

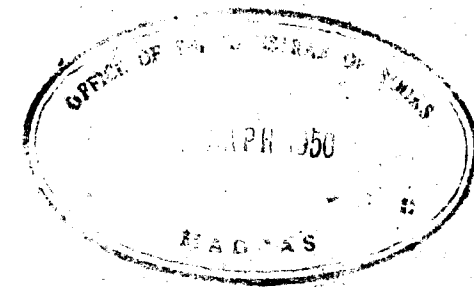
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Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

Swami Vivekananda

THE VEDANTA KESARI

VOL. XXXVI

APRIL 1950

No. 12

॥ शान्तिः ॥

ON PEACE

Peace is not such an easy thing to attain. The way to peace is very difficult—full of thorns. 'Sharp as the blade of a razor and hard to cross is the way to Self-knowledge—so the sages have described it.' These are the actual words of the illumined seers. The path is indeed extremely difficult, however easy it may seem to those who have not entered it. Great effort is required to make progress in the realm of the spirit. But if one sincerely wants to realize God, it is certainly true that he will receive His grace. You must have read in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that even he had to go through tremendous spiritual discipline before gaining the vision of the Mother.

Spiritual efforts without sincere love for God are fruitless. Sincere love is what counts. The Master used to say that when the three attachments—that of a devoted wife for her husband, of a mother for her child, and of a miser for his wealth—become one, then one realizes God. If anyone feels the same intense longing as would result if these three attachments were united, only then does he have God-vision. Sincere love brings God-realization and in that alone is genuine peace and joy.

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AMIDST FLAMES OF ORDEAL

Destiny loves dishing out fire. Those who will live must live in spite of this—we must eat fire and live.

India stands amidst flames. Right now she is passing through a crucial time of her history. If she will not go to ashes she must know how to eat up these flames and assimilate. This is precisely the problem before India.

This is a very difficult situation indeed, so much so, that very few people know whither to go. A poignant sense of indecision not untinged by a secret and unadmitted sense of frustration continue to torment the sick soul of the nation. Leaders seem to be groping and foundering. The ghost of unrequited injustice and the goad of the lofty passion for the good and the grand continue to tear the heart of India, in contrary directions.

When blows after blows fall upon us, our minds naturally get troubled and agitated. Mental agitation clouds the vision. When the vision gets clouded we cannot see clearly. Right action is impossible under such circumstances. And wrong action will as a matter of course father undesirable fruits, the seeds of which will in their turn bring about a bumper crop of the same inexorable potential.

Therefore the great necessity of correct thinking. In this wild times of history one of the most difficult feats that man is called to perform is maintaining the coolness of head. Humanity cannot afford the luxury of many more wrong actions. It stands perilously near the fringes of its ruin.

So every step we take must be such as to take us away from the edge of our own graves which we have sedulously dug with

spades of our wrong doings. At least our leaders of thought and action, who create thought-patterns and mould the go of the affairs must come to get in their grip that creative calmness, without which it is impossible to get at any comprehensive perspective of things.

What we should do will be determined by our ideal. Progress is not agitated, angry and haphazard movement. Genuine progress is going ahead on the path of one's own ideal. Therefore meditation on the nation's ideal is always helpful nay indispensable. Without having an absolutely clear conception of our ideal we cannot determine our duty, either personal or national.

To be precise, God and God alone is India's ideal. God cannot be achieved by ungodly strivings. This is why India's has been the path of *nivritti* (renunciation of desires) down the ages. It is that celebrated path that rolls over the razor's edge. This is the national path of India. The national genius of India can find its best expression through that path. Over and above that, this is the only path, striving through which the world can be saved from an early ruin.

But the nature of the world is such that it will not let any one go on his own way undisturbed. Neither will India be allowed to do so. It is useless fretting and fuming over such nature of things. In fact disturbances are right now powerfully obstructing India from going on in her own way. And it must be told that disturbances are being caused both from within and without.

India cannot move on in her own way

The Vedanta Kesari

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VOL-XXXVI

MAY-1949 — APRIL-1950

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

INLAND RS. 4-8. SINGLE COPY AS. 8. FOREIGN SH. 12; \$. 3.

EDITOR

SWAMI KAILASHANANDA

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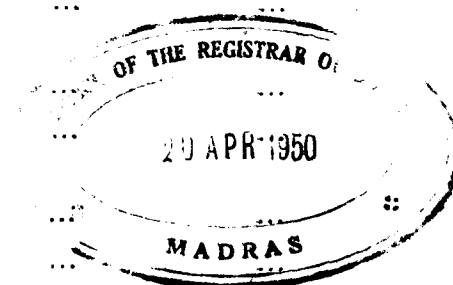
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without defeating the causes of these disturbances. In other words India must be more powerful than the causes of such disturbances. So the basic question before India, is that of being truly, progressively and creatively powerful.

There is only one way of becoming powerful and that is by knowing to acquire strength, more strength and ever more strength. If India is to live on, for and by herself, and help the world towards peace, plenty, happiness and joy, India must learn to become strong—nay India must become a synonym for strength. It is impossible to do good to the world without being strong, for weakness is sin. And from sin never comes any good.

The word strength is very naturally understood differently among different people in the diverse stages of evolution. According to the traditional understanding of India Truth is the only strength. Swami Vivekananda says,

“And here is the test of Truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening, Truth is purity, Truth is all knowledge, Truth must be strengthening, must be enlightening, must be invigorating..... I stand for Truth. Truth will never ally itself with falsehood. Even if all the world is against me, Truth will prevail in the end.Follow Truth wherever it may lead you; carry ideas to their logical conclusion. Don't be cowardly and hypocritical....It is only in our scriptures that this adjective is given to the Lord—*Abhik, Abhik*. We have to become *Abhik*, fearless and our task will be done.”

This gospel of fearlessness must be thoroughly lived by India if she is to survive. The feeling of fearlessness can come only from the reservoir of strength.

Absolute fearlessness can come from the absolute faithfulness to Truth. There should be no compromise as far as this basic stand is concerned. India must firmly resist all provocations and temptations to follow lesser ideals for temporary gains.

