorsed as categorical only after one has made an

exhaustive study of the whole Ahadith and the recorded utterances of other masters. There is a misprint in the saying 319 l. 3 and another in 292 l. 1. We recommend the book heartily.

History of Modern Marathi Literature, 1800-1938: By Govinda Chinnaji Bhate, M.A. Price Rs. 8-0-0 Inland; and Rs. 15-0-0 abroad. Copies can be had of Dr. V. G. Bhate, M.B., B. S., Mahad (Dist. Kolaba).

We have here, in a sumptuous volume of 745 Demy quarto pages, an elaborate history of Marathi literature of the British Period written in English, on modern lines, by one who has 35 years of educational experience as professor and principal, successively, of two colleges, and who has brought to bear on the work his long and indefatigable study of enormous material available not only in the premier libraries of India where Marathi books are collected and conserved, but also in the British Museum Library and the India Office Library in Great Britain where he went specially for the purpose of securing for his work the designed exhaustiveness. Mr. Bhate's book is the first of its kind in Marathi, and it is not known whether there exists in any of the literatures of the spoken languages of India a work of this kind, with the possible exception of Dinesh Chandra Sen's *History of Bengali Literature*. The present work is written in English at the instance of the Librarian, India Office Library. This has laid the book under the serious handicap of excluding citations from works of the authors treated and the illustrations of literary tendencies discussed. To remove this defect—which is indeed a serious one since it reduces the work into a magnified 'descriptive catalogue'—the author is bringing out an exhaustive anthology of such pertinent passages as a companion to the present volume.

Just as in the case of most of the other spoken languages of India, in Marathi too, we can demark a clear division in the development of its literature into two epochs—the pre-British period and the British period. The first one, though extending over centuries, is distinguished only for a number of brilliant poetical works, mostly religious in their content, and are reverently remembered and studied against the

luminous backgrounds of their divine and saintly authors, whose spiritual and aesthetically devotional experiences mingled with the high literary exquisiteness they possess, have undoubtedly been a potent force in educating the feelings of the masses of the Maratha country for several centuries. Jnanesvar, Namadev, Ekanath, Muktesvar, Tukaram, Ramdas and others are the gems of this period. Since the elaborate treatment of this long period would require a separate book, the present author has only treated them very briefly at the opening just to indicate the pedigree of the Marathi language.

The second period has very distinct features. Introduction of printing and cheap and easy way of producing and distributing every form of literature, along with a tremendous spread of education and promotion of city life, have stimulated all literatures to an astounding degree during this period. The brilliant record which the Christian Missionaries have made during the early part of this period by their efforts in compiling lexicons and grammatical works and translating the Bible at tremendous cost and labour in almost all the languages of India, as well as the inspiration they gave in other directions,—although handicaps and prejudices often incapacitated them from making their efforts flawless and more valuable—requires the grateful recognition of any Indian, especially a literary historian. The present author has amply recognised this. By going through the pages of the book one again finds the whole story of the development of the English Literature for over 300 years after the invention of printing enacted over again in a miniature form—the same literary forms of dramas, operas, essays, novels, farces, criticisms, stories, periodicals, newspapers and the rest, developing just as in English, through their imitation, translation and assimilation with such variations as are suited to the needs of Indian life.

Mr. Bhate's work consists of fourteen chapters, of which the first three are introductory, dealing with a brief discussion of literature in general, the rise of Marathi into an expanding literature and the natural division of it into periods. The titles of the ensuing chapters are External Attempts, Indigenous Attempts, Translations, Status of

Marathi in the University, The Romantic Novel, Makers of Classical Marathi, Great Novelists, The Literature for a Variety of Tastes, New Forms of Literature, Recent Phenomenal Growth, and Future of Marathi Literature, respectively. In these chapters the author gives biographical notes on the lives of scores of writers major and minor, and descriptions of their known works. There are, of course, omissions and, perhaps, some minor errors which are certainly to be condoned in a work of this type completed single-handed. One would have wished a more thorough work, though not so bulky, with greater attention to its quality. Unlike the political history of a race, its literary history can be made always a pleasant work of art. Making sufficient allowance for the alien medium, the present work does not come up to the highest standard either in this respect or in the appraisal of the works described. It is a pleasure to read the history of a literature as it takes one through the garden of literary flower-beds creating in the reader taste and enthusiasm for the works and the personalities behind them. However, being one of the first attempts, it has its great value in paving the way for others, and also in disclosing to non-Marathis the scope and depth of that language in its recent developments. We therefore recommend without hesitation this volume to all libraries that have a place for books dealing with the languages of India.

The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo: By Nalini Kanta Gupta. Copies can be had at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pages 57, Price As. 8.

This small brochure is a welcome addition to the mass of literature that is fast growing around the silent saint. Sri Aurobindo's is undoubtedly a great creative mind but unfortunately his writings form tough reading, as they are mostly couched in a heavy style. Books written by students of his philosophy have not much improved the situation, as they too have not achieved that amount of clarity which would enable the ordinary reader to understand his philosophy easily.

The book under review, free as it is from technicalities and coming as it does from the pen of one of the intimate fol-

lowers, can dispel much misunderstanding and ignorance.

The book contains four chapters, two dealing with the particular variety of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, one dealing with his school of thought and the other with his interpretation of the Gita. The first chapter represents Yoga as an art of life which makes life "a perfect work of beauty, pure in its lines, faultless in its rhythm, replete with strength, iridescent with light, vibrant with delight." The second chapter represents the Yoga as Nature's own Yoga; because we are assured that Nature, which has always tried to evolve higher types of beings in the past and succeeded in producing man in the end, is again in the travail of a greater birth with the conscious co-operation of man. The third chapter tells us that it is "not at all a school, least of all a mere 'school of thought,' that is growing round Sri Aurobindo. It is rather the nucleus of a new life that is to come." The fourth chapter enlightens us about the novelty of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Gita which spiritualises action in contradistinction to the emphasis of the neo-spiritualists on activism, and which preaches the doctrine of Purushottama, containing "the dual reality of Brahman and the world" in contradiction to the Sankarite "stress upon a spiritual and a religious, which meant therefore in the end, an other-worldly discipline." Sri Aurobindo's interpretation according to our author is "instinct with something of the Gita's own Mantra-shakti." It may be pointed out that however attractive might be the scheme outlined above, it will not be wise to discard established philosophies of life that have proved their worth in the course of ages.

The book is nicely got up and printed.

Initiation into Yoga: By Sri Krishna Prem. Publisher: The Ananda Publishing House, 3-A, Lower Road, Allahabad. Price As. 6 or 6 d.

Yoga has fascinated and attracted modern people more than any other ancient system of thought and discipline; and it has come to mean many things to many people. Cheap pamphlets, attractive advertisements and mysterious Gurus have played havoc with the careers of hundreds of thoughtless people eager to discover a

short cut to health, beauty and power or to the speedy attainment of God. There is ample room for fraud and charlatany in this mysterious field, and those who teach simple psychological and moral truths that are emphasised in authoritative texts and verified by the lives of utterly unselfish spiritual men are likely to be put down as commonplace since they have no astounding promise to make. The above booklet is pithy and thoughtful and deserves to be read and remembered carefully by all whose interest in Yoga is practical. Those who are anxious to start the practice of Yoga straight away as soon as they have read a book on the subject would remember that "the books contain a number of black marks on white paper (or the equivalent) and what these marks signify to us depends upon the ideas in our own minds and they in turn upon the experiences we have gone through. Without having lived through the appropriate experience it is quite impossible for us to understand in any real sense, the meaning of what is written in any book" (p.4). This is only too true. Hence the necessity of seeking a genuine teacher whose competency is tested by long and close contact before surrendering to his instructions.

Understanding is the first thing needed before any practice is begun. The author rightly says ".....men are fundamentally lazy. We want some one to do everything for us, to transform us into Yogis without our having to go through the long and painful struggles that are necessary. Consequently we are only too apt to feel

that if a Guru cannot do that for us it is he and not we who are to blame." It is rightly said that a good deal of self-effort and sincere yearning are required if one has to derive any benefit by contact with a Guru. The first and foremost requirement on the path of Yoga is disciplining thought and desires. Anyone who has not achieved a fairly good amount of success in that direction would do well to get it first before taking to Yoga. If thought is trained to follow its proper laws it is capable of revealing truth and becoming the rudder of the soul, "enabling the latter to cleave a passage through the waters of desires, regardless of their hostile currents." "One habit in particular must be carefully checked and that it is the habit of allowing the mind to run on aimlessly from one thing to another, of letting it take sudden flights from one subject to another and then back to the first without any control at all." These and other observations are really helpful. We wish a wide circulation for this book.

Towards the Light: By Nalini Kanta Gupta, Published by Culture Publishers, Calcutta.

This small book is a collection of a few epigrammatic observations by Mr. Gupta on various subjects such as, Love and Aspiration, Divine and Its Help, Desire and Atonement, etc. These aphorisms apparently represent the attitude of the school of thought to which the author belongs, towards the above-mentioned topics, though many of them have a wider outlook also. The book is interesting.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Ancient Wisdom of India appreciated in the New World

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA'S WORK IN AMERICA

(Sent by Gertrude Oldendorph, Ferguson, Missouri, U.S.A.)

"You accept the world, but deny the soul. The world is real to you because you see it. How can the 'seen' be real if there is no 'seer'? The seer is the soul, the knower in you," proclaimed Swami Satprakashananda in one of his early addresses in St. Louis last November.

The Swami, a representative of the Ramakrishna Order of India, came to St. Louis to preach the sublime truths of the Vedanta on October 13, 1938. The fact that the Swamis of this Order came to America at the invitation of the Americans and that Vedanta Centers have been growing in different parts of the United States for nearly half a century shows that the ancient wisdom of India is desired and appreciated in the New World.

Prior to leaving for America, Swami Satprakashananda was in charge of the Ramakrishna Mission Centre in Delhi, the

capital of India. Since his arrival in this country in March, 1937, the Swami worked at the Vedanta Center in Providence, R.I., with Swami Akhilananda, its founder, for over a year. During this period he also visited Washington, D.C., and preached the message of the Vedanta several weeks in the nation's capital. A short account of his first year's activities has already been published.

In July, 1938, at the invitation of Swami Prabhavananda, the leader of the Vedanta Society of Los Angeles, Swami Satprakashananda went to California to attend the dedication of the Society's new temple at the Vivekananda Home of Hollywood. A public meeting was held to celebrate the occasion, on the 10th of July. The five guest Swamis spoke on different aspects of the Vedanta before an assembly of about 300 persons. From Hollywood, Swami Satprakashananda twice visited the Ananda Ashrama (Vedanta Center) of La Crescenta. On Sunday, the 17th of July, he was invited to speak at the Temple of the Universal Spirit there. The same evening the Swami spoke at the new temple in Hollywood on "Self-mastery."

While in Hollywood, the Swami received an invitation from Swami Ashokananda, the head of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. A Summer Retreat of San Francisco Center was being built on Lake Tahoe under the direction of Swami Ashokananda, who was spending his vacation in Tahoe supervising the work. On August the 8th Swami Satprakashananda participated with five other Swamis of the Order in the opening ceremony of this happy Retreat on the lake.

From San Francisco the Swami twice visited the memorable Shanti Ashrama (Peace Retreat) in San Antoine Valley and stayed there about a week.

At the commencement of the new session, the Swami was asked to address the congregation at the Hindu Temple of San Francisco on September 14 and 21. Both the speeches met with warm appreciation.

From San Francisco the Swami came to Portland on September 28. The next evening a reception was arranged at the Vedic Home by Swami Devatmananda, the leader of the Center. Swami Satprakashananda gave a short after-dinner address. The audience was very appreciative. The Swami then participated in the worship of

the Divine Mother performed at the Center for four days according to the Hindu rite. In the morning of October 2 he spoke on "The Divine Mother" in a sylvan grove, amidst natural surroundings on the woody heights of the new hermitage of the Portland Vedanta Center. The same evening he addressed the public in the Masonic Hall under the auspices of the Vedanta Society. The Swami also gave two impressive class-talks at the Vedic Home.

On October 7 he came to Seattle to meet Swami Vividishananda, who was organizing a Vedanta Center there. At the Sunday meeting of October 9, at the Hotel Mayflower, Swami Satprakashananda was asked to speak on "Subconscious Mind and Superconscious Vision." The next day he took leave of Swami Vividishananda and started for St. Louis.

Within a few days of his arrival in this city the Swami was able to make friends and start the work with their help at Hotel Melbourne on Sunday, the 23rd of October, 1938. The five opening lectures delivered in the course of eight days on well-chosen subjects, such as "The Masters and the Mystic Wisdom of India," "Yoga and the Western Mind," "Karma and Reincarnation," "Mind: Conscious, Subconscious, and Superconscious," served to introduce the Western hearers to Hindu mysticism, philosophy, and psychology. The universality of the teachings, their rationality and practicability struck the audience. Then followed a course of six lessons on "The Practice of Yoga," with special emphasis on mental discipline and meditation. The lessons began on the 1st of November. Three lessons were given each week. A full synopsis of the lessons covering the whole process of Yoga was circulated ahead of time. The suitability of certain aspects of Yoga to modern life and conditions was clearly explained. The lessons aroused so much interest that the Swami had to repeat the whole course during the month.

The discourse on Yoga occupied the week-days, while on Sundays the Swami gave public lectures on "The Soul's Secret Chamber," "What Happens After Death?" "Secret of Poise and Power," and "Religion in Modern Life." The lucid exposition of the profound spiritual truths and of their bearing on modern life and

thought made a deep impression on the audience.

As some of the students evinced interest in the regular study of the Vedanta, weekly classes to teach the Upanishads and the Gita on Tuesdays and Fridays respectively were started at the end of November. A daily noon meditation was also begun about the same time.

In December the Swami gave public lectures twice a week in addition to class talks and meditations. The subjects as well as their treatment were very appealing. The following topics may be mentioned among others: "Self-control and self-expression," "Body, mind, and soul," "The Practice of Concentration," "Secular and Spiritual Life," "The Mystic Word." On Christmas Day the Swami spoke on "The Blessed Life of Jesus." On December 16 he had been invited to speak before the St. Louis Health Club at the occasion of their annual function in the American Hotel. As his subject he chose "The Psychological Factors in Physical Health."

In January the weekly lectures were restricted to Sunday, the Thursday lecture started in December being dropped. The following subjects, of wide interest, were ably dealt with: "What can Religion do for Me," "The Meaning of the Present World Crisis," "Mind: Abnormal and Supernormal," and "The Rhythm of Life."

In commemoration of Swami Vivekananda's birthday a special meditation and worship were conducted on January 17. The following evening the Swami gave an inspiring discourse on "Swami Vivekananda's Message to America." On both these days the audience was entertained with refreshments prepared by the Swami. The birthday of Swami Brahmananda was similarly observed on January 22 and 24.

A novel feature of the work in February was an illustrated lecture on India, depicting various aspects of Indian life. The slides were received from Swami Vividishananda of Seattle.

To celebrate the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna on February 21, a special meditation and worship were conducted at noon and a vivid portrayal of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings was given in the evening. The Hindu food served on the occasion was enjoyed by all.