Right now India has been passing through a very delicate and testing time. Such provocations are being daily meted to India as may draw her out in the path of weakness and untruth, if per chance India forgets to constantly remind herself of the high ideals she is pledged to. India must live an utmost vigilant and cautious life now. She must guard against brutalizing herself under the powerful impacts of reaction. However may be the deeds of others, the deeds of India must be clean and pure. So the main sadhana India has to carry on through the internal and external tribulations is keeping up the purity of purpose. But this is no joke. Much merciless introspection and sustained self-sacrifice are essential. India's is inevitably a hard life. India is constitutionally unfit for successfully going for cheaper ideals. Even if India has to tear her own heart India needs must forgive. And that is what is meant by being strong. Mark what Swami Vivekananda says:

“I have never spoken of revenge, I have always spoken of strength. Do we dream of revenging ourselves on this drop of sea s, ray? But it is a great thing to a mosquito!”

This we must understand very clearly, self-sacrifice does not mean pampering evil, but becoming an oblation for the enhancement of good and establishment of Truth in the world. No one has any business and right to pamper evil by appeasement and allow it to thrive in its own way in this world. Evil must be resisted with all

necessary strength and care. The devil always extracts more than its due and when we are careless, inefficient, clumsy and cowardly it demands all for itself.

India habitually suffers from a peculiar disease which is popularly known in the Indian language as *dharma-sandeha* (doubt as regards the rightness and wrongness of a particular step towards action). This is our national habit which often leaves India in the vortex of indecision and inaction. To be frank this is sheer weakness. There is not a semblance of religion in such wavering. Dharma is the giver of Law, and as such Dharma is something determined. Sri Krishna was categorical in his imperative: *क्लेशं मास्म गमः*; yield not to unmanliness. We have to understand this. We must get cured of our weakness, through necessary treatment and we must do it for Dharma along the path of our *swa-dharma*. We must stop covering our weakness with silken fabrications of an unreal religion. In this field of action, we must act fearlessly and efficiently but strictly in the path of true Dharma. We must have the courage to understand and follow true Dharma. Dharma is not all sweetness, tenderness and drowsiness. The path of Dharma may often lie through terrible ordeals. We should meditate on the smile of derision, which sparkled on the lips of Sri Krishna, when after refusing to fight Arjuna came out with a learned discourse on Dharma and Adharma before the Yogeswara. We can get rid of much confusion if only we cease to rationalize our weakness and thus try to pass as

righteous people. An honest rogue is a superior man to a self-deluding hypocrite.

There is another pitfall which India must avoid falling into. In her anxiety for working for the establishment for peace in this world India must not indiscreetly compromise with all the evils that care to appear with a goodly mask. We must know that peace can never come in an ignoble way. Peace is made of sterner stuff than most of us imagine it to be. It is attainable only through the strenuous living for true Dharma. Living in the path of Dharma is not for the faint-hearted. If any one imagines that he can cause peace descend in this world by working a chain of compromises he is deluded.

* * *

Light saves by showing the way. But Light has got also to be saved from getting extinguished. Light can be saved only in one way—by being faithful to the Light. Light is not the counterpart of darkness. It is the negation of darkness—a total absence of darkness. When Light becomes a Reality, darkness is a chimera.

Bleak, blasting winds are blowing from all sides in this world. Aggressive darkness is up with its million venomous hoods and keeps on hissing in a wrathful rhythm. At uncertain intervals it swoops down to vomit dark venom which burns down on the threshold of Light.

This snake has to be charmed and its poison-teeth must be taken out. This can be done by making the Light more powerful. The task before India is to show how this could be done.

16-3-50.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN THE WORLD CONTEXT OF THE DAY*

By SWAMI VIVIDISHANANDA

Friends, it gives me great pleasure to talk to you on Sri Ramakrishna this morning. The hundred and fifteenth anniversary of his birth is being celebrated today at the Belur Math, headquarters of the monastic order founded by him. In Sri Ramakrishna's holy name as many as a quarter million men and women will congregate at the monastery grounds and participate in the worship and festivities, returning home spiritually uplifted. The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna is a festival observed all over India—in villages, small towns and cities. It is also observed by his ever-growing spiritual family abroad—in countries like the United States of America, England, France, Germany and Argentine.

Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal body in 1886. He was therefore a man who lived only a short time ago. I had the blessed privilege of knowing and associating with some of his direct disciples who survived him. Humanly speaking, though Sri Ramakrishna is no more, there is no denying the fact that he is a living spiritual force working through his Order and also from a subtle invisible realm, bringing the light of knowledge and peace to countless souls.

Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, unique in mystical literature, have been written in most of the Indian vernaculars as well as several European languages. As we live too close to Sri Ramakrishna, I do not think we can make a true estimate of

his greatness. One has to judge him with the perspective of centuries. Besides, it is difficult to judge and evaluate a God-man like him, who was so indrawn, living a life that was inaccessible to ordinary mortals. Truly speaking, a Godman alone will understand Sri Ramakrishna. The Master was variously honoured by his contemporaries—as a saint, a mystic, an illumined Yogi, a prophet or an Avatara—an incarnation of God. Give him any name you please, it does not matter. Time alone will prove what he was and how great he was.

Sri Ramakrishna was born in an orthodox Brahmin family in 1836, in a little obscure village of Bengal. Even as a child he showed the promise of a brilliant spiritual career that was his later. Extra-ordinary purity, truthfulness, independence of spirit, compassion and detachment marked his character. Even in that tender age he seemed to be aware of his divine mission. Instead of indulging in childish pastime, he was given to prayer and meditation. The many supersensuous visions and experiences would have baffled his playmates and elders. He was an enigma to many. Handsome in appearance and of a magnetic personality, he exercised a great influence upon one and all. Possessing a keen mind that would dare fathom the mysteries of the universe, an unusually sensitive and tender heart that felt for all and a prodigious photographic memory, he was a precocious boy of a unique type. His

* A radio talk broadcasted on February 26, '50, (8-45 A.M.). Courtesy: All India Radio, Calcutta.

schooling did not go beyond the rudiments of the three R's, for he refused to have the so-called bread and butter winning education after going to school for a short time. He would rather have that knowledge which would illumine his soul and give him the vision of God. The spiritual longing that the Master manifested as a child increased as he grew in age and it made him disconsolate and restless.

At the age of sixteen Sri Ramakrishna came to Dakshineswar near Calcutta. Here at Dakshineswar in the beautiful setting of a temple garden situated on the Ganges, the life-drama of the Master was enacted act by act, attracting a large number of seekers of Truth. It is known to all how the Master starting his career as a priest in the temple of Mother Kali eventually merged into a world figure, a Godman of the highest order. Not satisfied with going through the routine of ritualistic worship, he wanted to have a vision of the Mother of the Universe, the Supreme Creative Energy, the Giver of illumination and peace. This longing to see the Mother consumed his soul, as it were, and soon brought him Her vision, followed by a series of mystic experiences, culminating in the realisation of identity with Brahman, Existence-knowledge-Bliss Absolute. In his spiritual practices, long and elaborate, Sri Ramakrishna was helped by several gurus or teachers who were past-masters in their own lines.

During his stay at Dakshineswar when Sri Ramakrishna was going through the storm of his spiritual struggle, his relatives got him married. They thought that the conjugal tie would bring him down to the mundane plane, but it was of no avail. The wedded wife Sarada Mani Devi was almost forgotten in her parental home

till she herself came to the temple garden and expressed the wish to be by his side, serving him without trying to drag him down. The Master was kind to her and taught her about God. In his relationship with his wife, the Master served as a perfect example of absolute continence and the conquest of flesh. Literally he saw the Divine Mother in every woman. Once Sarada Mani Devi while doing personal service asked her husband what he thought of her. To this his significant reply was: "The Mother that gave birth to this body (meaning himself) and the Mother that is worshipped in the temple are one, and again it is the same Mother that resides in you (meaning his wife). I see no difference." Sarada Mani Devi, the worthy consort of the Godman Sri Ramakrishna, became his first disciple, living the life of a dedicated nun and playing an important part in the working out of his mission.

Impelled by an inner urge, Sri Ramakrishna wanted to realise God and enjoy Him in all His varied aspects. So he plunged into many spiritual disciplines current in Hinduism, practising them in all their full details, and he attained the goal specified by them in an incredibly short time. This realization brought him the conviction that all spiritual paths, sincerely pursued, are true and effective, leading to the same destination. We know from his biography how Sri Ramakrishna had in the same way the vision of Christ and Mahomet, the founders respectively of Christianity and Islam. Because of this realization Sri Ramakrishna learnt to accept and respect, and not tolerate as most of us do, all religions and their founders. Even the crudest of faiths and reeds would not elicit from him a word of criticism or condemnation.

When the lotus opens its petals bees by thousands flock to it attracted by its colour and fragrance. That was what happened in the case of Sri Ramakrishna. Now that the Master became established in the knowledge of God, vibrant with spirituality, scores of seekers came to him. The Master helped them all according to their spiritual needs. Sometimes he would awaken the spiritual consciousness of a person by a mere touch or wish. Of the many that came within the orbit of his holy influence and became his disciples, Swami Vivekananda tops the list because of his extraordinary spiritual calibre. He was the most beloved and capable of his disciples and the Master commissioned him to organize and direct the Order.

Sri Ramakrishna was not one of those who would enjoy the bliss of God-vision or illumination all by himself in the silence of a forest retreat or a mountain cave, ignoring the world. As he realized the oneness of life and consciousness, he developed a love that would embrace all, irrespective of caste, race and nationality. His great feeling heart bled for erring humanity, and the fifty years he was spared to us he toiled ceaselessly for their enlightenment and peace. The story of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual ministrations is a thrilling and inspiring narrative. As desired by the Master Swami Vivekananda formulated and stated clearly the ideal of the Math and Mission. This ideal, briefly speaking, consisted in the worship of God and the service of man as God. Since then the monks of Sri Ramakrishna dedicated themselves to this twin ideal, continuing to work for their own salvation and the good of their fellowmen.

It was Swami Vivekananda who first brought the message of Vedanta as taught

by Sri Ramakrishna to the West, specially the United States of America, in 1898. Swamiji's phenomenal success at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, his subsequent lecture tours and his manysided labours of love are now facts of history. Swamiji by his talks raised India in the estimation of the world, dispelling from the minds of people the many false and distorted notions they had regarding India. In order to propagate Vedanta systematically permanent Vedanta centres were started in various places in America. Swamiji was followed by some of his brother disciples and others of the Order in the preaching work, presenting India, her cultural heritage and philosophy of life. Today there are as many as eleven centres in U. S. A. with good-sized congregations. We may say that Vedanta is slowly and gradually taking root in the American soil. In America there are many who think of India as a holy land and of Sri Ramakrishna as Christ or Buddha, offering divine honour.

Strange as it may seem, Swamiji very seldom mentioned the name of his Master in his lectures and discourses. He did this purposely, for he wanted to emphasise the principles more than a personality. We know that the Master was the source of his inspiration and power. He always considered himself an insignificant tool in Sri Ramakrishna's hands. In his reply to the address given by the citizens of Calcutta he said, "Gentlemen, you have indeed touched another chord in my heart, the deepest of all and that by the mention of my Teacher, my Master, my Hero, my Ideal, my God in life. If there has been anything achieved by me, by thought or word or deed, if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped anyone in the

world, I lay no claim to it, it was his..... All that has been weak has been mine, and all that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure and holy has been his, his inspiration, his words and he himself."

It was never the purpose of Sri Ramakrishna to found a sect in his name. He came to fulfil and not to destroy. He simply restated and revitalized the ancient teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita, and for that matter, the truths embodied in the other scriptures of the world.

In this critical age when nations are feverishly busy preparing themselves for another war, perhaps an atomic war, and when individual men and women hungry for peace and security do not know which way to turn with chaos and conflict rampant everywhere, the life and message

of Sri Ramakrishna are like a beacon light pointing the way, guiding the faltering steps of humanity. What is Sri Ramakrishna's contribution to the sum-total of human progress? Briefly stated, Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated the reality of God to a Godless world. A Godman who constantly lived in God, Sri Ramakrishna proved that nothing counts in life except God—that He is our life and soul—our only refuge and source of peace and security. This world will be a veritable hell if we deny God in life. He also told us that in order to realize God we must be spiritually reborn by renouncing lust and greed. Let us listen to him. May the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna—his divine life and message hearten us, bringing us inner strength, courage and peace!