On February 26 the Swami gave an illuminating talk on "Heredity and Rebirth,"

bringing out the facts that the biological view of heredity leaves the moral and spiritual issues unexplained and that unless the idea of hereditary transmission be modified and supplemented by the doctrine of reincarnation, materialism is the sole alternative. The lectures on "India's Spiritual Message to America" and "The Power of Suggestion" given during the month were equally instructive. "The world even at its highest and best cannot be the goal. It is but the means to an end beyond itself. We should live in the world in order to transcend the world," declared the Swami while speaking on "India's Spiritual Message to America."

Another interesting lecture on India illustrated with motion-pictures was given in March. Swami Nikhilananda of New York, who took the pictures during his visit to India last year, kindly supplied the films.

On March 19 a lecture on "Sri Ramakrishna, the Mystic Saint of Modern India" was given in commemoration of his birthday. In his speech on "The Inner Resources" the Swami brought home to the audience the fact that the solution of the problems of individual and collective life rests on the proper manipulation of the inner powers. The lecture on "The Spiritual Problems of the Modern Man" cleared many misconceptions of religion in the modern age.

On the first Sunday in April the Swami spoke on "How to Overcome Death." It proved to be a real Easter sermon. His lecture on "India and Her People" at the International Institute on the 16th of April, before an open-house audience of about 300, representing nearly thirty different nationalities, was designated by this Institute as "a skilful and scholarly talk." The other lectures given during the month on "Work and Its Secret," "The Practice of Meditation," "Vedanta and Modern Life," and "Reason and Emotion: How to Harmonize Them" were illuminating as well as exhortative.

To commemorate the birthday of Lord Buddha a lecture was given in May on "Buddha and His teachings." On May 8, the day following, the Swami spoke on "The Civic and National Ideals of India" before the Kiwanis Club of Normandy. After the talk the Swami explained the Caste System of India in answer to a ques-

tion by the minister of the Normandy Presbyterian Church, where the meeting was held. The other lectures given during the month were on "The Power of Thought," "The Art of Spiritual Living," and "The Meaning of Good and Evil." In his lecture on "The Meaning of Good and Evil" the Swami discussed the various theological and philosophical views on this problem, and it became evident that the only satisfactory solution of the problem was reached by the Vedanta. Thus observed the Swami: "Good and evil are interdependent in this universe of duality. They are like the obverse and reverse of a single coin, or like the two sides of a sheet of paper—rub one side away with a rubber, and the other side vanishes with it. One cannot have the one without the other. To go beyond evil, we must go beyond good. First overcome evil by good, then transcend good to reach the goal, the Absolute."

In June the Swami took up the following subjects: "The Power of Destiny," "How to quiet the mind," "In Quest of God," and "The Abundant Life." The meetings were well attended in spite of summer heat, and the Swami in his lecture on "The Power of Destiny" referred to the different ideas of determinism prevailing in mythology, theology, philosophy, psychology, and science, maintained free will, and explained predestination by the Law of Karma. "The Abundant Life" was an inspiring concluding sermon of the session.

On account of the hot weather the Sunday lectures had to be suspended from July on. But the Swami did not discontinue the other activities. The week-day classes and the daily noon meditation which had been conducted all along since their start are still going on uninterrupted. The Sunday lectures are to be resumed in autumn.

Throughout his stay in St. Louis the Swami has granted interviews to men and women that have sought his advice for the solution of their personal problems. He has also visited several American homes, where the members and their friends have enjoyed his lively conversation and ennobling presence. He was also invited to a social gathering of the American League of Pen Women, where a brief

address was given by him on "The Art of Life."

Swami Ghanananda in Mauritius

Mauritius is a British Crown Colony, over 700 sq. miles in area, noted for its sugar industry. There are over 2½ lacs of Hindus in the Island. The Swami was deputed by the Headquarters of the Mission to work for their spiritual and social welfare in early July. He landed on the Island on the 20th of July and was given a rousing reception by the public in general and by the Arya Sabha. Swami Ghanananda joined the Mission about two decades back and has been working successfully in India in various responsible positions for spreading the ideals of the Mission and the Order.

The following is the text of the address presented by the Hindu Mission Committee, Port-Louis, on 30th July 1939, to Swami Ghanananda:—

Revered Swamiji,

We, in the name of the organizing committee, welcome your worthy and venerable presence among us with unbounded joy, and thank you heartily for having so readily responded to our invitation to come over here, and implant in the hearts of the Hindus an abidingly active love for their religion, culture and language.

The very instant we took contact with you, we had the pleasure to find in you the spiritual leader for whom we had been longing ever since the inception of our movement, nay a true representative of the Ramakrishna Mission and a worthy follower of its founder, Swami Vivekananda, the gifted messenger of Ramakrishna, who was the first Hindu Sannyasin to cross the seas like the Buddhist monks of old and spread world-wide the wisdom of Ancient India as taught by his saintly Guru, with the result that today the Ramakrishna Mission has centres established not only in all the Provinces of India, in Ceylon, Burma, Straits Settlements, Fiji, but also in England and the Continent, in the United States and Argentina.

Your astounding knowledge of, and soul-stirring love for, the manifold beauties and potentialities of our religion and culture have already imparted the certainty that the object we daringly set before us, we mean the object of providing the commu-

nity, for some time at least, with the spiritual guidance of a Hindu missionary hailing from the world-famed Ramakrishna Mission, will be productive of results conducive to the moral and material uplift of our people.

Besides the varied benefit we shall certainly derive from your teachings, there is no doubt that your presence, here, will afford us the living touch linking us with our past and all its multitudinous glories which must needs awaken in us that national pride so indispensable for upholding one's own culture and one's own religion.

We assure you, before concluding, that you will find your stay in our Island Home agreeable and your work appealing, while we revel in the thought that with your advent here, a new era has dawned on us, which will soon witness a general awakening and regeneration among us Hindus in all the spheres of life.

We remain,

Revered Swamiji,

Your most obedient servants,

M. SANGEEL

V. GOVINDEN

Secretary.

President.

The Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares.

Short statement of the activities during 1938.

The activities of the Home during the year 1938 were under the following heads:

Indoor General Hospital: There are 145 beds in the various wards. The total number of cases admitted was 1,832 of whom 1,170 were cured and discharged, 209 were relieved and discharged, 194 were discharged otherwise, 134 died and 125 remained under treatment at the end of the year. The total number of ghat and roadside cases admitted was 385. The daily average of indoor cases was 110.8. The total number of surgical cases in the Indoor Hospital was 387 of which 155 were major cases.

Refuge for aged and invalid men: There were 4 permanent inmates in this refuge, during the year.

Refuge for aged and invalid women: In this refuge there were 23 inmates during the year.

Refuge for paralytic patients: During the year under review in all 20 paralytic

cases were accommodated of which 2 were provided for under the Lachmi Narain paralytic fund.

Chandri Bibi Dharamsala Fund: During the year, 209 men and women were given shelter and food under this head. The annual income of Rs. 273 accruing from this fund, being insufficient, had to be supplemented with money from other sources.

Out-door Dispensaries: The total number of new cases treated during the year at the out-door dispensaries of the Home was 83,483 as against 64,420 of the previous year and the total number of repeated cases was 1,38,058 as against 1,10,776 of the previous year. These include 21,453 new and 50,308 repeated cases treated at the branch out-door dispensary of the Home at Shivala. The daily average attendance was 607 and the total number of surgical cases was 1,951.

Out-door help to invalids and helpless ladies of respectable families: Under this head 202 persons received weekly and monthly out-door relief and it cost Rs. 2,746-5-6 in cash (including Rs. 175 of yearly interest, derived from the Audhar Chandra Das Charity Fund especially constituted for money relief) and 118 mds. 17 srs. 4 chits. of rice and Atta, besides blankets and clothings.

Special and occasional relief: Under this head 1,280 persons were given help in the shape of either books for students, food for stranded travellers or similar relief as occasion demanded.

Finance: During the year under review under the General Fund receipts were Rs. 38,009-3-5 and expenditure Rs. 42,664-10-3; under the Building Fund receipts Rs. 6,609-8-9, and expenditure Rs. 2,823-2-9; under the T. B. Sanatorium Fund receipts Rs. 2,050-0-0 and expenditure Rs. 767-5-0; and under the N. C. Das Estate receipts Rs. 526-2-0 and expenditure Rs. 1,766-7-0.

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow. 1937—1938

The Sevashrama presents the following Report for the years 1937 and 1938.

In the outdoor Dispensary the total number of patients treated was 2,07,206 as against 1,65,866 of the corresponding years of 1935 and 1936. Of these the number of new patients was 52,981. Besides, eight widows of respectable families, who had

जागर्ति संसारगृहे मनीषी मोहान्धकारे स्वपिति प्रमत्तः ।
 प्रजागरो जीवितमेव लोके मृतस्य सुप्तस्य च कोविभेदः ॥ १० ॥
 स कोऽपि सत्कर्मविपाकजन्मा बन्धो विवेकः प्रशमाभिवेकः ।
 यस्य प्रभावाद्विरतस्तृहणां त्याज्यैव रत्नाकरमेखला भूः ॥ १० ॥
 दृष्टं मुष्टिनिविष्टपारदकणाकारं नराणां धनं
 धन्योऽसौ यशसासहाक्षयपदं यद्यस्य विशोतते ।
 दीनानायगणार्पणोपकरणीभूतप्रभूतश्रियः
 पुण्यारामविहारचैत्यभगवद्विम्बप्रतिष्ठादिभिः ॥ ११ ॥
 एषां ब्रह्मविहारश्च चत्वारः सत्वशालिनाम् ।
 करुणामुदितोपेक्षा मैत्रीचेति परिग्रहः ॥ १२ ॥
 क्रुदस्यन्दिनि निन्दिते प्रतिदिनं श्वासक्षयस्यन्दिनि
 स्नेहः कोऽयमपायधाग्निं मलिने मिथ्याशरीरे नृणाम् ।
 एकैव स्पृहणीयतास्य यदिदं पुण्यैः क्वचित् कस्यचित्
 किञ्चिद्विषय कदाचिदार्तिसमये त्राणाय सन्नद्यति ॥ १३ ॥
 धन्यास्ते परिपूर्णं पुण्यं निधयः सद्धर्मं सम्बोधिताः
 ज्ञानोदग्रगुरूपदेशमहिमप्राप्तप्रभावोदयाः ।
 गेहप्राङ्गणलीलया बहुतरकलेशोप्रसन्तापकृत्
 यैः संसार विसार मारवमहामार्गः समुलङ्घ्यते ॥ १४ ॥
 सन्तर्तस्मिन् खरतरमरुत्स्फारसंसारमार्गे
 पापं पापं त्यजत जनताः सक्ततीवानुतापम्
 पुण्यं पुण्यं कुरुत सततं पुण्यपीयूषसिक्ताः
 पुण्यक्यातरुतलभुवः शीतलाः पुण्यभाजाम् ॥ १५ ॥
 तेषामशोच्यं स्पृहणीयमेव जन्मप्रशामोचितमुन्नतानाम् ।
 मैत्रीपवित्राणि मनांसि येषां सद्धर्मशुद्धानि च जीवितानि ॥ १६ ॥

Strange indeed is the conceit of man who thinks that his body is a permanent entity—the body which is a formation of foam on the agitated ocean of Samsara (round of birth and death), the body which is the terminal blossom on the twig of Karma waving in the wind of time ready to drop, the body which shares the fickleness of the looks of an illusory damsel (1). The pleasures that approach man in wave-like succession are as fleeting as the tremble in the eyes of a frightened doe; wealth, shining for a moment, is just like the flash of a lightning that illumines the cloud of humanity; the transient play of youth is only the hue of morning light imparted to the lotus of the human body, doomed to pass off in a trice. The pearly drop of life, alas! evaporates on the arid bank of Samsara in a moment's time (2). Ah! life here for all beings is a train of misery—deprivation of freedom, degeneration of body, diminution of happiness and permanent servitude! (3). Indeed it is a pity that man, driven by greed of possession, makes cruel designs and derives pleasure coolly by harassing others,

and persistently endeavours to secure his own enjoyment. (4). In fact, man has his full cup of misery: he is exposed to innumerable risks; he is being disintegrated day by day on the road of suffering; his fortitude is constantly upset by the gale of sorrows; he pines over loss and sorrow even after they are over; at the face of all these, efforts are made by him to injure beings for grabbing others' goods with the sole motive of momentary pleasures. A hundred pity! (5).

Lo, the old man trudges on slowly, shrunk and bent over, with gaze directed towards the ground, searching as it were the jewel of youth lost by him. (6) "Not a word calculated to benefit others was uttered! Not a word of righteousness was listened to! The flower of goodness was not at all smelt! Nor was there the least touch of a state of inner peace and calm!"—Evidently wrapped in this remorseful absorption the corpse lies in perpetual rest, when life has ebbed away. (7) That heedless dullard who proceeds exultantly through the hard path of transmigratory existence teeming with sensuous luxuries, plays with a triple-headed viper; he courts death with his head; he slips round his neck a garland of a furiously venomous creeper; he enters into a bed of live cinders. (8) At this residence of Samsara a self-controlled, intelligent man is wide-awake; while a negligent one falls deeply into sleep in the night of delusion. To live in this world is to be vigilant always. (We live only so long as we are awake); what difference is there between a man asleep and one dead? (9).

Now, discrimination is engendered somehow by reflection—discrimination worthy of honour and surrounded by tranquillity. Through its power desires cease and at that stage the sea-girt earth itself, if it happens to be a possession, one is ready to renounce. (10). For, after all, it is observed that man's wealth is like a quantity of mercury grasped in one's fist. If the shining door to the Imperishable State is open for man along with a good name on earth, through the endowment of his immense riches for serving the poor and helpless, for laying out public gardens and monasteries, for establishing temples, and consecrating images of deities, and other services—then such a man is indeed to be congratulated. (11). These virtuous, energetic souls who have renounced all, have no possession except the four Brahma-abidings or, highest mental developments, namely, compassion, gladness, poise and friendliness. (12). Why should there be such fondness for this false, filthy body on the part of man?—a body despicable and flowing over with secretions, a body which is but the abode of all troubles and wasting daily with every breath! If at all there is anything desirable regarding it, that is only this: In some place, at some time, through one's religious merits one uses one's body to save and serve someone when he is plunged in suffering. (13). Noble indeed are they who are a brimming treasure of virtue, who are informed with the good rule,

and who are beaming with the noble influence derived from the spiritual initiation received from Teachers of ripe wisdom. The dreary desert of extensive Samsara, terrible with a multitude of diverse sufferings, is easily crossed over by them in sport, just as one may walk across a courtyard of his house. (14). O men, with deep repentance give up all sin incidental to the journey in this intensely heated desert path of Samsara. Drenched in the ambrosia of virtuous deeds, always be intent on doing good work. The virtuous souls are like a prolific tree casting a cool shade of virtue and holiness beneath. (15). None needs to feel sorry for the lives of such; it is highly covetable for all—lives of those who have taken birth in a manner suitable for embracing renunciation and tranquillity. These exalted ones possess mind purified by friendly love; and their lives are hallowed by excellent righteousness. (16).