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

By SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

Why do we pray? What do we gain or expect to gain by prayer? Is there any known benefit that it can confer on man? If so, what?

These questions have become pertinent these days, for a great many people have now not only stopped praying but have also stopped believing that prayer can serve any useful purpose. There are some who even regard with pity and contempt, those who are in the habit of praying, for to them they represent an age which is long past. They see in this practice the last traces of medievalism which still persist but which must go as scientific knowledge spreads.

The chief objection to prayer, according to those who accept the standpoint of

material sciences, is that, there being no satisfactory proof that God exists, no intelligent man should waste his valuable time in an undertaking of such dubious value as this. Another objection to prayer is that, even assuming that God exists, it is not likely that prayer will yield any worthwhile advantage. The argument on which this contention seems to be based is that the universe is governed by some inflexible laws which even God, probably their maker, cannot alter. He is just as much bound by them as any mortal. So what purpose would it serve if anyone prayed to Him?

Now it is not possible to convince anybody by argument that God exists. Only direct experience can do so. But direct

experience of God is a rare good fortune which few in the world can claim to have had. The price of it is a life-long effort, though there is no guarantee even then that it will come. There is, however, the curious fact that to some lucky souls it comes almost unasked, taking them, as it were, unawares. It came so to St. Paul, to St. Francis of Assisi, to Guru Nanak. It came so to numerous others, though their names do not appear in history. But the question is: So long as this experience does not come to you, either as a gift or as a reward for your toils, how can you bring yourself to pray?

The answer to this is that you should go on praying as if you have already had that direct experience. In other words, you should accept God on trust. The proposition is not as illogical as it may sound at first. Even in applied science where the scientist claims to go by severely objective evidence he has to accept a great many things on trust, at least to begin with. This is an inescapable necessity. He first makes an assumption and then proceeds to examine if it is correct or not. At any rate the assumption is his starting-point. Without an assumption he cannot make a beginning.

In religion also you start by accepting that God exists and then go on investigating whether He does or not. You investigate the question thoroughly and in all its aspects till you have satisfied yourself that you know as much about it as possible. In religion the only acceptable test of truth is in personal experience. You must have a direct personal experience of God before you are competent to say that God exists. Till then the question is open to doubt and you reserve final judgment, though your investigation must go on.

The name chosen for this sort of investi-

gation in the field of religion is—prayer. Not a happy name, to be sure, but then there is nothing better, nothing, at any rate, more easily understood. Whatever the word may connote literally, it is used to cover, with a stretch of its meaning of course, any effort that a religious aspirant may make with regard to God. It may be that he does not specifically seek knowledge of God, being modest or being, as the case may be, not too inquisitive. Nevertheless God is such a self-revealing force that the aspirant gets to know about Him in the course of his investigation. In any case there is nothing in the field of religion that is to be taken for granted. The whole field is open to exploration, and everyone has to explore the field himself. The discoveries made by others cannot satisfy your needs. The problem is a personal problem and you have to solve it yourself. If another man eats for you, it does not satisfy your hunger. It is just like that in the matter of religious problems, also.

The point that needs to be emphasised is that in the process of prayer nothing is so very important as mental health, mental faculties must be kept intact and used to the full. Even a slight deterioration of these, or slackness in their application, would retard progress. Almost the very qualities that a scientific worker is required to possess in order that he may succeed in his experiments a religious aspirant also must possess. In fact, more, for here the field of the experiment is inside the experimenter himself. He must possess also a sound and strong body, for in his endeavours the body plays as vital a part as the mind. Anyone who has the least knowledge of the lives of saints knows what ordeals, physical and mental, they had to pass through before they reached

the final goal. Only the strongest body and the keenest mind could have withstood them.

It is well-known that, just like any experimental science, religion also has its own rules, its own technique, which those who want to pursue it seriously, must observe. These rules are very exacting and even a slight deviation has a vitiating effect. Further, like science, religion also guarantees a large measure of success provided the rules are strictly followed. The difference, however, is that even if you do not follow the rules correctly, due to ignorance, or due, say, to laziness, your effort is not altogether wasted. Prayer, no matter how ill-performed, is never in vain. But if the rules are observed, the result is so much greater.

A remarkable thing is that these rules are very much the same in different countries and different ages. Mystics all over the world; irrespective of the denomination or the age to which they belonged have prayed in the same manner, sometimes even in the same words. And as might be expected, they have had the same experience, too. They may have described this experience differently, but it is obvious enough that it is the same. One definition of truth is that it is valid in all countries and in all times. If the experience did not have a core of truth, it could not have been the same everywhere.

Advocates of religion do not believe in academic discussions. They say it involves making statements about religion which must inevitably be vague and inadequate. Religion is essentially a matter of experience. Only by experience can any idea be had of what it means and what it stands for. Words, rather than helping to understand it, may even confuse. That is

why they stress the need for practice, for only by practice can the truths of religion be experienced.

But what are the advantages of prayer? Again, only experience can provide the answer to this. 'The proof of the pudding is in the eating.' Unless you pray—and with sincerity, devotion and longing, that is to say, in the manner prescribed by teachers, you are not likely to understand what advantages prayer has to offer. The fact that to this day a large number of people are found in the habit of praying is proof that prayer undoubtedly yields a good return. It is well-known that religious aspirants have often to undergo incredible hardship. If they can still go on, it clearly implies that they find something in prayer which sustains them and gives them hope of ultimate success. Saints of all ages testify that no prayer is altogether wasted. Provided the necessary conditions are fulfilled, every prayer is answered.

But it must be understood that there are different ways in which a prayer can be answered. There are instances showing that even prayers for material gifts may be answered. Miracles of that kind have happened all over the world. But it is a wrong way of judging the benefit of prayer to insist upon a miracle of this kind. The object of prayer is not merely to solve the problems of physical existence, though, indirectly, it does help to solve them. There are far more difficult problems inside oneself which have to be solved and to solve which prayer is necessary. Until these problems are solved, one is not a complete being, not even a normal being. Everyone is only too well aware of the tangles within himself and how they warp his personality, making him utterly miserable. Prayer, being an exercise in

self-understanding, helps to remove these tangles; and the best miracle that can happen is the removal of these tangles.

Prayer has truly a corrective effect on man. Passions, which eat into a man's soul eventually overpowering his reason and judgment, can be conquered only by prayer. And in being so conquered they turn into a great benign force. This is why saints are found to possess incredible energy and vitality which they devote to the service of humanity. An illustrious example of this was Mahatma Gandhi.

It is not that prayer brings to a man that which is not already in him. It rather sets free in him forces which ordinarily remain inactive, but which, if properly organised co-ordinated and disciplined, can prove of immense value. Moral courage, devotion to duty in the face of utmost difficulties, a keen sense of right and wrong, love of his fellow-beings, cheerfulness—all these, which usually adorn the character of a saint, do not come from without, but from within. Like the fragrance of a flower they are an integral part of his personality. They come not at the end of a special search, but naturally, almost inevitably, for prayer has so transformed his personality that he cannot help being what he is—kind, good, selfless, strong and bold. He is like that, again not as a matter of policy, nor from a narrow appeal of party or country, but because it is his nature. He is like that unconditionally, also unreservedly.

There is much that is dross in a man and this needs purging. Selfishness, egotism and jealousy are what may be called the dross in a man. They come from ignorance—ignorance of the basic purpose of life. Through prayer this ignorance is

dispelled, as is seen in the lives of saints. Truth reveals itself to the man whose ignorance has thus been removed. It is only saints who can possess true knowledge and understanding. It is remarkable how when intricate questions are simple and clear to saints, scholars utterly fail to grasp them. This is because saints apprehend a truth through something higher than intellect—superconsciousness (which develops when the limitations of the ego have been overcome through prayer) while scholars try to understand it through the weak medium of intellect.

The peace, joy and blessedness which saints possess and radiate are well-known. Their love and good-will towards others transcend all geographical and racial boundaries. When afflicted, humanity turns to saints for comfort and guidance rather than to scholars or political leaders. To this day men and women owe more to Christ and Buddha than to the tallest among political leaders. It is from them (and others of their kind) that the best that humanity now possesses has been derived. And in future also it is to them that humanity must turn for help and guidance to elevate itself.

In these days when, thanks to industrial civilisation, everybody finds his nerves shattered and temper frayed, the healing effects of prayer should prove most welcome. Today pride and conceit which man feels because of his achievements in the domain of science, have blurred his vision; and he is not able even to see his own follies. Only prayer will give him the humility necessary for him to have a true and correct understanding. Never before was man in greater need for the habit of prayer.

MANIKKAVASAGAR

By SWAMI RITAJANANDA

Of the various forms of the One Truth conceived by people, the idea of the form of Shiva is the oldest one and His worship was prevalent in India even thousands of years ago. But it seems that He was most popular in South India and the religion that has gathered round His worship has developed itself into a wonderful system with a fine philosophical background. "It is really the most elaborate, influential and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religious systems of India", says Dr. Pope. When the faith of the people was shaken by Buddhism and Jainism, there appeared a number of Saiva saints, who by their exemplary lives and enthusiastic preaching removed the doubts of the wavering minds and re-established Hindu religion. They made Hindu religious ideals popular by preaching devotion and composing hymns in the local Tamil language.

The idea of Shiva as preached by these saints not only followed the conceptions of the Vedas and the puranas but something more. He is the One supreme Reality, beginningless, uncaused, ever-pure, without any defect, the All-doer, the All-pervader and very sportive of nature. He is the Lord of the Vedas, the trampler of ignorance and the Lord with overflowing love for His children. He is ever gracious and always ready to help his devotees. He resides in the various temples to bless His votaries and this great Lord beyond the reach of speech and mind was adored by the Saiva saints.

Of these the most well-known is Saint Manikkavasagar. He has endeared him-

self to all the Tamil speaking people throughout India and Ceylon, by his great work 'Thiruvagasam', or the Sacred Utterances. Due to this charming work alone he got the name of Manikkavasagar, which means one whose utterances are rubies. Even after centuries after his quitting this world, we can hear people chanting the hymns of Thiruvagasam daily in most of the Shiva temples. They are full of moving devotion, immediately transporting people to the right prayerful attitude. It is no exaggeration when we say that "Thiruvagasam is a veritable Pilgrim's progress revealing the experience of a devout and godly soul", for, Manikkavasagar has presented his spiritual struggles completely through those hymns.

This remarkable saint seems to have lived between the years 660 and 692 A.D. It was the period when South India was divided into a number of petty states, Chera, Chola, Pahlava, Pandya and other kingdoms. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were the prevailing religions but none of them had a strong hold over the people. Madura was the capital of the Pandya country and not far from that city was a village called Vadavur. There to a brahmin couple was born a child, who later became our saint Manikkavasagar. We have no information either about his parents or the parental name. This boy when he grew up showed extraordinary intellectual powers that he soon attracted the attention of the king at Madura. So when he was in his sixteenth year, he was taken into the service of the king and very soon won his confidence

and was raised to the status of prime minister. At that time he was known only as Thiruvadavurar i.e. one who hailed from Vadavur. As days rolled on the king began to love him more and more. He gave him all the comforts of life and also conferred on him the title of "Thennavar Brahma Rayan." All important affairs were safely entrusted in his hands. Thiruvadavurar was a lovable person a bit religiously inclined but never with sufficient faith. The pleasures of life often drew him to their side most frequently and he often mentioned this in his songs.

"When Cupid's dart in spring tide
wounds, moon-light will scorch of this

I took

No heed; like milk 'neath churning
stick I'm stirred by wiles of fawn-like
eyes.

To Shivan's city I go not, where grace as
honey to soul is given

To cherish soul within the body, still
I eat and garments still put on.

"By thought, by deed, by hearing or
by speech or by these senses five,

I failed in days of old Thy truth to
reach—I low and foolish one.

I passed not through fire, my heart
burst not with shame,

To Thee O Father, even yet may I
attain, may I yet dwell with Thee."

(Translation by Dr. Pope.)

So he frequently indulged in those pleasures, but he often felt a vague desire for a higher life, which would take him nearer to God and give him a better sort of happiness. When he was living thus, one day news was brought to the king that a number of fine Arabian horses had

arrived at the port Thiruperunthurai. The king wanted to get some of those horses and he entrusted the task of the purchase to his prime minister. On an auspicious day Thiruvadavurar started towards the port, with a large retinue and sufficient wealth to make the purchases. The journey took many days and they passed through many forests and hills. Thiruvadavurar sat in a palanquin befitting his position and was slowly moving towards the port hardly imagining what was in store for him.