—*Avadanakalpalata.*

THE SON OF MAN

AFTER patient researches for several centuries, historical scholarship has not been able to fix the exact and precise date of Christ's nativity. About the fifth century Church fixed the 25th of December to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, very much as we have a Jayanti, or day of celebration, in memory of Gita or Valmiki or Kalidasa. Whatever might have been the precise date of the advent, irrecoverable though it is, Christmas is an annually recurring reminder to all who care to cherish the memory of one who was a messenger of love and peace, and who has deserved homage from all humanity. The soul-stirring outpourings of devotion, pious oratory of the church and multifarious artistic creations occasioned by the sacred season all over the Christian world for centuries reveal the divine personality that has illumined a selfish and callous world for about two millenniums.

I

It may be, the contemporary Jews looked upon Jesus only as a magician excommunicated by the Sanhedrin, if one is to believe the Talmud; the Encyclopedists saw in him only a charlatan; Renan only an amiable Rabbi, Socinus the highest of men. But, "If I, as an oriental, have to worship Jesus of Nazareth," said Swami Vivekananda in one of his addresses, "there is only one way left to me—that is, to worship him as God and nothing else. Have we no right to worship him in that way, do you mean to say? If we bring him to our own level and simply pay him a little respect, as a great man, why should we worship him at all? Our scriptures say, 'These great children of Light, who manifest the Light themselves, they being worshipped, become as it were, one with us and we become one with them'." This union with the Divine through

them must evidently have been the meaning in mind when Jesus said, "Whoever receives me receives not me but Him who sent me." We become one with them by assimilating into our lives the truth they have taught. The great Christian saints therefore had inscribed in their hearts the grand motto: *Vita tua via Nostra*—Thy life is our way.

Jesus, the word, has originally come from Hebrew Jehoshua meaning "Jehovah is salvation," signifying that Jesus came to save his people from their sins. Christ, originally a title, signified the "anointed one," i.e., consecrated in a recognised way to be the King, Prophet and priest. Later on the two words blended and passed as one name separately or together. Jesus was born probably in 4 B.C. and was crucified on March 31, 30 A.D. The major part of his life was spent in extreme seclusion. The short period of his public life has given a grand revelation of God by his person, presence, life and teachings. Our grandest attempts to grasp or picture the divine attributes and power cannot even imperfectly approach what is revealed in the lives of these Godmen. Hence it is that they are our 'way.'

II

The birth of Jesus is ascribed to a miraculous act of God, and about his early infancy, childhood and youth our knowledge is next to nothing. We learn from the Gospel that he did as his parents told him and that he "increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." We are also told that "the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was

on him." He must have learned his father's trade to support himself as well as his mother and brothers. Although he had not the literary training of the learned class, he could read and write and was conversant with the books of the Prophets and the Psalms. From his utterances we get ample evidence for his close familiarity with Nature, his knowledge of men of all classes and their manners and the wonderful gift of keen observation, reflection and alertness that he must have developed from childhood. His future greatness gleams through the simple picture we get in S. Luke where the young boy is presented seated among learned men in the Holy Temple both "hearing and asking questions." His answer to the interrogations of his parents, who discovered him there after the temporary loss, is equally significant.

At the age of eighteen Jesus comes out from his village home to be baptised by his ascetic kinsman and prophet John preaching 'repentance.' Jesus was inaugurated into his spiritual ministry by this symbolic act of moral purification—sinless though he was—in order that the world might know the fact that a great religious Messiah comes not to destroy the existing order but to fulfil the law and the prophets. Jesus undoubtedly taught on direct divine authority; but the ancient law supplied the setting for his new teaching. In the spiritual history of man this is repeated—Krishna and Buddha and Sankara were no exceptions.

Baptism opened a new chapter in the life of Jesus. No more he returned to the avocation of a joiner; the new vista of spiritual life lured him into solitude and in the region of

Quarantain, in the desert of Jericho he underwent the 'dark night of his soul' preceding illumination. Physical exhaustion, spiritual pride, unhallowed ambition—none of these could contaminate his immaculate mind. At last he emerged gloriously victorious, strengthened by divine Grace.

Jesus returned to the ford of Jordan and entered his spiritual ministry; one after another disciples joined him—Andrew and John and Simon and Philip and the others, all pure and warm-hearted young men. According to modern researches Jesus' public activity extended about a period of only eighteen months. He performed a multitude of miracles and several preaching tours bringing spirituality to all who were thirsty for the waters of eternal life. The chief events of this period may be rapidly passed over. He began his miracles by turning water into wine at a wedding banquet. On the famous festival day of the Jews, the Passover, he cleansed the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, which was to be a house of prayer for all nations, of its desecrating traffic, in fulfilment of the ancient prophecy—an act which might have incited the Jewish priesthood to jealousy and anger. He therefore retired to Judaea from Jerusalem giving his disciples power to baptise and heal. After the imprisonment of John, Jesus withdrew to Galilee and never, it seems, he returned to his birth-place. His preachings were publicly done in Synagogues, and his new message roused amazement and opposition, which people at Nazareth expressed by their churlish behaviour. By a laying of his hand or a word he exorcised several demons

and cured several violent and incurable diseases. In the small manufacturing district on the caravan road to Damascus, called Gennesaret, it being chosen as his temporary place of stay, hundreds thronged wherever he went, to be blessed by him. Even though he warned the person concerned after each sanative act not to divulge it to anybody, they were so beside themselves with delight that they could no more contain the secret. In no time his fame rang to far-off regions like Syria.

III

Before the famous Sermon was preached he chose his twelve disciples—all Galileans, except one Judas who betrayed the Master for the paltry sum of less than £ 4—whom he gave the name 'apostles.' The sermon was preached 'down the hill' on a 'level spot' and not on the Mount. Arjuna's sad plight furnished the occasion for the "Celestial Song," which to-day is the Universal Gospel; so too the Sermon of Jesus, though delivered to the disciples, is certainly for all the world. The brevity, universality, authority, grandeur and divine idealism of these words not only impressed on all who heard them deeply but also won immortality for them. Jesus spent all these days in poverty, toil and simplicity, wandering about from village to village like a Sannyasin, proclaiming the divine dignity and glory of man to rejoicing crowds and actively demonstrating it by his own wonderful acts of mercy. To his contemporary Jews righteousness meant only scrupulous attention to the performance of exaggerated and meaningless ritualistic minutae; whereas Jesus insisted on a change of

mind—*metanoia*. He gave moral and spiritual edification by his inspiring words and august personality. But this opened a new page in his story, namely, the increasing spite and hatred of the Jewish legalists. This new development alarmed his mother and brothers, and more than once they went to dissuade him.

Probably to avoid them and the increasing crowd he retired to the eastern shore of the lake after he had preached to the crowd from the boat itself. The boat being caught up in a storm he hushed the squall with divine majesty; and again on another occasion he taught the power of faith to Peter by walking over the sea to console him and his party. The Pharisees and their scribes had now a new cause of wonder and jealousy at seeing him 'forgive sins.' They complained to the disciples why he ate and drank with tax-gathers and sinners? The characteristic reply was: "Healthy people have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill; I have not come to call just men, but sinners to repentance." Jesus placed mercy above sacrifice.

IV

Jesus came at a time when the Mediterranean world was sinking into ever deepening degradation. The masses of the Roman Empire under whom the Jews were a subject race were in a morass of superstition and immorality, and the Jewish religion itself was almost choked by deadening formalism and hypocrisy. The dismal condition spreading over state and religion reawoke in the minds of men the hope in a Messiah—a servant of Jehova, the Eternal, who will rescue them. But the Jews were expecting

a temporal sovereign who would suppress the enemies and raise the people to the summit of earthly prosperity and luxury. They were therefore unable to understand Jesus and his mission. Beyond the arrogant and obnoxious insistence on the letter of the sacerdotal law nothing could claim their attention. So in their eyes the sanative deeds and divine claims of Jesus were blasphemy. They objected so much as his command to the healed man at the Pool of Bethesda to take the mat on which he lay and walk, because none should carry even the smallest burden on the Sabbath; his healing on Sabbath day was seriously watched; and when they saw his disciples, while crossing the cornfields, pulling some ears of corn to eat them rubbing them in their hands, they could wait no more. Jesus defended himself irresistibly and with divine calmness; the power he had with the people unnerved them to do anything against him. But the hostility became bitter and persistent and he had to leave Jerusalem soon.

Jesus was shadowed by Pharisaic spies seeking occasion to get over him by some craft; and he returned therefore to Galilee with the knowledge of his coming violent death. The news of John's death betokened darker days for Jesus and his followers and he had often to retire to deserts or tops of hills, where he spent his time in solitary prayer. The rage of his opponents must have reached high when they saw him teach the Lord's prayers emphasising the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man in ringing accents. This must certainly have been an innovation upon their tribal conception of the Deity. They therefore began now to

impute his miracles to the arch-devil; but they were rebuffed by Jesus in the sternest manner. Finally with the confused breaking up of a feast in a Pharisee's house, where Jesus unobtrusively exposed the hypocrisy and baseness of the priesthood, amidst the tumult of taunting hosts and eager crowds, he had to put an end to his stay at Galilee.

Flight, peril and concealment were his lot afterwards. From Tyre and Sidon he sailed to Magdala and came near Caesarea Philippi where he carried conviction into the hearts of his disciples regarding his divinity by transfiguring himself in radiant white robes on the Hermon. Again he appeared suddenly at Jerusalem on a festive day where he evinced his sovereign wisdom and tenderness in connection with the episode of the woman who was caught in adultery. He left the temple under a ban of excommunication and was once more back in Galilee to leave it for ever. On the day of the feast of dedication he was again at Jerusalem passing through Bethany where Mary in her devotion and gratitude broke the alabaster flask of pure nard perfume and poured it over him, exciting the greed of Judas. After the signal revival of Lazarus by his power, on Palm Sunday he entered Jerusalem on a colt amidst shouts of 'Hosanna.' The day was spent in preaching and at dusk, as it is the wont of Hindu Parivrajakas even to-day, he retired outside the city.

V

During all these days Jesus devoted special care to train his disciples in sacrifice, humility and service, turning every small occasion to advantage.

On a previous occasion he had inculcated the need of the most absolute contentment and simplicity. Now, on the evening of that Thursday in the Passion week he was instituting the sacrament of Eucharist, he cured their pride and personal ambition betrayed by their mutual jealousy and eagerness for precedence, by himself washing the feet of his disciples. We are reminded of another great act declaring the same lesson in the behaviour of Sri Krishna at the Rajasuya ceremony of Yudhishtira. The Last supper was accompanied by significant instruction and words of unfailing consolation. Afterwards Jesus walked in darkness to the Hill of Olives and to the place called Gethsemane where he passed through the mysterious passion and agony. "My heart is sad, sad even unto death—" he declared to Peter, James and John whom he took apart. Then he went forward a little and fell to the earth in prayer, after which he returned to see his disciples asleep. Suddenly with lit torches appeared a mob with swords and cudgels who had come from the high priest, scribes and elders. They took him captive, his identity being betrayed by Judas by a kiss. "All his disciples forsook him and fled." He was then called before an irregular midnight tribunal, exposed to beastly violence and crucified. After prayer for his murderers he committed his spirit to his Father's hand and with a loud cry he expired. The event, it is said, was synchronised by an earthquake and obscuration. On the third day Jesus rose; and he continued, it is believed, to appear to his chosen men for forty days, which must have inspired them with great power and unity.

VI

Through this scrappy outline the historic personality of Jesus stands forth in all its majesty. In the words of Bhagavata XI: 1.6, 7—where the words are used regarding Sri Krishna—we may more or less say of Jesus that he too withdrew from vision leaving behind him the pattern of a soul-entrancing form, a glorious chain of divine deeds and a treasure of wise teachings with the hope that subsequent generations will be redeemed from darkness by these, along with his glory widely sung over the earth. Jesus never counted human favour and taught the way of God honestly so that people might inherit that glory of righteousness which is spiritual and imperishable. In faith, cast-iron faith, and utter dedication to God lay the secret of his teaching. He went by the road that scripture had prescribed. Prayers and fasting were among the discipline prescribed to bring the mind and body under control; what he disliked was sanctimoniousness. Beware of the scribes, he warned. "They like to walk in long robes to get saluted in the market places, to secure the front seat in the synagogues and the best place at the banquet; they prey upon the property of widows and offer long unreal prayers." Jesus obeyed the Mosaic law; but he cared infinitely more for the spirit that underlay it. He did not wear the phylacteries or the prophet's mantle; he dressed and ate like a plain man conscious of his own pregnant saying that what defiles a man is not what enters into him but what comes out of him. He insisted that respect should be accorded to all recognised laws, Jewish or Pagan, and taught that all teachers should be

honoured. He checked all kind of political agitation and dispelled the chiliastic delusion of his people by significant acts of his own. He placed himself at the end of the Old Testament and employed words in the simple, obvious, traditional sense. He was not a theologian or a metaphysician. He cared all for the moral and spiritual being and gave the most beautiful meaning to charity, humility and humanity. "The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve," an idea more divinely put in the Gita, III: 22, 23. He embodied the teaching "whoever wants to be the first must be the slave of all." In fact, to attain the spiritual state he had in mind "everyone has to be consecrated by the fire of the discipline."

Renunciation was the core of his message. To a wistful youth perfectly moral, chaste and loyal to parents, with a loving glance, he advised, "Go and sell all you have, give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, take up the cross and follow me." In unequivocal terms he expressed how difficult it is for those who rely on money to realise God. With almost Upanishadic purity and grandeur he replied to the scribe who wanted to know the chief of all commands: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord, your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind and with your whole strength. The second is this: you must love your neighbour as yourself."—"That is far more than all holocausts and sacrifices," seconded the hearer. Jesus taught the common man, and the best among them, his

disciples, hardly understood him; therefore the highest truth that the Divine is both immanent and transcendent unity, and that man is potentially Divine was only dimly indicated in his sayings.

VII

Today, after nineteen long centuries, have the nations who have done the most to spread his name understood this messenger of Love? If so, should there be this repeated recrudescence of blood-shed? Perhaps it may not be a far away date when the thoughtful

among them may come out of the thick mental insulation and view him through the pure and radiant spiritual atmosphere of Vedantic thought and get a correct knowledge of him who was an oriental of orientals, in thought and outlook and Divinity Itself, as the mystic Jacapone da Todi sang, expressing a typically Indian sentiment.

Come come with me!
Folk, why so tardily?
Eternal life to see
In swaddling clothes.

REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

BY A DISCIPLE

[Sri Saradamani Devi, known also as the Holy Mother, was the consort of Sri Ramakrishna. She was wife and nun at the same time. Though possessed of great spiritual attainments and respected and worshipped as a divine personage by the devotees of the Master, she was always simple and unsophisticated in her life and ways of thought. In these reminiscences of a great woman of modern India, the reader will get intimate glimpses of a glorious type of womanhood through the little acts and simple talks of everyday life.—The Editors.]