When the party reached the port they were going by the side of a grove of 'Kuruntha' trees. From there came out a melodious chanting. This soul-stirring music made Thiruvadavurar get down from his palanquin and enter the grove. There he beheld a scene which profoundly affected him. Just in front there sat a Saiva ascetic under the spreading branches of a huge tree surrounded by a large number of disciples, who were singing the Saiva Agamas. The charming ascetic with his matted locks, bright eyes and smiling lips soon attracted the attention of Thiruvadavurar. The saint's body was smeared with ashes and he had a number of garlands made of 'rudraksha' beads. The convincing way in which he spoke on the Saiva religion and the way in which he was attended by his disciples made the minister feel that Saiva religion was still a force and that there were towering personalities who could lead people towards the realisation of Truth. So he approached the saint, and made some simple queries. But the overwhelming power of the saint soon made him prostrate and beg for the acceptance of himself as a disciple. He rose up, folded his hands and while tears trickled down his cheeks, said, "Lord! I beseech you to

accept me. I shall henceforth renounce all desires for enjoyment. I am meaner than a cur, but sir! be gracious and permit me to worship thy feet by the performance of which I shall attain liberation." The master smiled. He had no questions to ask, for He was none else but the Lord Himself who had come down to this earth on a particular mission. Immediately arrangements were made for the ceremonies connected with the initiation of Sanyasa. When the following day dawned Thiruvadavurar joined the ancient order of Hindu monks cutting off all the ties of the world. The minister became a mendicant exchanging his costly robes for the orange-coloured clothes. His well-dressed hair became matted locks and the perfumed body was smeared with ashes. The neck that was once decked with diamonds and pearls were adorned with garlands of rudraksha beads. Though such a kind of jump would have produced many reactions in an ordinary man, Thiruvadavurar felt nothing but the infinite grace of the Lord, who came to save him. In the ten verses called '*Arpuda Pattu*' or 'the Miracle Decad' he shows how surprised he felt at the sudden appearance of divine mercy. "To me, who engaged himself with many unreal things of this world, afflicted with the illusory attachments of "I" and "mine", and wandered urged by the force of my own deeds, He, whom Vedas could not reach—the Lord—came. He pulled me to His presence and gave me the sweetest thing. I do not understand this miracle. I had kine, kinsmen and all pleasures. I was immersed in them thinking they were the end of life. The Lord came to set me free from their binding actions. He stirred my spirits, entered within and made me His own. How shall I understand this miracle?" The more he

thought about the Lord the happier he became and felt the real spiritual bliss can never stand comparison with anything in this world. We shall see to his happiness later on. From that time onwards Thiruvadavurar belonged to his Master. The spiritual insight he got, and the sacred advice he received all made him adopt this new mode of life with the firm conviction that 'God alone is real.' After some time he remembered he had the king's treasures for the purchase of the horses. But in this transformed state that work had no meaning and he immediately handed it over to his Master to be distributed away to the poor and the needy. The nobles who followed the Minister felt shocked to see all these incidents and the way in which the king's money was spent; but Thiruvadavurar saw it in a different light.

The attendants thought that this sudden madness of their master would pass away and waited for some days and at last went and reminded him the purpose of their leaving Madura. To Thiruvadavurar the world had no meaning and he sent them away. The whole party returned to the king and narrated all that took place and the way the minister had disposed of the amount sent for the purchases. The king could not at first believe that his trustworthy minister would do that. But there was sufficient proof to show that the horses were not purchased. So he sent some messengers to Thiruvadavurar asking him to return immediately. He received the orders of the king with contempt saying, "I know no other king than Shiva. What can these people do to me, when even the messengers of Yama are powerless before my Lord." Finding themselves helpless they approached the master of Thiruvadavurar.

At last the minister was persuaded to go to the king. His Master assured him that there was nothing to fear, since He was always with him. As for the horses he could inform the king that on the 19th of the month of Avani (September 4) the king would get his horses.

When the king saw his minister and heard his explanation he could not believe him and so Thiruvadavurar was sent to prison. The king thought that the horses would never come, and when on the morning of the 19th of Avani a warrior appeared with a number of excellent horses he was extremely surprised. The horses were worth more than the amount he gave his minister. He regretted for his suspicion of his trusted servant and asked for pardon. While every one saw only an ordinary warrior, Thiruvadavurar saw his Master in that disguise but he could not express it. The bargain was concluded and the king asked his servants to put the new horses in the stables. Suddenly before the dawn of the following day the whole city was disturbed by hideous howls proceeding from the king's stables. It was soon found that all the new horses had disappeared and in their place were a number of jackals, which were howling and biting the horses that were already there, creating great confusion. The king became wild with anger and ordered severe chastisement to Thiruvadavurar. He was led to the sandy bed of the river flowing past the city and was made to stand on the burning sands with a heavy weight on his back. The saint felt helpless and could not understand, why he was made to pass through all those miseries. The Lord took pity on him, showed him the higher life and why He sent him back to Madura again to suffer? So, he stood in the fierce sun praying to the

Lord. A little later some water appeared in the river and slowly the level rose higher and higher threatening to flood the whole town. "How strange", people wondered that this river which was mostly dry should have so much water." The king felt perturbed and thought the indignities to which he subjected his noble minister must be the cause for all that. He immediately ordered the release of him. Further he requested Thiruvadavurar to protect the city from the inundation. So orders were immediately issued that all citizens of Madura should help in the raising of the embankment irrespective of their age and sex.

At this time there lived an old woman, who eked out her living by selling some rice-cakes. She had none to call her own and she was absolutely helpless. So she was crying. Just then a well-built young man came near, with a basket covering his head and a spade hanging over his shoulder. He went close to the poor woman and said, "Grannie! What ails you? If you do not mind I shall help you. I am quite strong and I have the spade and the basket. I shall do the work allotted to you, if you will feed me. I am a fellow of extreme hunger and whenever I come to you in the course of the work, you must give something to eat." The old woman could hardly believe her eyes. To give a few cakes to that young man was nothing compared to the punishment of the king. She immediately consented and sat down to prepare the cakes when the young man began to dig and began to throw the earth on the embankment. But the young fellow was very eccentric. He threw two or three baskets of earth, put the basket away, began to sing and dance. Every few minutes he would run to eat some

cakes. Even before he threw a score of basket-fuls of earth, he had stuffed his stomach with so many cakes that he wanted rest. He put the basket for his pillow, stretched himself and calmly went to sleep. But strangely, even with such little effort he had done his task. Yet, how could he go to sleep when all the people were working hard? So the watchman complained to the king, who gave peremptory orders for caning the shirker.

The servants carried out the orders and lo! when the first blow was struck it was felt by all the people of the town and the young man disappeared. This news reached Thiruvadavurar. He immediately understood how the Lord had come again to save him and the people from the flood. He felt extremely grieved that his kind benefactor should have been beaten and that he did not have the good fortune to see him in that labourer's garb.

All these wonderful incidents which followed in quick succession, made the king realise that his former minister was not an ordinary man. He prostrated before him and with folded hands offered the kingdom as a compensation for the cruelties he inflicted on him. But the saint had tasted a joy from a different kingdom. He asked not the bliss of Indra, Vishnu or Brahma. (Though his house and home be ruined and he entered even Hell he desired only friendship with devotees of the Lord.) So he requested the king to permit him to go back to his master at Thiruperunthurai. The king allowed him and Thiruvadavurar left Madura once for all.

He went back to the blessed company of his master and lived for some time happily, when the master told him that the time had come for him to leave the

world. The other disciples would keep company for some more years and then they would also leave him. Thiruvadavurar felt he could not be alone without his beloved master and he begged his master to take him with him. But it could not be. The master affectionately drew him near him and said, 'No'. My child! Why do you feel that I am forsaking you. Learn to see me everywhere. When thou art doing my work I am with thee. Thou hast many things to do. When you go to Uttarakosamangai, you will know more things about me. You have come to establish my worship firmly even convincing non-believers as you shall see at Chidambaram. When thou hast played thy part thou wilt come back to me." With these words the master disappeared plunging Thiruvadavurar in grief. His heart felt intense pangs of separation and he gave expression to this in his interesting hymn called '*Neethal Vinnappam*' or petition for being forsaken. Dr. Pope, who has made a close study of Thiruvagasam says that there are very few books in literature which have such a genuine ring as some of the verses in which the young noble bewails the apparent desertion of his Master. The saint bewails, "Like an ant on a stick lit at both ends, cut off from Thee I wander bewildered and Thou hast forsaken me, Thou the Lord of the three worlds, King of Uttarakosamangai! I gained access to Thy bright feet, freed from the attachment to this world and making me pine Thou hast forsaken me! O Ocean of grace!" In the same hymn in the last portion he says, "if Thou leavest and when others ask, 'whose servant are you? I shall answer; I am the slave of the glorious servants of Uttarakosamangai's King and

thus make them laugh at Thee. I shall make them laugh at you and lay bare Thy faults thus forsaking me. And still if I am left alone, I shall abuse you calling you as 'Madman with hide for his dress, Madman, who drank poison, Madman of the cremation ground and the Madman, who has made me His own!'"

Sometime later the other disciples of his Master also left our poet-saint. Thiruperunthurai lost all its charm when the great souls disappeared and Thiruvadavurar took up the wandering life. He visited all the important Shiva shrines and at last reached Chidambaram the most important shrine for all devotees of Shiva and which is called as 'Bhu-Kailasa'. This ancient town has the temple of Natarajah and even now attracts large crowds throughout the year. All the great saints have sung in praise of the Lord and experienced the spiritual atmosphere. In olden days the place was called Thillai due to the fact that there was a forest of trees called 'thillai' tree in Tamil. Thiruvadavurar felt the presence of the Lord in that temple more than in any other place and he chose Chidambaram as his place of residence. Most of his songs were composed there and are full of spiritual beauty. They give us fine pictures of the various moods the saint passed through and the ecstatic bliss he enjoyed. Not far from the temple he had a small hut, where he spent most of his time in silent prayer now and then composing some hymns when he felt inspired.

About this time we are told a king from Ceylon came to Chidambaram and entered the temple of Natarajah with the intention of proving the superiority of Buddhism. But Manikkavasagar was asked to meet the opponents and he is said to have defeated them by his arguments and all

the opponents joined in the worship of Shiva giving up their religion. Thus the last word he was expected to do by his Master was also finished and Thiruvadavurar eagerly waited when the final release would come.

One day while he was alone in his hut chanting some of his hymns, a young ascetic came and asked permission to take down all his compositions as he dictated. Thiruvadavurar agreed and all his gem-like pieces were carefully recorded by the stranger. Later on one morning, when the temple priests opened the shrine for worship, they found a neat copy of the poet's book at the foot of the pedestal and with the signature of the writer as Thiruchitrambalam. They could not understand how it happened and felt the Lord must have accepted those compositions. They rushed to the saint and requested him to explain the meaning of his works. He did not say a word in reply but came with them to the temple. There standing before the image of the Lord, pointed to Him and said, "He is the meaning." Then he straight walked into the temple and merged himself in his beloved Lord.

This is a short account of the great poet-saint, prepared out of the Purana that goes by his name. The book pictures his life with a lot of poetic imagery and it is hard to extract correct details of his biography separating facts from fancies and truth from tales. But undoubtedly the framework of the account is beyond all doubts, since there are many points, which are authenticated by the poet's own words in his compositions. He has left behind him the immortal 'Thiruvagasam', which has no equal for the beautiful way in which it depicts the 'progress of the soul from the bondage of ignorance and passion into