It was morning. The Mother was seated near the bedstead in the room adjacent to the Chapel. We were engaged in conversation.

Disciple: Some say that it is not good for the Sadhus to work in the Sevashramas and dispensaries or to be preoccupied with other temporal works. Did the Master ever undertake such activities? Works of this kind are thrust upon the seekers who enter the Order with a yearning for the realisation of God. If one must do some work, let it be the performance of worship in the chapel, meditation, Japam and devotional music. Activities other than these entangle one in desires and turn one away from God.

Mother: You must not listen to those who talk like that. What will you do day and night if you are not engaged in work? Can you practise meditation and Japam for twenty-four hours? You have referred to the Master. But his case was different. Mathur used to supply him with proper diet. You are able to get your food because you are doing some work. Otherwise you would have to roam from door to door begging for a morsel of food. Perhaps you would fall ill. Besides, where are people today to give alms to the Sadhus? Never pay any heed to such words. Things will go on as the Master directs. The Math will be run on these lines. Those who

cannot adjust themselves will go away.....

Disciple: Enjoyments come from desire alone. A man may live in a four-storeyed mansion; but he does not really enjoy anything if he has no desire. And a man may live under a tree, but if he has desire he gets all enjoyment from that alone. The Master used to say, "A person may have no relatives anywhere; but Mahamaya may cause him to keep a cat and thus make him worldly. Such is her play!"

Mother: That's true. Everything is due to desire. What bondage is there for a man who has no desire? You see, I live with all these things, but I do not feel any attachment; no, not the least.

Disciple: What desire can you possibly have? But how many insignificant desires crop up in our minds! How can we get rid of them?

Mother: In your case, these are no real desires. They are nothing. They are mere cogitations that appear and disappear in your mind. The more they come and go the better for you.¹

Disciple: I thought yesterday, how could I fight with my mind unless God assured me His protection?

¹A Sannyasin devotee once asked the Holy Mother, "I have been practising religious disciplines. I do not relax my efforts in that direction. But it appears that the impurities of mind are not growing less." The Mother said, "You have rolled different threads on a reel—red, black and white. While unrolling you will see them all exactly in the same way." There are two kinds of desires: One that stimulates enjoyment and the other exhausting themselves without residual effect on the mind. Though externally they look same, their effects are different.

No sooner does one desire disappear than another crops up.

Mother: So long as the 'ego' exists, the desires also undoubtedly remain. But those desires will not injure you. The Master will be your protector. It will be unkind on the part of the Master if he does not protect those who have taken shelter at his feet, who have taken refuge in him renouncing all, and who want to lead a good life. You must live depending upon him. Let him do good to you, if he so desires, or let him drown you if that is his will. But you are to do only what is righteous, and that also according to the power he has given you.

Disciple: Have I, O Mother, surrendered to him to that extent? Sometimes I feel that I can depend upon him to a small extent and the next moment it disappears. What will be the way for us if he does not protect us? Sometimes I think that now you, O Mother, are alive; and we can report our dangers and difficulties to you and feel peace in looking at your face. Who will protect us after this? We shall feel safe if you give us assurance.....

Disciple: Mother, was it not arranged that you were to visit Puri Jagannath at the time of the "Car Festival?"

Mother: Should one go there when there is such a rush of people? Perhaps there will be an epidemic of cholera then. Lakshmikanta (the priest) said, "Even now all the rooms and houses are rented. There is no place to live. Even the small rooms have been rented for ten rupees each. Please come during the winter months."

Disciple: What deity does the image of Jagannath represent?

Mother: I dreamt of Jagannath as the image of Shiva.

Disciple: Did you not see in the temple this image of Jagannath when you visited the place?

Mother: No, only the image of Shiva. Shiva, the Lord of the universe, was installed on the altar made of one lakh of *Salagrams*. There must be something Divine there; otherwise why should there be such a rush of people? The Goddess *Vimala* is worshipped in the Temple compound. A goat is offered to Her on the night of the *Mahashtami*. *Vimala* is after all *Durga*, is that not so? Therefore, is it not natural for Shiva to dwell there?

Disciple: Some say that originally it was a Buddhist temple and the image of Buddha was installed there. Later on, *Shankaracharya* removed the Buddhists and transformed that very image of Buddha into the emblem of Shiva. Last of all, when *Vaishnavism* was preached, people turned Shiva into Jagannath, Vishnu.

Mother: What do I know? I only saw the emblem of Shiva.

Disciple: How many temples, gods and goddesses the Mussalmans have destroyed! They have cut off the noses of some of them, and the ears of others.

Mother: *Govindaji* of *Brindavana* fled to *Jayapur* for fear of the Mussalmans. The priests of *Brindavana* lay without food or drink in the temple to move the pity of the Deity. At last a revelation said, "The image verily has gone away; but I am still here. Make another image and I will dwell in it."

Disciple: There is the temple of *Somanath* in *Gujarat*. The priests in former times used to bathe the Deity daily with water from the

Gangotri. Every day people used to carry water from the Himalayas in pots on their heads. *Sultan Mahmud* demolished the image and carried away the temple doors that were made of sandalwood. Why should that happen?

Mother: The Deity goes away for fear of wicked people. But why should that be so? He can do whatever He likes by His mere will. This also is *Leela* of God.....

Disciple: Can the effect of Karma be made null and void? The scriptures say that Knowledge alone can destroy Karma. Still one must reap the result of *Prarabdha-karma*.

Mother: Karma alone is responsible for our misery and happiness. Even the Master had to suffer from the effect of Karma. Once his elder brother was drinking water while delirious. The Master snatched the glass out of his hand after he had drunk just a little. The brother became angry and said, "You have stopped me from drinking water. You will also suffer like this. You will also feel such pain in your throat." The Master said, "Brother, I did not mean to injure you. You are ill. Water will harm you. That is why I have taken the glass away. Why have you, then, cursed me like this?" The brother said, weeping, "I do not know brother. Those words have come from my mouth. These cannot but bear fruit." At the time of his illness, the Master said to me, "I have got this ulcer in my throat because of that curse. Well, none of you will have to suffer. I am bearing everybody's suffering." I said to him in reply, "How can man possibly live, if a thing like this can happen to you?" The Master remarked, "My brother was a

righteous man. His words must come true. Can the words of anyone and everyone be thus fulfilled?"

The result of Karma is inevitable. But by repeating the name of God, you can lessen its intensity. If you were destined to have a wound as wide as a ploughshare you will get a pin-prick at least. The effect of Karma can be counteracted to a great extent by *Japam* and austerities. This was the case with *King Suratha*. He had worshipped the Goddess by slaughtering a lakh of goats. Later on, these one-hundred-thousand goats killed the king with one stroke of the sword; he did not have to be born one hundred-thousand times. That was because he had worshipped the Divine Mother. Chanting God's holy name lessens the intensity of *Karmic* effects.

Disciple: If that be so, then the law of Karma is supreme in this world. Then why should one believe God? The Buddhists accept law of Karma but not God.

Mother: Do you mean to say that there are no deities like *Kali*, *Krishna* and *Durga*?

Disciple: Is the effect of Karma destroyed by austerities and *Japam*?

Mother: Why not? It is good to do the right kind of work. One feels good in doing good, and one suffers for evil action....

Disciple: Mother, now and then I see you reading from *Ramayana*. When did you learn to read?

Mother: During my childhood, *Prasanna*, *Ramanath* and others used to go to the village school. I used to accompany them now and then. Thus I learned to read a little. Later on, *Lakshmi* and I used to read the *Bengali primer* a little at *Kamarpukur*. My nephew, *Hridaya*, snatch-

ed the book away from me. He said, "Women should not learn to read and write. Are you preparing yourself thus to read novels and dramas later on?" But *Lakshmi* did not give up the book. She belonged to the family. Therefore she held on to her book. But I also secretly bought a copy for one anna. *Lakshmi* used to attend the village school. On returning home she would teach me. I really learned to read later on at *Dakshineswar*. The Master was staying then at *Shyampukur* for treatment. I was all alone. A girl belonging to the family of *Bhava Mukherjee* used to come to the garden to bathe in the *Ganges*. Now and then she would spend a long while with me. She used to give me lessons and examine me. I used to give her a large quantity of green vegetables and other articles of food-stuff that were sent to me from the garden.

Disciple: Mother, did the Master visit *Jayarambati* frequently or did he go there only once or twice?

Mother: He was there many a time. Sometimes he spent ten or twelve days continuously there. Whenever he went to *Kamarpukur*, he used to visit *Jayarambati*, *Sheore* and other places. At *Sheore* he once fed the cowherd boys.

Disciple: When did this happen? During the period of austerities or later on?

Mother: Later on. He was not himself while practising spiritual disciplines. Had he visited his father-in-law's place then, people would have called him a mad man. When Shiva visited His father-in-law's place, all began to say, "Oh, poor *Uma*! such is your ill luck! You had to be married to an inebriate!" After marriage people used to say many

things about the Master: "A mad son-in-law! What will be the fate of the poor girl?".....

Disciple: Many devotees used to visit the Master. Where are they now? None of them comes to see you.

Mother: Oh, they are all leading happy lives.

Disciple: What, happy!

Mother: You are right. How can a man be happy in this world with his wife and children? They have forgotten themselves in "woman and gold." Everything in the world results in suffering after all.

Disciple: Besides, the mind has outgoing propensities.

Mother: Kali, the Mother of the universe, is the Mother of all. It is She alone who has begotten both good and evil. Everything has come out of Her womb. There are different kinds of perfect souls: those perfect from very birth, those perfect through spiritual disciplines, those perfect through the grace of a teacher and those made perfect all of a sudden.

Disciple: What is the meaning of "made perfect all of a sudden?"

Mother: It is like becoming wealthy suddenly by inheriting the riches of another.

Just then Nalini, Mother's niece, entered the room, after a bath in the Ganges. Finding the closet a little dirty, she washed it with a few pots of water, and hence had to take bath in the Ganges for purification. The disciple and the Mother opined that she need have bathed in the tap alone.

Mother: Indeed, you could as well bathe in the tap water in the house and then touch Ganges water.

Nalini: How is that possible? A water closet!

Mother: What difference does that make? You have not actually

touched filth. What does it matter even if you have? There is filth in our intestines..... I have also walked over dry filth many a time in the country. I chanted the name of Govinda a few times and felt pure. The mind is everything. It is in the mind alone that one feels pure and impure. A man, first of all, makes his own mind guilty, and then alone he can see another man's guilt? It only injures you. This has been my nature from childhood that I cannot see anybody's fault. If a man does a trifle for me, I try to remember him even for that. To see the fault of others! One should never do it. I never do so. Forgiveness is Tapasya (austerity).

Disciple: Swamiji (referring to Swami Vivekananda) used to say, "Suppose a thief entered the house and stole something. The idea of the thief would flash in your mind. But a baby has no such idea. Therefore it would not see anyone as a thief."

Mother: That's true indeed. He who has a pure mind sees everything pure. The mind of this Golap (referring to Golap-ma who had just entered the room) is pure. A certain child committed a nuisance in the temple of Madhava at Brindavan. All talked about it, but no one cared to clean the place. Golap tore off a piece of her new valuable cloth and with it wiped away the filth. The other women whispered to one another, "As she has cleaned the place, it must be her child." I thought within myself, "See, O Madhava, what people are talking!" Some one remarked, "No, she is a holy person. (There were monks like Swami Yogananda in the party). How can you talk of her children? She has removed the filth out of kind-

ness, as it made the temple unclean and caused inconvenience to everybody.

If Golap sees any filth in the Ghat of the Ganges, she procures a rag from somewhere and cleans the place. Then she washes the steps with pots of water. Others are benefited by it. Their happiness makes Golap happy; their peace of mind makes her peaceful.

One is born with a pure mind if he has performed many austerities and spiritual practices in previous birth.

Disciple: Mother, my mind does not relish Japam or spiritual practices.

Mother (smiling): Why? Not at all?

Disciple: Oh, I do a little rather half-heartedly. The next moment I think, what is the use of mumbling? If God exists, then He is: let me rather try meditation.

Mother: Can you meditate?

Disciple: No, I cannot do even that. I understand all; but where do I get peace? You know the road to Dakshineswar very well; but can you walk all the way?

Mother: Japam or the mumbling of a word is the duty of a woman. You have knowledge!

Lalit Babu entered the room and saluted the Mother and they became engaged in conversation, the disciple joining in now and then.

Mother: The Master used to say, "The way is extremely difficult, like the sharp edge of a razor." (After a little pause); but he has kept you in his arms. He is looking after you.

Disciple: But he does not let us know that he is doing so.

Mother: Yes, that's your trouble.

Disciple: Yes, Mother.

Lalit: The Master will take us into his arms after death; is there anything great in that? If he would only do so while we are in this body!

Mother: He is holding you in his arms often in this body. He is above your head. Truly he is holding you.

Disciple: Does he really hold us?

Mother: Yes, it is true.

Disciple: Are you telling the truth?

Mother: Yes, I say it truly that he is holding you tightly.

Disciple: True!

Mother (firmly): Yes, really and truly.

Mother finished the morning worship and distributed Prasadam in *sal* leaves to the devotees. Then she swept the room. As she took the dirt in her hand, a pin entered her little finger. The finger bled and Mother suffered terribly from pain. As soon as the disciple heard about it, he ran upstairs. Someone asked him to apply hot lime. That greatly relieved the pain. The Mother said to him affectionately, "My child, you are my own. Truly you are my very own."

THE REAL AND THE UNREAL

BY Dr. M. HAFIZ SYED, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., L.T.

[Dr. Syed belongs to the Allahabad University. His scholarship is matched by deep culture and broad sympathies. In the following paragraphs he points out how reflection on the real and the unreal is inevitable to the thoughtful, leading as it would to deep ethical and spiritual consequences.—The Editors.]

PLATO said, "Philosophy begins in wonder," and it is wonder that leads to reflection; but how few there are who seriously pause to reflect on what they see around them. The ancient Indian thinkers also laid due emphasis on proper cultivation of this necessary habit of thought. They say that without reflection one cannot possibly learn to discriminate between the real and the unreal. It is reflection that inevitably leads a man on to what is called Vairagya (dispassion or desirelessness) without which no spiritual life is possible.

The majority of people are so much absorbed in living that they do not care to know what life is; and that is why glaring events of life which to a thoughtful man serve as food for serious reflection, do not rouse any thought of wonder or any feeling of bewilderment in them. They take every thing as a matter of course and continue to be engrossed in their petty affairs of life.

One over-conspicuous or obtrusively stern reality of our lives is death that stares us in the face and makes short work of ever so many of us every day, and yet we do not consider our own fate and cheerily go on with our usual business. This attitude of mind shows no little indifference and lack of thought. Men commit so many sins and suffer so much because they look upon this earthly life as the only

reality which as a matter of fact is not truly real but a shadow of an eternal substance. We would certainly cease to do wrong and injury to others for our selfish ends if we learned to keep this changing character of our outer life in view.

We should occasionally remind ourselves how millions of men are daily born in the physical form and die, and how countless numbers of beings must have come and gone in the past from this ever-changing world. We find at the close of our physical existence that the so called prizes of the earth have no intrinsic value or weight in them. The wise, the thoughtful, do not run after shadow.

This kind of serious reflection on the outer happiness of our life will go a long way in detaching us from temporary earthly attractions and creating in our minds a feeling of serenity and balance—a thing so necessary for higher life.

The fact that the outer world with all its attractions and solid-seeming multifarious forms, is after all changing every moment and is, therefore, unreal, could hardly be denied or repudiated. It is so patent that it needs no proof. Any one who is accustomed to thoughtful observation and close reflection needs no argument to carry conviction to him in regard to the transitory nature of this world. There is nothing wrong in

calling a spade a spade. To state a true fact however unpalatable, is not to take a gloomy view of life. To think of the unreality of the world is not futile. It has a moral as well as an utilitarian value.

It is not often that one is confronted with dire misfortune and calamity of various kinds: ill health, loss, penury, failure and discomfort; naturally one is disheartened, forlorn and dejected and finds it hard to bear one's miserable existence placidly. But one who habitually dwells on the passing nature of this mundane world does really put on a brave face and meets his ill luck with equanimity. Whenever he is in sore need and has nothing to fall back upon, instead of breaking his heart, he takes a wise view of his hard lot and begins to remind himself that neither joy nor sorrow lasts for ever. After all, his dark days are as short-lived and momentary as his prosperous ones.

The idea of the unreality of the world, if constantly borne in mind, helps a person to become desireless and care-free. There is no virtue higher than desirelessness. Desire is the root of sin which gives rise in its turn to sorrow and suffering. He who has cultivated dispassion is capable of applying himself to any higher pursuit, because a care-free mind alone can accomplish great things in the intellectual, moral and spiritual realm.

He who has convinced himself that everything earthly is subject to change, decay and death does not allow himself to be attached to any earthly pleasure. He knows that it is momentary and is therefore not worthy of his attention. Thus we see that taking this moving world at

its right value by no means plunges us into what is called a "dark and dreary view of life," but fills us with hopes and cheer and makes us happy and contented.

The unreal hath no being; the real never ceaseth to be; the truth about both hath been perceived by the seers of the essence of things (Tattva).—(*Bhagavad-Gita*, II, 16.)

While analysing the content of the outer world and finding it changing and therefore unreal, the ancient Indian philosophers have unmistakably pointed out to the underlying Reality which is eternally free from change and decay.

We are advised to cultivate discrimination (Viveka), to set our heart on the Real and not feel distressed when the outer form begins to crumble down and die.

This truth is variously explained in some of the *Upanishads* and is summarised in the following lines.

The *Kathopanishad* asks in a thoughtful vein: "What decaying mortal here below would delight in a life of the contemplation of the pleasures of beauty and love, when once he has come to taste of the kind of life enjoyed by the unageing immortals?" (I: 1, 28). In a similar spirit, the *Kathopanishad* condemns "the desire for a long life of sensual enjoyment in preference to even a momentary contemplation of the life immortal." This reflective mood is most expressively brought forth in the *Maitrayani-Upanishad*, where, our attention having been called to the contemplation of the universal evil that exists in the world and the impermanence of things having been most poetically expressed, physical life is described as the source of pain

and misery. "What is the use of the satisfaction of desires," asks Brihadratha, "in this foul-smelling and unsubstantial body? What is the use of the satisfaction of the desires in this body which is afflicted by lust, anger, covetousness, fear, dejection, envy, separation from the desired, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, old age, death, disease, and grief? Verily all this outer world merely decays. What of these? The great oceans dry up, the mountains crumble, the pole-star deviates from its place, the wind-cords are broken, the earth is submerged, and the very gods are dislocated from their positions." Contemplating such a situation, Brihadratha entreates Sakayanya to save him, as one might save a frog from a waterless well. Again in the *Chandokyo Upanishad* we read: "Prājapati said, verily, O Indra, this body is subject to death, but it is at the same time the vesture of an immortal soul. It is only when the Soul is encased in the body, that it is cognisant of pleasure and pain. There is neither pleasure nor pain for the Soul once relieved of its body. Just as the wind and the cloud, the lightning and the thunder, are without body, and arise from heavenly space and appear in their own form, so does this serene being, namely, the Self, arise from this mortal body, reach the highest light, and then appear in his own form. This Serene Being, who appears in his own form is the highest Person." There is here an indication of the true nature of ultimate reality as being of the nature of Self-consciousness. That which sees itself by itself in the light of supreme knowledge—that must be regarded as the final reality. "The final reality, there-

fore, according to the *Chandogya Upanishad*, is reached in that ecstatic, Self-seeing state in which the Self is conscious of nothing but itself."

"Greater reality than the reality of the world of illusion belongs to the world of dream; greater reality than the reality of the world of dream belongs to the world of life; greater reality than the world of life belongs to the world of the Self, or God, or the Absolute, which are all ultimately identical with one another. Every system of philosophy must needs take account of some sort of appearance."

It will be interesting for us to remember that Kant, too, while strongly inveighing against the Dogmatism and Scepticism of his times, by a thoroughgoing critical analysis of Reason came to the independent conclusion that the world, qualified as it is by Time, Space, and Causality, has no metaphysical reality, but none the less is an appearance i.e., is empirically real.¹

That the only true existence is that of Brahman, the absolute, that Brahman is identical with the Atman and that the universe is Maya, illusion, having only a phenomenal or relative existence, are accepted in the main by most of the ancient Indian philosophers. But some later thinkers have taken a different view. Vallabha, for instance, goes as far as to say that the whole world is real and is subtly Brahman.²

The world is therefore as eternal and real as Brahman Himself and its creation and destruction are due to the power (Sakti) of Brahman.

¹ Doctrine of Maya p. 116.

² *History of Indian Philosophy* by S. Radhakrishnan, Vol. II. p. 756.

The world cannot be regarded as an illusory appearance, nor is it essentially different from Brahman. The relation of Cause and Effect is one of absolute identity. The universe in truth is Brahman. Brahman manifests himself of his own will, as the individual souls and the world, without undergoing any change in his essential nature. He is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. The charges of partiality and cruelty cannot be urged against Brahman, since the difference of the Jivas from Brahman is admitted by Vallabha. He holds that the Jiva, freed from the fetters of Maya, is one with Brahman.³

The world of Maya is not regarded as unreal, since Maya is nothing else than a power which Isvara of his free

will produces. The world is true though our experience is wrong. We do not realise that the world is but a form of Brahman.⁴

The fact that everything external is a mere appearance, and the reality lies only in spirit, is corroborated by Prof. F. H. Bradley, the author of *Appearance and Reality*, in these words: "Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality and the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real." The essential message of Hegel was also to the same effect.

"The true life," says Fichte, "lives in the eternal. It is a whole in every instant, the highest life which is possible at all. The phantom life lives in the changing. The phantom life therefore becomes an incessant dying; it lives in dying."

³ *History of Indian Philosophy* by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 758.

⁴ Ibid p. 759.

A PILGRIMAGE TO ASSISI

BY SWAMI SIDDHESWARANANDA

[The following is an abridgement of a news letter from Paris by Swami Siddheswarananda. The Swami is the leader of the Vedanta centre in Paris. The letter was written before the outbreak of the war.—The Editors.]

This time my news letter relates to my recent visit to Florence, where I had a long-standing invitation from some kind friends. It was a journey of about twenty hours from Paris, and I had a very pleasant experience of it as my kind hosts, the R—— family, had provided me with pullman comforts in the train. My chief idea in undertaking this journey was to go on a pilgrimage to Assisi and Siena and to see the great works of art of the period of Italian Renaissance.....

The first two days of my stay were taken up with seeing the objects of cultural interest in Florence. The place is associated with the long-drawn struggle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, and was the scene of many a tragic outbreak of Florentine passion,—of the historic execution of Savonarola who was confined to its towers.... Of the numerous buildings and castles of great historical interest and of the many sculptures and paintings of world-wide renown, like those of Michael Angelo,

Raphael, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Angelico, I shall not give any account here, but go straight to my visit to Assisi.

Leaving Florence one noon, after a three-and-a-half hours' travel by train, we arrived at Assisi, the place associated with St. Francis. The Umbrian hill town is some four miles from the station. We took a taxi and came and pitched our camp in a fine hotel—Hotel Subasic, and taking our evening tea, we all immediately began our pilgrimage.

It has been a long hope of mine to see places consecrated by the life and deeds of St. Francis and St. Clare, the two illustrious names associated with Catholic mysticism that have become by-words to express the best and deepest in the religion of Christ—reproductions of the life of the Saviour for a posterity that required a re-manifestation of his life. One cannot agree with the words of Nietzsche that there was only one Christian and he died on the cross. There have been many real Christians that lived the life of Him who died on the cross, and there are still some who aspire to express what Lord Jesus conceived as the best and the noblest end of man. Christianity is alive not because of her cathedrals and her church dignitaries. It lives and shapes civilisation because it is, and has been, a living force in history, considered as the descent of the Divine on this poor earth torn by the incapacity of man to realise his full candidature to Divinity and to arrive at a real conception of humanity as a pathway leading to this goal. Christ came to show the light to reach the truly human which is the real Divine. His standard is kept up by the aspirations of His devotees

drawn from all ages and all climes. They are the salt of the earth and if we should look at Western civilisation, we must see the under-current of their lives—that subsoil from which has sprouted all that is best and great in the West. For the present we are in an impasse. Earth is sick and heaven is weary when statesmen and generals talk of peace and goodwill among nations. As Wordsworth has sung, "Oh Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour, England hath need of thee." Not only England but the whole of Europe is a fen of stagnant waters that breed the worst form of life that threatens the very basis of civilisation. But one should not judge the movement of life from one isolated segment in Time—the present. And the hope of the future, as Sri Ramakrishna has pointed out, is only in Man becoming endowed with spiritual awareness.

The life and teachings of St. Francis is a re-vindication of this hope; in him we see a mysticism that is not barely 'introverti' but having an application in this wide suffering world of ours. He identified himself with the human and the sub-human world and reached heights of consciousness that make us see in him some approach to the life of Sri Ramanakrishna. I hope some of you have read the beautiful book written by Sister Devamata on Sri Ramakrishna and St. Francis.

Assisi, one can definitely say, is the Melkote (the famous Vaishnavite temple of Mysore) of Europe. If one can just eliminate the geographical differences and the dress and the nature of the buildings; if one can touch the undercurrent that is so visible for one who can become a bit sensitive; one gets the same waft of holiness, the

same soft touch, the same blessings from one whose heart beats for the poor, and who rained spirituality on all who approached or came within the orbit of his influence. Sri Ramanuja and St. Francis lived almost at the same time. They are the same spirit in twin bodies only. I could forget all the Western costumes I was in and feel myself roaming on the slopes of Tirunarayanapuram. The Christian devotees that came with me—one an Italian and the other two Americans—brought forth to my mind the episodes of the great lives of St. Francis and St. Clare in the same manner.

Every corner in Assisi preserves the atmosphere in which St. Francis and St. Clare left it. The evening gleam of the setting sun was sleeping like an iridescent spread of pollen—to use an imagery from Thomas Hardy—on the slopes of the Umbrian Hills when we descended first to visit the sanctuary of San Damiano, so full of the memories of St. Clare and St. Francis. The little church belonged to the Benedictines. The church which was in a dilapidated condition was restored by St. Francis in 1207 after he had heard the holy voice before the crucifix bidding him, "Francis, seest thou not that my house is being destroyed? Go therefore and repair it for me." How reminiscent of many incidents of the life of Sri Ramanuja, who heard the voice of God and worked only on that impulse! St. Francis consecrated that monastery to St. Clare and her companions. This was the beginning of the second order of St. Francis known as the Poor Clares. Here she lived for forty-two years till her death in 1253. The convent is the same and a monk took us round and showed all places of interest. We saw the place where St. Francis composed his

famous Canticle to the sun. We saw many relics of St. Clare, her dress, cords attached to her dress, etc. Here, on the place where the crucifix spoke to St. Francis, lies a beautiful motto of St. Francis: *Not the voice but the vow, not clamour but love, not stringed instruments but heart-sounds in the ear of God. The tongue concords with the mind and the mind with God.* In the Refectory stands the same cupboard and door, the very place she occupied at table, marked by a small cross on its surface. Here she blessed the loaves of bread for the community that lived on very frugal rations. In another place they showed us the place where the Saracen army came to attack the convent. Near the ancient door of the convent St. Clare showed to the army of heathens the blessed Sacrament, and such was the power of the Sacrament that the Saracen army got frightened and was put to flight. The same stories we find in many of the pilgrim centres in India. We know many stories of the army of Tippu Sultan checked in its course by the power of this Devi temple or that. The Indian mind could immediately form parallels, and say with the monk who showed us round "Oui, mon pere, c'est n'est pas impossible (Yes, Father, yes, that is not impossible)."

In the chapel of the crucifix there is an excellent piece of wood statue of Christ on the cross, by Bro. Innocent of Palmero (1634). The monk asked us to see it from the middle, and then from the right, and then from the left. Remarkable are the three different aspects of the crucifix, calmness, agony and death. It is so interesting to study this work of art executed purposely to show on the same figure from two different views,

two contradictory expressions of calmness and agony. That figure intrigued me so much and lives still in my mind.

Next we wended our way to another suburb of Assisi, the place whereto St. Francis often returned when he wanted to acquire new force to fulfil his mission. The place is called St. Mary of the Angels. This solitary place pleased St. Francis from the early days of his conversion. Here he formed the order of the Minors to put in action the great idea of evangelising the whole world. Here embraced St. Francis and St. Dominic, a fine representation of which is so beautifully portrayed by the great monk artist Fra Angelico (a copy of which I keep in my room in Paris). Here St. Clare was shorn off her locks by St. Francis as a sign of her renunciation of the world, and here it was, feeling his end coming, St. Francis wished to be laid on the bare ground of the little cell,—there to die surrounded by his brethren, "whilst a flock of nightingales sang his requiem in the near fields." There has now come over this little village chapel, so reminiscent of the times of St. Francis, a huge construction enclosing it. It was begun in 1569 and finished in 1840. These modern forms of architecture looks so banal and useless. It takes away the atmosphere and my friends asked me to look into that Franciscan chapel, as if through a blinker, and never to let attention revert on any of the superimposed forms—the Basilica and its ultra-modern facades. We stayed in the Franciscan chapel for more than two hours. We attended the evening 'office.' There were so many monks assembled along with the laity. I spent also a good time meditating on

the spot where St. Francis passed away.

As we got out of this peaceful place, from the memory of one that rained peace on earth, we dropped into the front yard of the church to see how modern nationalism is fostered. There a village captain of a Fascist team was training a young batch of child Fascists into the arts of warfare. The children were hardly seven or eight, but with little guns in hands and with drums and athletics, they were having a parade. A child from three is trained into the Fascist mode of thought and living. A child of three gets particular kind of badge, at another stage of life he gets another badge and so on until he becomes a full-fledged 'Camice-nere' or Black Shirt.

With the break of the morning we were on our way to Basilica and the convent of St. Francis. The construction of this was begun during the days, perhaps, of St. Francis, but it took a long time to be completed. Everyone knows that the remains of the Saint were confined in this church, but none could exactly spot it out. It was in 1820 the subterranean crypt was excavated round the rock that contains the remains of St. Francis. We spent a long time before the tomb. Mass was being said at the time we were there. Then we saw round the whole church where on the walls are seen fine frescoes. One of the English-speaking monks came to our assistance in seeing round the church. He showed the relics of the Saint: The stone pillow he used, his slippers and his clock. The West has so much historic sense in this line; one sees so many things that the saint actually used in life. That cloak which he used, torn in a number

of places, brought forth tears in our eyes; there is such a simplicity working through it that one feels almost the saint in it. Then we saw the number of pieces of cotton that were used to sponge blood that used to come out of the stigmata every now and then—the hand-writing of the saint and so many other things associated with his life. The monk took us round the courtyard of the convent. There it is all peace. In the middle of the courtyard there is a beautiful statue of the saint surrounded by tall poplars. There we heard one nightingale singing. The monk told us that that bird had lived in a cage in one of the cells of the monks who released it to the freer air of the courtyard. She sang so much at night that the whole brotherhood was disturbed by its chants. Now it lives on the poplars and sings night and day alike! On the verandah of the courtyard I had a long talk with the monk. I gave him an account of Sri Ramakrishna and he spoke to me of St. Francis. And when we parted we had become friends. I told him that every year, if circumstances would permit, I shall come to Assisi and next time I shall live as a guest in their monastery. Assisi is the only place so far I have met in Europe that gives one a complete Indian atmosphere. Here as in Melkote and Benares we meet with people to whom God alone is real and everything else unreal.

Taking a hurried meal, we were again on our way to see the spot where St. Francis lived most. It is the 'Carceri,' high up in the mountains. We took horse carriages. 'Carceri' in modern Italian means a prison; but in the time of St. Francis it indicated a remote place away from the habitations of men. Here in the hermi-

tage St. Francis at times retired to pray and meditate. The woods here were also the cells where the first companions of the saint lived. One or two monks stay up here and the atmosphere is so fine that I didn't want to leave it. Coming down we took a taxi and wanted to see some portion of the city of Perugia. This Etruscan city and Assisi have made history by their constant wars. It is some ten miles from Assisi. It is a very modern city, with a university which has a reputation to grant cheap degrees to all who go there. Everywhere we saw only Fascist demonstrations. We took train from Perugia after dinner and came to Florence by midnight.

After taking a day's rest, we were again on our way to Siena, the place of Sainte Catherine. The place did not at all produce any deep impression in my mind; perhaps the priest who showed us round is responsible for it; he spoke with such a tone in his voice that made us believe that he had not even that reverence which the devotees have for that place. We came then to a church to see some fine paintings of the great painter Sodoma. On our way to the Museum that had some other paintings, my interest was drawn to another grand Fascist demonstration. There must have been there at least a thousand young men and women. They were having their drill.

Next day, taking advantage of the nice morning, we went to see the monastery of San Marco, which is a perfect museum of the works of Fra Angelico who passed years of his life within walls. It was erected between 1437 and 1443. During the time of Cosimo, when the architect Michelozzo worked in improving it, Fra

Angelico decorated the walls with these incomparable fresco paintings. From 1490 to 1498 San Marco was also the home of the Dominican preacher, Savonarola. In every cell occupied by the then monks, one finds some biblical event portrayed by Fra Angelico. The same spirit that dominated the Buddhist monks that made Ajanta a work of art pervaded the whole monastery of San Marco. The religious spirit everywhere is the same and very often manifests the same impulse to capture it in stone and verse all over the world. Where would have been art if it had not been for the inspiration of religion? And those who decry the religious spirit do not know that the world would have been very much poorer if humanity had not been endowed with that noble impulse that binds the soul of man with the spirit of God, as the very word religion indicates. There is a tendency to decry the monastic spirit in some sections of our educated community in India and elsewhere. But how many know that the leading movements in the world that have made life human have been initiated by monks, who became the votaries of Truth that took them not only to the pedestal of the Divine but made the earth their footstool. "Atmano mokshaya Jagadhitaya" was not said in vain.....

Before concluding this letter I shall also refer to an interesting interview I had with one Signore F—— who came to meet me at ten o'clock at night and remained till two in the morning, the whole R—— family being present during the conversation. It was partly humorous and partly serious. Signore F—— is an ardent Catholic and he came to silence me.

He sat in a nonchalant way on a sofa and asked me: "Sir, have you sacrament and communion in your religion?"

I knew that he held the belief that without that aspect of Catholic Christianity, no one can get salvation. I wanted to answer him from his level and so said: "Surely, how can one get salvation without Holy Sacrament? We have our Ganges and sacred *prasads* like Puri *mahaprasad* which we consider as our sacrament." "What is your conception of Sacrament?" he asked me adding, "Do you believe the presence of God in the bread and wine like us Catholics?"

"Much more," I said. "You have to invoke the presence of Christ in bread and wine, but to us the Ganges water is the veritable Brahman, God; so also Puri *mahaprasadam* and the dust of Brindavan (explaining what all these meant). I accept your position that God comes to you through sacrament; but I shall sit up the whole night if you can prove that God is not in my Ganges—the burden of proving the opposite is with you."

"Impossible," he replied, and then with a look of surprise he asked me, "how can river water, a grain of rice, and some dust be God?"

"What is your conception of God, monsieur?" I asked. He could only mumble. I had to tell that he had a Judaic conception, the whole basis of his religious thinking being Judaic. We have our conception of God, the Chinese have their conception of God, the Eskimoes have their conception of God and so on and so forth.

"But," he said, "they are not true." "Who told you?" I asked. "It is so," he said. "We know it to be so." I had to be a bit sneering

and asked him, "Were you present when God made the decision that only the Judaic conception is true." I then spoke to him about the idea of truth from the point of view of comparative religion. The Catholic idea that they alone possess the Truth is childish faith which it is inutile for serious minds to engage with; but it is necessary in the interests of world peace to have a broader idea of Truth. I explained among others Swami Vivekananda's imagery of photographing the sun, and the different approaches one makes in the endeavour to comprehend this innate urge to know Truth from the standpoint to which one is most fitted.

After a long sigh my friend remarked, "It is difficult to contradict you; but I must say the Western training we have got prohibits us from accepting your position. We cannot give up the idea we alone possess Truth; our civilisation is built on that; if your viewpoint becomes accepted, the whole basis of our civilisation will have to change." I totally agreed with him and said, "Yes, in your way of understanding Truth, 'yes' and 'no' are two different, absolutely opposing units. But according to us, in this relative world there cannot be absolute contradiction. Contradiction is also a relative point of view. You have applied in your attitude in social, economic and political fields the reflex of your religious moods; that is why you have so much violence in Europe and you have not been able to absorb the benefits of science. The only country in Europe that could boast of bringing civilisation to another country without violence is Denmark."

It was late when we went to bed. The next day I had a long talk with another pious Catholic lady who was from the beginning afraid of approaching me, but hearing me narrate the veneration Sri Ramakrishna had for Jesus, and his realisation of him, she became friendly and spent a long time with me. She presented me with nice books, and came to see me off at the station. The train left at noon, and just before the engine steamed out, one of the young R——s ran with a toy cage towards my compartment and handed it over to me telling, "Swami, don't go alone. There is a small living cricket in it which will give you company." As the train sped on, the cricket began its music, but the car pain I contracted on the way made it impossible for me to appreciate it. Coming home I released the poor insect into the woods. The next day I received a nice letter from R—— of whom I spoke in the beginning of this letter. In course of the letter I read:—

"This afternoon A—— came for tea and has just left me. I read to her of Swami Brahmananda's vision of Christ in the book of Devamata you gave me. It went straight to her heart and oh! what joy it was for me to read it. I told her of other incidents in Ramakrishna's life and found that those stories can touch her more than anything and open new channels for understanding other people's thoughts. I told her of Ramakrishna's prayer 'Oh Mother, another day is gone, etc.' She was visibly moved and understands my love for Him. I felt in the end a missionary for Ramakrishna. Why is that we are so blessed in coming into contact with Him, and others are still so ignorant

of His presence? I really feel that if I did nothing else but give thanks for all He has given us, then my life would not be in vain. Something seems to stir so in me when I enter my room and see his photograph."

TRUTH TO HIGHER TRUTH

BY SWAMI NISREYASANANDA

[The philosophical position of the Mandukyakarika will be explained from a new standpoint in this and some of the ensuing issues of *The Vedanta Kesari*.—The Editors.]

GAUDAPADA'S Karikas on Mandukyopanishad and Sankara's commentary on them form a profitable study, provided we safeguard ourselves against certain pitfalls. When properly understood, they give us philosophical Truth. This Truth is neither Indian nor European, though Indian seers have realised It and preached It more than others. Like the truths of physics, philosophic Truth is not the peculiar monopoly of any race or religious group.

Philosophy embraces all fields of human activity, separately covered by the different sciences. Thus physics, chemistry, biology, sociology, psychology, economics and other fields of study come under its scheme of co-ordination. Religion is no exception. The field of Religion covers man's relations with the Supreme Being, the Creator of the universe. Since no special form of religion is meant here, we describe it as the field whose chief features include teachings mostly based on the revealed scriptures, theological explanations, scholastic interpretations and mystic practices. These practices range from rituals and prayers to different Yogic exercises, leading to visions and at the highest Nirvikalpa Samadhi. If any one field alone is accepted as the sole factor in deciding the Highest Truth, we

shall have only a caricature of Life. It will be like indefinitely prolonging the note "Ni," the highest in any octave, and calling the result music! To avoid this defect of partial presentation of Truth, philosophy builds its edifice by using the valid conclusions of all fields, including religion, as its own starting point. Philosophic wisdom, thus, can never contradict religion or any other field. On the other hand it does the supreme service of lifting its votary to a level of harmony, from which every field of enquiry is realised as contributing its own quota of "relative truth." For purposes of study we may isolate the various fields; but philosophic wisdom must remove all sense of contradiction. The philosopher does not rise from error to Truth, but as Swami Vivekananda pointed out, from truth to higher truth.

Gaudapada's Karikas are valuable since they include the experiences of dream and deep sleep to supplement the bare waking standpoint usually covered by philosophers. We may wonder whether a philosophy built upon dream and sleep can teach anything better than to dream or sleep. But we shall find that this suspicion is childish if we embark upon its study with an open mind and sharpened power of reasoning. The common

pitfalls for a teacher or a student of the Karikas centre round the meanings given to terms like religion, Yoga, unreal, reasoning, creation, knowledge and so on. We shall take up a few of these in this article.

RELIGION

First in order comes 'religion'. In Sanskrit it has no exact equivalent. Neither has English any exact equivalent for Dharma or Darsana. There are also no separate Sanskrit words to denote the English classification into theology, mysticism or scholasticism, which we in India often mistake for philosophy. We fail to keep in mind these handicaps when trying to express Indian ideas through a language which requires precision of this nature.

Vedas and their commentaries contain a good deal of material presented in a theological, mystic or scholastic manner. When the Mundaka Upanishad begins with the statement that Brahma became the first of the gods, it is pure theology. When Vedanta Sutras start the enquiry into Brahman "from which the creation etc., of the universe proceed," there is not much deviation made from theology. For the position that the world has been created by some one stands outside the field of enquiry still. Philosophy, however, must question all assumptions or *Avidya*, whether they stand or fall as a result of honest enquiry. It aims at their opposite, namely certainty, knowledge, *Vidya* or Jnana. But certain Upanishadic and other texts present things in a purely philosophic manner. The Mandukya Karikas come under this category. They question the reality of causation or creation as well.

One need not get upset by this registering of any manner of presentation as theological; for no contempt or irreverence is meant. The Karikas too cover the position taken by the Vedanta Sutras. But they make a substantial difference by adding one more perspective. The result is a more complete harmony. Theological and mystic positions are not contradicted or thrown away as useless. They are valued as "means for helping knowledge." Religious practice,—most, or the whole, of which is Yoga from the standpoint of Patanjali's Sutras or Bhagavad Gita—leads to God-vision or various Samadhis.

Why should not visions of Vishnu, Siva or Kali, or the attainment of Samadhi be given the place of the Highest Truth? The following is the reply from the philosophic standpoint.

LIMITATIONS OF WORDS AND THOUGHT

Words are useful for calling up ideas in the mind. In the case of ideas occurring frequently in daily life,—e.g., ideas about objects like a table or about actions like walking—words attain almost complete success. But when one has to convey to another ideas relating to aspects of mind-control, they become less and less efficient. The difficulty has been enhanced by the fact that different schools of thought have used identical words in different senses. Religion, Yoga, reasoning and other words mentioned above fall within this group. Wise men have from times immemorial realised this inherent defect of words in the field of religion or philosophy. They have therefore warned us against taking them in too

literal a sense. "Unattainable by words," "That from which words recoil along with mind" are expressions often met with in Sanskrit works. To prevent too prosaic a meaning from being accepted, many sages have expressed their ideas through poetry, employing various figures of speech and even parables. Who does not remember the Upanishadic attempt to correct our ideas of "creation of the world" by using a series of similes, one neutralising the defects of another? Who does not also remember how Jesus often wound up his parables with the pregnant remark, "Those that have ears, let them hear!" Even when the greatest sages, with such precautions, teach the disciples¹ who live with them day and night, only a few of the hearers properly understand, some even wrongly understand, while others fail to understand anything at all. As often as we read or hear words, then, we must, as we advance in spiritual life, avoid giving them too literal a sense. We must step behind name and form, Nama-rupa as the Upanishads call it, and "grasp" the meaning intended.

Vishnu, Siva and other forms are aspects of Divinity perceived by the aspirant when certain conditions are fulfilled. Mystics in all ages have had diverse experiences of this kind. It is not a sign of wisdom to thrust aside these valid experiences and call them impossibilities or worthless illusions. There is a law by which hopes and eager expectations of a duly con-

¹ लोके अपि एकस्माद् गुरोः शृण्वतां कश्चिद्यथाव-
त्प्रतिपद्यते, कश्चिदयथावत् कश्चिद्विपरीतं, कश्चि-
त्प्रतिपद्यते । (Kena II. Sankara's
Commentary.)

trolled aspirant can 'condense,' as it were the Divine into a Presence as "tangible" as the objects of our waking condition now. The religious teacher, if competent, can also impress the disciple² with any such Personal or Impersonal aspect, so that the latter can realise that same aspect as true wherever his perception alights. Every day, without consulting our tastes or opinions, our physical growth is managed or a world of dreams is spread out before our perception. A certain "creative" power accomplishes this. When refined and regulated, this same power makes visions possible. From the philosophical position, Mandukya Karikas fully accept this truth. About eleven Karikas (II: 19-29) deal with this topic. We are told that those competent aspirants who accept Reality as Prana,—being impressed that way by the teacher—do realise It as Prana, while those who consider It as Loka, Veda, Creation or any nameable "entity" realise It in a corresponding manner.

Usually teachers or aspirants cling to an aspect or two among these possibilities. Hence such people, if they have no philosophical outlook, become responsible for separate cults, each accepting its own experiences as the only valid ones and condemning those of others as "illusions." This has also resulted in quarrels between religions, in mutual vilifications and in the mania for proselytisation. This does not mean that religions have not done their duty or that the sages and

² य भावं दर्शयेद्यस्य तं भावं स तु परयति
तं चावति भुत्वासौ तद्ब्रह्मः समुपैति तम् ॥ Man-
dukya Karikas II, 29. See also
commentary by Sankara

teachers specialised in mutual contradictions. Religions are valid paths leading to certain realisations to this day, if any one cares sincerely to practise them. It is we, the unwary students of the sages, who take their descriptions in too literal a manner and stress the distinctions of name and form in place of the Principle, which cannot be adequately described. Philosophy, from a higher standpoint, admits the truth of all these experiences. The sages "knew" the Highest Reality which is beyond thought and speech. But when they tried to communicate their experience to others, each teacher selected words current in the society at the time. We of a latter time fail to see the limitations of words. Often too, owing to our strong likes and dislikes, we behave like Virochana of the Chandogya Upanishad and pervert the meanings to suit our uncontrolled ways. To say that religion or the sages have created quarrels is thus an unjust accusation. If we rise to philosophical heights ourselves, we shall find that they all tried to express the same Truth.

In modern days Sri Ramakrishna was one of the unique men who prac-

tised the disciplines laid down by a number of cults. Throwing himself heart and soul into any practice he took up, he was able to realise the Truth through each of them. He saw that Rama could be realised as Kausalya or Hanuman saw him, or Krishna as Radha saw him, or Jesus as his disciples saw him. He also entered into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Enriched by these first-hand experiences, a true philosopher as he was, he could teach, as no other, that all paths lead to the same Goal, which by itself is beyond all human specifications. God, according to him, is the only "Entity" not made impure by being spat out in the shape of words. All Divine Forms and even the Formless are valid experiences attainable by aspirants of different temperaments in accordance with the intensity and suitability of their practice. All this is fully in keeping with Mandukya Karika position. We have only to add that the Highest Truth, if beyond these truths of religion and mysticism, is simultaneously beyond the scope of names and forms as well. It is, in this sense, Silence.

GOOD AND BAD: HOW TO TRANSCEND THEM?

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

[These are the notes of the class-talks given by the Swami to a group of spiritual aspirants at Wiesbaden, Germany, in December 1933.—The Editors.]

I

Devotee: Why is it that evil thoughts arise in the mind?

Sri Ramakrishna: In His world we find such a diversity. He has made good men and He has also made bad men. Some He gives good tendencies and others, bad tendencies.

Devotee: Then we are not responsible for our sins?

Sri Ramakrishna: You must remember that this is also God's law that if you commit sin you must take the consequence. If you take chillies do you not feel the burning sensation? Mathur Babu, during his youth, did many bad and impure

things, and therefore before the time of his death he suffered from many ailments. During the time of one's youth one cannot reap all the consequences of one's impure deeds.

Devotee: Sir, why has He created evil men?

Sri Ramakrishna: His will. His play. In His Maya we see both, good and evil. There is need for darkness too, so that the glory of the light shall manifest all the more. He has given us lust, anger, greed, all these bad things. But why? So that He may make great men out of us. If one controls one's senses, one becomes great. And what cannot the man of sense-control achieve! Through the Lord's grace he comes to have even Divine realization! The Lord has made all sorts of things, good and bad. There are good trees and poisonous trees. There are weeds too. Among animals also we find some are good and some are bad,—the tiger, the lion, the snake and all these!

—From *Kathamrita*.

In the answers given above to the questions of the devotee Sri Ramakrishna hints at the truth that it is not possible to find a satisfactory explanation for good and evil, so long as we remain on the phenomenal plain—the plain of gross and subtle manifestation. But it is possible to transcend them both, to go beyond both good and evil and beyond the whole domain of manifestation and reach Truth as It is. No man who does not lead a perfectly pure life in body and in thought can even reach such a state. Without strict discipline and sense-control in every respect, the problem of good and evil and their why and wherefore can never be solved; and we just go on groping about in the dark, helpless, growing more and more bewildered by what life brings us. That is why Buddha never wished to give any metaphysical explanations

about God etc., to his disciples. The impure mind can never grasp any Truth about the Divine, so it is useless to tell impure minds the truth which they cannot grasp. Without previous purification all such discussions are useless and waste of time. Buddha said, "When the house is on fire, do you first inquire into the origin of that fire or do you run and extinguish it first?" Our task is to get out of this whirlpool somehow or other, and not to go into deep metaphysical speculations about the Ultimate Truth and the reason of good and evil. Both are there. So we have to face them, whether we know their reason or not, and the only way of facing them is to transcend both good and evil and reach a state where both are not. Empty discussions about good and evil and why God created them are useless and lead nowhere. This Sri Ramakrishna has shown again and again, and we should try to realize Truth, not to discuss problems belonging to the phenomenal plain or to raise wonderful philosophic structures which, after all, do not mean anything as they do not transform our lives.

II

There is a time when good and evil exist for the spiritual man, and there is a time when both good and evil no longer exist in any form; but there can never be a time when good alone exists. You cannot just take one side of a pair of opposites and refuse to take the other also. So long as you try to do this, you will never find a satisfactory solution.

To the extent we are pure, we feel peace. To the extent we are selfless, we feel an expansion of the soul. To

the extent we are truly dispassionate and non-attached, we become free. To-day our task is to drive the good thought deep into the mind, so that the whole mind may become coloured by it. The whole difficulty for the beginner is to colour the whole mind with the Divine idea.

Really speaking, it is the Divine in us that makes us pray. It is the first cause of our prayer and of our turning to It. Our true Self is eternally within us and we follow Its promptings when we begin to pray sincerely and intensely. It is not that we choose to pray. And the Divine we pray to are we ourselves, i.e., that which is the Self in us, not any of the Upadhis (the limiting adjuncts)—nothing that belongs to the body or the mind.

There is such a thing as evolution of matter, but there is no such thing absolutely as the evolution of the spirit. "Of that being which is ever unborn, birth is predicated by some; but it is impossible that the unborn and the immortal could ever partake of the mortal. The immortal does not become mortal, or vice versa: for in no way is it possible that a thing can be changed into something quite the opposite." (*Gaudapada*.) There is no such thing as evolution seen from the standpoint of the Self. Evolution belongs to the relative plain of Maya alone. I do not evolve into my own eternal Self. It is there all the time. It neither undergoes evolution nor involution. It imagines Itself to do this; but It never actually does. You are always the witness of your own actions and of your own mentation.

Make the body finer, make the mind finer, make the heart more non-attached and pure. Practise strict, unbroken

continence in deed and in thought. Avoid all association with worldly-minded people, then you build up a better mental body which will be a great help to you in your spiritual struggle. Company, association, plays a great part. Never associate freely with persons of the other sex, even if they seem to be pure. If you do, there will never be any progress for you, nor will you ever be able to eliminate and efface old impure impressions. Then everything just becomes a vicious circle and nothing more. So be constantly on your guard.

III

The body has to be made rhythmic, the mind has to be made rhythmic. The building up of a purer mind is the most difficult task in spiritual life. Stress Brahmacharya (continence) constantly. Lead a perfectly pure life; avoid all association with the other sex; even in thought. Be very careful about your company, even about that of your own sex, because a person of your own sex who does not lead a pure life or mixes with immoral people brings their subtle vibrations also to you; and these always affect your mind. May be you are not yet sensitive enough to feel this, but subconsciously they always do. Never believe you can progress if you are not on your guard. We need continence in thought, word and deed to make this body and mind very subtle and sensitive instruments of the Self. We must make them cleaner and cleaner, so that they can give better reflections of the Truth. Your whole nerve-current must change. It must be made to flow upward. Your body must change. Your mind must change. It is not an easy task at all.

Some may tell you that Brahmacharya (continence) is harmful to the body. All that is nonsense. The Western world has become so nervous through incontinence. Everywhere you come across these nervous wrecks, men and women, and they have not become so by leading too pure a life. In the case of a person who leads a perfectly pure life, the nerves become much stronger. If you lead a very chaste life, you build up an exceptionally strong body. The purer you become mentally, the purer you become physically also. To the extent we lead a purer life, that finds its expression in the face too. You can always tell what kind of life a person is leading by studying his face, once you have developed the capacity of reading it. Continence must be very much stressed. It removes all the base fibres from the face. Mentally you feel perfectly fresh and elastic. Mentally you feel young if you are continent. Here you see so many people who have a lewd look on their faces. Sometimes they hurt me when I pass them in the street. There is such a lot of sexual perversity in all these faces. You can tell at a distance. The person leading a pure life always has a look of straightforwardness and simplicity, a great personal charm of a very special kind. Purity is the very root of all forms of spiritual life, and with the higher thought purity becomes easy.

Mind tends to go to the plain of sex, and if you have the sex-impulse without being able to raise the centre of your consciousness effectively, you will never be able to resist it in the long run. That is why I am warning you so much about company. It will take time till you can efface all the

old impure impressions, all the dirt and filth you have allowed to accumulate in the mind, and you will never be able to see the end of this cleaning process if you are not careful in the company you choose to keep. There must be no awakening of old memories through associating with people. Change the nerve-current at once, the moment you feel any sexual temptation, and do not allow yourself to be in the company of persons belonging to the other sex, no matter whether they be pure or not. This you will have to do for some time to come. It is difficult to erase old impure impressions, but it has to be done, if such impure impressions have been taken in through leading a careless life.

The best way to disarm woman is by looking upon her as Mother, never by hating her. See Mother in her, but salute her from a safe distance. Never rely on your own strength at present. It will fail you. Never allow old memories to come up and tempt you by meeting people who may rouse them in you. You cannot be careful enough in all this if you really want to progress. Be very dignified in your behaviour to women as well as men; and make all women understand once for all, that they will not be allowed to look upon you as a man, that you will not suffer them to approach you in any other light except in the light of a sexless spiritual entity. If you allow women to become free or familiar with you, your foot will slip sooner or later. You cannot take any risk so long as the old impressions in your mind are not completely effaced. I have seen a good number of aspirants in India who came to grief through sheer careless-

ness on this point. There are many who cannot appreciate the necessity of these prescriptions, but you can believe me. I have seen many people, many different types and characters, and I had to study them all very minutely if I wanted to help them.

There are many who cannot grasp the necessity of sex-purity in spiritual life; but without sex-purity in its three aspects, thought, word and deed, there can be no spiritual life at all. All those who have been leading a really spiritual life know all this from their own experience. It is not just mere words. Avoid the other sex as much as possible for a long time to come. There are many old impure impressions to erase in your mind.

Never underrate the value of what I am telling you now. The beginner should never dare to give the enemy a frontal attack, and during your Sadhana you will find what an amount of trouble these old impressions are going to create for you. So always be on your guard and do not rely on your own strength so long as traces of the old impure impressions are still left and so long as there are still sensual desires in you.

IV

Sri Ramakrishna: On seeing the attitude of a child (in the devotee regarding women) the Divine Maya hides Herself from one's path out of the sheer sense of shame.

Devotee: Sir, why have you given up the world? The Scriptures speak of the householder's life as the greatest.*

Sri Ramakrishna: I do not know much of what is good or what is bad. I do

* Here Sri Ramakrishna just avoids giving an answer to the worldly-minded person for whom real instruction would have been valueless.

whatever the Lord makes me do. I say whatever He makes me say.

Devotee: If all people give up the world that would be going against the will of the Lord.

Sri Ramakrishna: Why should all people give up, and again is it the Lord's will that all should get themselves merged in the enjoyment of Woman and Gold, and lead the lives of cats and dogs? Have you known what He wills and what He does not? You say, His will is to lead a family-life. When the wife dies, why don't you see there also the will of the Lord? When you starve, when there is illness and poverty and faithlessness, why don't you see there too the will of the Lord?

It is owing to Maya that you do not know the Lord's will, and it is due to His Maya that the unreal appears to you to be real and the real unreal. The world is constantly changing. Now it is and then it ceases to be, but owing to Maya it appears to be real. It is owing to Maya that we believe ourselves to be the doers, and also that we have all these: wife and children, father and mother, house, property, etc. And in this Maya there is both Vidya and Avidya. Avidya makes one forget God and cling to the world—Woman and Gold; while Vidya, which is devotion and holy company, takes one Godward.

He who through God's grace goes beyond Maya looks upon both Vidya and Avidya with complete indifference.

—From *Kathamrita*.

You find very many grown-up people who have a child mentality. They will never give up their playthings, all their human dolls. The more we play, the more playthings we want. We want to go on playing eternally. Only very few children grow tired of playing and give their minds to something more serious. No doubt, there are some very troublesome children who stop their play and begin to cry. They give no rest to God and are bound to get Him. There is such a nice parable of Sri Ramakrishna illustrating the general attitude of man.

V

Vishnu was once sitting in His heavenly abode with His consort. All of a sudden Lakshmi saw that He was getting up in a great hurry. She said, "What is the matter?" Vishnu replied, "Just wait a moment. I must at once go and look after a devotee of Mine who is in danger. I must protect him." As a matter of fact, a devotee of Vishnu was to get a good thrashing from some enemies of his. After a short time, however, Vishnu returned. Lakshmi asked Him, "What is the matter now? Why are you back so soon?" "O," replied Vishnu, "I was not necessary at all. The devotee had already taken the Law into his own hands and given the enemies a good thrashing. So what was the use of My coming to his protection?"

VI

If we depend wholly on Him, He comes to our aid, but if we do what we please, we come to grief. We cannot have two feet in two different boats. But real self-surrender is a very hard thing and cannot be attained without great struggle and perseverance.

The inner voice becomes still, as soon as we turn deaf ears to it. Many people talk of this 'inner voice,' but in most cases it is nothing more than their own higher moral sense. The voice of the Divine cannot be heard so easily as these people imagine.

We cannot be expert divers all of a sudden. We must dive deep, but first we must train ourselves properly. The diver does not get the precious pearls if he does not even reach the bed of the oysters.

First we must shake off this mental lethargy. We must so train the mind

that, at least to some extent, we shall be able always to have the thought of the Divine. One current should constantly be flowing Godward, while in the other part of the mind bubbles may rise and try to create troubles. Always keep part of your mind engaged with the Divine.

We should strictly avoid the company of the evil-minded and all those who do not lead pure lives, whether they be of our own sex or of the other sex. We should seek the company of the good and holy. If I meet a man who leads an impure life or mixes with impure people it is as bad as if I were in the company of the other sex myself.

VII

You see, it is this. The mind that has once become dirty and full of all sorts of filth cannot be cleansed without great and prolonged effort. If I take a match, and it slips out of my fingers and falls into a puddle, it gets wet. And once having got wet, it cannot be struck any more. So the first task is to make it dry again. Then it can be struck and will leap into a nice flame at once. Hence the question of company and of strict ethical culture and mental culture is of such great importance. How to dry the soiled mind, that is the point. Do not let us brood over the fact that we have allowed it to get soiled and highly impure. Let us cleanse it. Let us do everything to make it pure, so that it will give clearer and clearer reflections of the truth. Brooding leads the aspirant just nowhere.

The mind is soiled, has become dirty. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt about our having led a careless, impulsive life. So, now,

the mind can no longer take on the colour of the Divine. Try to dye a dirty linen. It is impossible. First you must wash it, then dye it. Set fire to all your worldly desires and then cleanse the mind with the ashes that are formed. It must be some good chemical cleaning. The mind has become so dirty. Whose fault?

Below the surface-layers, there is the true metal, and that metal, as such, can never be soiled. So there is the possibility of cleaning it. But it needs a lot of rubbing and scrubbing. The electric wire has these surface-layers of silk, and they may become dirty, and even the metal may become dirty to a certain extent and thereby a non-conductor, but it can be cleaned. It is good to throw away the silk altogether, to burn it. In our case, in the case of the beginner, the 'silk' is only half-burnt. That is the whole trouble. We are not fully sincere. Otherwise just one single gust of wind would sweep it all away.

"This heart of ours, which has been burnt by the fire of the world, O Lord, do Thou revive it with the

mantram that brings back life to the dead."

The Holy Name revives, as it were, the heart that has become dead by all the worldly dirt of our desires and inordinate affections which it has accumulated. It brings new hopes in place of the old deceptive ones that are lost and burnt. It brings love in place of the old impure affections that have become ashes and are gone for ever. It brings peace in place of the shadow of peace at which we thought to clutch now and then, but which always again slipped out of our fingers. In place of falsehood it brings truth. In place of uncertainty and desire it brings certainty and dispassion, because there is no want in the Divine; and he who has realized it does not lack anything.

Let us all struggle day and night to attain the purification of our mind and let us see that we do not accumulate any new dirt by our carelessness. Let us strictly follow the instructions we are given, for only then can the cleansing process be accomplished and spiritual life become a reality.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy: By *Anagarika B. Govinda*. Published by the Patna University, Patna. Pages 271. Price Rs. 5.

The book gives, in the first place, a review of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism and then proceeds to show the lines along which the early Buddhist scriptures analyse the human consciousness. The author has tried to show how in the Buddhist study of man, there is an intertwining of metaphysics and psychology, and how both these are pursued not with a barren professional interest but with a view

to their life-giving value. The Buddhist psychology would be of special interest to the modern mind as it offers a scheme of analysis of the human consciousness without positing any permanent and unchanging spiritual nucleus like the soul. In this respect Buddhism is in agreement with many of what are called the modern systems of scientific psychology, but it parts company with them in that it finds in human consciousness a layer of awareness called 'Bodhi' which is higher than sensuous perception and rationality, the ordinary ways of acquiring knowledge. The concept of Bodhi corresponds to what

is called intuition in the great mystical tradition of all religions. A study of a subject like this which is thus in agreement with some of the dominant tendencies of both science and religion, will be of great interest to the modern mind, and the author's wealth of scholarship and knowledge of comparative religion and philosophy have all the more added to the value of his presentation of this interesting theme. The many charts illustrating various planes of consciousness and their inter-relation and functioning are both ingenious and instructive.

Medieval Jainism: By B. A. Saletore. Published by Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay 2. Price Rs. 5. Pages 426.

This is a historical work dealing with the progress of Jainism in Southern and Western India, in the empires of Gangas, Kadambas, Western Chalukyas, Hoysalas and the Vijayanagara Kings. That means kaleidoscopic sketch of the fortunes of a great faith over a long period ranging from the 2nd to the 16th century A.D. In dealing with this interesting subject, it is important to note that the author has specially concentrated his attention on the great influence exercised by it on contemporary life in all its phases—literary, artistic, social and political. The author rightly remarks that the vitality of a religious movement is to be measured not only by its philosophical and theological speculations, but by the way in which it affects the political and cultural life around. He shows that in this respect the influence of great Jain ascetics had led to the founding of powerful empires and directed the life and politics of great kings and statesmen. It was dear to the hearts of the classes as well as the masses and enjoyed patronage of both. As a consequence Jainism, though exotic to the Deccan and South India, having migrated to these places after its decline in the North—its original home—, had a brilliant career in the land of its adaptation and played a dominant part in the political and cultural life of the people there. The book is scholarly, but is yet adapted to the needs of the general readers. It contains also five illustrations of considerable artistic value.

The Hindu Philosophy of Conduct: Being class-lectures on the Bhagavadgita by the late M. Rangacharya, M.A., Rao Bahadur, Professor of Sanskrit and comparative Philology, Presidency College, Madras. Publisher: G. A. Natesan & Co., Publishers, George Town, Madras. Pages 483+20. Price Rs. 5.

This is the third and the last volume of Mr. Rangacharya's class-lectures on the Gita delivered under the auspices of the Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha several years ago. The whole series is complete in 87 lectures. The first 31 lectures covering the first six chapters of the Gita were published during the author's life-time under his own attention, and the book was welcomed by all competent to judge its merits. A couple of years ago the worthy son of the author gave to the public a second volume containing the lectures on the next *Shatka* of the Bhagavad Gita, which is now followed by the remaining portion. Although these two volumes were not fortunate to get the author's editorial care, we are told by his son that they are "published almost exactly as they were delivered," the liberty taken by the publishers being only a few verbal alterations, excision of some superfluous repetitions and the insertion of the translation of certain verses which the author had not made separately. But they were embedded in his explanations. We have now thus a complete study of the Gita by one who was well known for his versatile genius, profound scholarship and integrity of character.

The out-put of Gita literature has enormously increased in recent years; but few volumes of real worth are produced. It is satisfying to see that even the trashy writings are an indication of the deep interest excited in the modern mind by this august scripture. To have a thorough and scholarly understanding of the Gita in the original a vast and profound knowledge of the religious and philosophical literature of Sanskrit which supplies the atmosphere to the Gita is essential. A reliable exposition of the text in English is therefore the only help available for those whose knowledge of Sanskrit is not of the nature described. The recent English books on Gita, viz., Tilak's *Gitarahasya*

(2 vols.) Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on Gita* (2 vols.) and Prof. Rangacharya's class-lectures (3 vols.) are therefore indispensable for those who want to take up a deep study of the Gita, and who do not possess a special scholarship in the religious literature of Sanskrit. The above-mentioned three books very well form a library of Hindu Ethics, Devotion and philosophy to the modern reader. Of these Prof. Rangacharya's volume may be recommended to start with, because of its lucidity and freedom from any metaphysical basis or espousal of any special ethical theory.

Although his treatment is tediously elaborate at places, having gone through them, one feels a definite gain not only for the luminous suggestions received in unlocking the treasure contained in the Gita, but also for the general enlightenment afforded on several religious and ethical questions. Since there is no attempt to criticise the views of the great Acharyas anywhere and his attitude towards them being one of profound reverence these lectures will prove dear to all whether they may be modern or traditional in outlook. We wish a wide circulation of these volumes.

NEWS AND REPORTS

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira

A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE AT BELUR

Swami Madhavananda, Secretary Ramakrishna Mission, writes:—

The public are aware that in accordance with the scheme of Swami Vivekananda we are trying to start a Residential College for youngmen at Belur in the district of Howrah. Realising the need of imparting a knowledge of the morals and religion along with wholesome secular education, the great Swami was extremely eager to establish a Vidyamandira at the Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order. But his untimely exit from the world prevented an early fulfilment of his desire. Following in his footsteps, the Ramakrishna Mission has been conducting various educational activities for nearly half a century, but up till now it has not been able to take up his scheme of the Vidyamandira. Swamiji desired that a University should grow at Belur Math, with religion as its pivot and combining Oriental with Occidental learning. It will require a huge expenditure of money as well as time to materialise this scheme in full. But we think the time has come for starting, as the first step to it, a Residential College for the youngmen after the model of the ancient Gurukula, and gradually building it up. There are a few High Schools and a large number Primary Schools under the Mission. But the majority of the boys in our country have to enter into a vitiated atmosphere away from their homes, just

when they attain their youth. If at this juncture of their life, they get the opportunity of receiving a higher education amid congenial moral and spiritual environment, then they may be expected to turn into decent citizens in future and devote themselves to the service of their country and religion.

With this object in view we are trying for the present to establish at Belur a Residential I.A. College affiliated to the Calcutta University. Later on we should like to open industrial, agricultural and other sections in order to provide the students with a means of livelihood along with general education in arts and science. In the fulness of time the institution may develop into an independent University.

We propose to start the Vidyamandira on a plot of land measuring about 13 acres to the west of the Belur Math. Some of this land has already been purchased, and the rest is being acquired for the College through the Government, the notification about which has recently been published. For the initial cost of the land and College building etc. we want at least Rs. 50,000 immediately. Out of this Rs. 10,000 has been contributed by an American lady devotee of Swami Vivekananda, and some more has been donated or promised by a few friends in this country. With this small amount at our disposal we have ventured to make a beginning.

We need not emphasise the necessity of an institution like this to our countrymen. As in the West, in this country also there

is no dearth of generous people who, feeling in their heart of hearts the utility of proper education for our youths, are ready to spend what they can in furtherance of this object. To them we specially appeal to help us in this new enterprise. We sincerely hope that with their assistance we shall be able to start a nucleus of this great scheme of Swamiji in the coming year. Contributions will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged by the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah.

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama Silchar, 1938.

This branch of the Ramakrishna Mission like its other branches is directing its activities towards the amelioration of physical, intellectual and spiritual sides of man. During the period under review it held 100 religious classes and discourses. During the birthday anniversaries of Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda five public meetings were organised. The Sevashram runs 4 night schools which had 117 students on the rolls during the year under report. The library attached to the Sevashrama contains 1040 books, 4 magazines and 4 newspapers. The Sevashrama conducts a students' Home also, where eighteen boys were given accommodation. Nine lantern lectures were arranged during the year in the different parts of the Cachar District and Lushai and Cachar Hills. The Sevashrama maintains a weaving section also, where three looms were regularly at work during the year under report. The total receipts during the year were Rs. 3,171-7-0, including the balance of the previous year. The total expenditure was Rs. 2867-4-9, leaving a closing balance of Rs. 204-2-3.

The Sevashrama immediately requires Rs. 4,500 to complete the main house and to erect a library building and a hall.

The Vivekananda Society, Jamshedpur, 1938.

This branch of the Mission is doing excellent work in the industrial town of Jamshedpur made famous by the Tata Iron and Steel Company, Ltd. It tries to meet the religious need of the people by holding three weekly religious classes in three different areas of the town. Besides, special meetings were arranged, devotional

music and Jatra performances were held, which tried to instil spiritual ideas in the minds of the ordinary public. Birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was also celebrated with due *eclat*.

The society conducts two libraries. The number of books in the main library was 1381. The number of books issued was 3052. In the Free reading room of the library there were 5 daily papers, 2 weeklies and 10 monthly magazines. The other library had 318 books and issued 402 books during the year.

The society runs four primary day schools and one night school. There were 328 students in these schools at the end of the year. The total expenditure on the schools during the year was Rs. 3,799-7-0.

The society also maintains a Students' Home where 10 students were given accommodation.

The society as usual did the following social works:

- (1) Nursing patients in the Hospital when necessary.
- (2) Nursing patients at their houses.
- (3) Cremating the dead.
- (4) Occasional pecuniary help.
- (5) And other philanthropic activities in collaboration with the Welfare Department of the Tata Iron and Steel Co., Ltd.

The total receipts during the year under review including opening balance were Rs. 7,000-9-6 and the amount of expenditure was Rs. 6,222-8-9 leaving a closing balance of Rs. 778-0-9 only.

The society urgently needs a building for the Hindi section of the schools and the rebuilding of the Night school. A separate block for the students' Home and more rooms for the Workers' quarters are also pressing necessities.

An Appeal for Famine Relief in Dhrafa Thana

Nearly half of Kathiawar is affected with famine conditions this year. Dhrafa Thana which consists of thirty scattered villages on the borderline of Nawanagar, Porbandar and Gondal States is one of the most affected areas in the Western Kathiawar Agency. People have been reduced to a state of utter helplessness in maintaining their families and cattle. Many cattle have died and those which are living are very likely to die if no timely

help for their protection is forthcoming. Many families have begun to show signs of half-starvation. Feeling the necessity of adopting relief measures in the Thana, the Agency authorities have invited co-operation of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, for organising and conducting relief activities. The Ashrama authorities have, therefore, formed a local Advisory Committee with official and non-official members having the Political Agent, Western Kathiawar Agency as its patron. The Political Agent has also kindly given his personal note which has been reproduced below.

The work of giving gratuitous relief in the form of distributing grains to the poor, old, decrepit and invalid persons has already been undertaken. Arrangements have also been made for giving *tagavi* loans to the cultivators and steps are being taken for deepening old wells and sinking new ones.

The committee has contemplated to take the following measures for which public help is badly needed:—

- Gratuitous relief on a larger scale;
- Opening of cheap grain shops;
- Distribution of clothes, blankets etc. in winter;
- Distribution of medicines and
- Opening of cattle camp.

The Committee feels the necessity of starting the above-mentioned relief activities as soon as possible; so, it appeals to all benevolent persons and charitable Societies to stretch their helping hands to this noble cause. All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged at any of the following addresses:—

1. President, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, Kathiawar;
2. President, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Khar, Bombay 21;
3. Secretary, Famine Relief Committee, Dhrafa, Kathiawar.

(Sd.) Swami Atmaswarupananda,
President,

Dhrafa Famine Relief Committee.
The Dhrafa Thana area is one of the

worst-hit areas in the whole of Kathiawar. It forms part of no big State, can draw on the resources of no wealthy administration, contains no citizens of substance. The Ramakrishna Mission have already started work here at my urgent request and have already rendered invaluable aid. I earnestly commend this appeal for the relief of real distress.

(Sd.) A. J. Hopkinson,
Rajkot, Political Agent,
9th Nov. '39 Western Kathiawar Agency.

Mayavati Charitable Dispensary and Hospital, 1938.

The Mayavati Dispensary and Hospital, established in 1903, with modest equipment has since grown into a full-fledged dispensary, residential and otherwise. It is in charge of a monastic member qualified for the task. During the year under review an M.B. has also been appointed to increase the efficiency of the work. There is at present accommodation for 12 indoor patients. But such is the demand on the Hospital that for about six months of the year arrangements had to be made for 20 patients. So, an extension of the building is urgently needed. This can be taken up early if public help is forthcoming. The Dispensary and Hospital have an up-to-date operation room and a small clinical laboratory. Thus it has been endeavoured to bring as much of medical help as is possible to these poor people of the mountainous region who are completely cut off from the amenities of civilised life.

Total number of patients treated during the year at the out-door dispensary was 15,426 of which 11,115 were new cases. In the Indoor Hospital the total number treated was 243. The total amount of receipt during the year including opening balance and also an ear-marked sum of Rs. 1,16,000 for investment was Rs. 1,20,805-12-7. The amount of expenditure was Rs. 1,15,687-14-4, including the sum of Rs. 1,09,531-12-1 spent in purchasing G. P. Notes, leaving a closing balance of Rs. 5,117-14-3.