the liberty of light and love, its first awakening, its joy and exaltation, waywardness and despondency, struggle and unrest, the peace and joy of union." There are 51 hymns covering more than three thousand lines. Generally 'Shiva Puranam' is said to be his first work, which is full of the prayerful attitude that we can call it as his prayer-song. His adoration to his beloved Shiva finds expression in numerous words full of musical cadence and rhythm that none can escape its devotional appeal. He begins his song with sacred word of five letters NA-MA-SHI-VA-YA and enumerates the great qualities of Him, the Lord, the Teacher, the One without a second, He who soothed his soul's unrest and made him His own. In his praise of the Lord, he says, "O spotless brightness! Lustrous full-blown flower! O Teacher! O Honeyed nectar! Lord of Siva-pura!" O Lord Thou hast no pleasure nor pain, but yet Thou hast love for loving ones. Thou art everything and nothing..." And these are the characteristics of the Lord, whom he worshipped. Then he describes about himself and begins from the earliest form of life as he felt, "O Lord." I was born as grass plant, worm, tree, beasts and birds, snakes and stones; I took the birth of saints, Devas and Asuras. Both as the movable and immovable creation was I born and weary have I grown. Sir! Thou art the Truth and seeing Thy golden feet to-day I have gained liberty. You as Truth, reside in me as the Omkara the essence of the Vedas art Thou." Besides all these births, the devotee finds himself steeped in the evil effects of his own deeds, hardly realising his position. "I was in the strong grasp of my own actions, shrouded in the enveloping ignorance; and binding me by the cords of Dharma and sin, clothing the body with the

filthy outer skin this home of nine gates getting deceived by the senses five, O pure One, you made me one who could never have melting love for you. You came by yourself with all your grace, showed me Thy blessed feet, to me meaner than a dog. You are the essence of all kindness more precious than a mother."

The saint had tried to put most of his experiences in all his compositions in some form or other and before we conclude it is worth while to take into consideration, the 'Thiruchatakam' or the "Sacred Cento" which is considered to be his master piece. This hymn contains one hundred stanzas divided into ten sections each presenting one idea. We begin with the soul groping for guidance and end with the final ecstatic bliss thereby showing varying phases of religious emotion and experience. In the first ten known as MEYYUNARDAL or understanding the truth the saint talks about his first meeting the Lord and still how the Lord came to save him and guide him. "I have done no penances, nor did I worship with flowers and prostrated. My life was wasted and I was a slave to my deeds. I never had the fortune to be with Thy loving devotees and get Thy grace O Shiva." But the Lord came, sought him out and made him His own. While in the first section he saw the Lord fit for worship, the second one called the ARIVURUTTAL or imparting the knowledge the saint learns more about the Lord. He prays for the grace of the Lord alone and he realises that the Lord is all pervading.

"Thou art the Heaven; Thou art the Earth; Thou art the Wind; Thou art the Light;
The body Thou; the Soul Thou; Existence Non-existence Thou;

Thou art the King; these puppets all Thou dost make move, dwelling within, That each one says: 'Myself and mine.'

What shall I say? How render praise?" But that is not all. God is all these and something more which he tries to explain in the third decad SUTTARUTTAL or the Removal of self-identity. In this the saint says how the Lord took complete possession of him and showered on him more of His grace in order that he might see the Lord as the inner soul making everything move and whom none can know by hearing alone, "He is Father, Male, Female, Neuter and Akasa wondrous Lusture; as the End of all and beyond that" By these ten it is shown that the Lord is beyond the reach of senses but can be attained only by true knowledge. The fourth is the purification of the self, known as 'ATMA SUDDHI'. In the last section we are told the realisation of God comes only by right knowledge and here he deals how that can be got. For this the mind has to be purified from the ideas of 'I' and 'mine.' These can be got by devout adoration of the Lord by mind speech and action. So the saint deals with this and how it is absolutely necessary for the seeker after God. He abuses the body in not taking part in the worship of the Lord. "Oh dead heart! Thou dost not dance; Thou dost not love the feet of the Dancing Lord (Natarajah); Thou dost not sing His praise, nor dost Thou throb with devotion. Thou dost not bow down before Him; neither dost Thou put the flower from His feet reverentially over Thy head nor dost Thou offer Him flowers. Thou hast become without a companion and I do not know what I should do with Thee." The mind was purified and he got also the blessings of the Lord. His grace he did not

at all deserve and yet he got it. So the saint expresses his inability to give a fitting return for this gift in the next decad 'KAIMARU KODUTTAL' or the return for the gift. He contrasts the greatness of the Lord with his baseness and feels absolutely helpless to give a fitting return. The Lord took him within Himself made the saint live in the company of devotees freed him from all his bondages, although the saint was incapable of understanding the greatness of his Master. The sixth decad is called the ANUBHOGA SUDDHI or the purification of experience. Now the saint had understood the greatness of the company of the Lord. But unfortunately this body with its numerous defects stands in the way. He well remembered the mercies of the Lord, who came to him leaving all those who practise severe austerities, but alas! he could not shake off his body. So he sings,

"For many years did numerous saints do penance for Thee, hating the body Leaving them, the sinful me the slave Thou made.

I cannot destroy this filthy sheath. O precious gem!

I have not the pangs of true love for Thee.

How shall I rise my Lord?"

At last grace has come and the saint gets the vision of the Lord Shiva. He feels highly thrilled at this and in a next decad 'KARUNYATTIRANGAL—Surrender for Divine mercy—he gives himself in complete adoration of Shiva and most of the hymns are prayers for the Lord to take the devotee nearer to Him and give him the blessed regions. In one of the stanzas he says: "Protect me my Lord! the king of

the gods! Partner of Divine Mother! Protect me My Lord, the wearer of Sacred Ash! Protect me Thou ruddy Prince! Protect me O Lord of Thillai! O King of Heaven! O my Lord! save me!"

From the next decad we are informed about his bliss got by the grace of the Lord. The eighth is called ANANDATTAZHDAL or the immersion in bliss. He had at last begun to taste the divine bliss which makes him dance with joy. All these ten verses are put in a rhythmic metre, and every sentence breathes the air of felicity. This superb joy stands far above even the pleasures of gods and the saint says that he sought not the choice delights of Indra, Vishnu or Brahma. He needed only the life at the feet of the Lord. It is because, by this he felt an overwhelming bliss that his breast was riven, the body trembled and tears trickled down his cheeks like streams. The next stage is ecstasy shown in the ninth decad 'ANANDA PARAVASAM.' Here he describes the fear he is having in his heart and prays that it is taken away. By this time he has been able to realise the higher aspect of God and the falseness of this body. "I am false; my heart is false; my love is false; but even I of evil deeds may get thee by crying for thee; O

ambrosial Sweetness! Give Thy grace." The last section is the culmination of the mystic experience, where he is said to go even beyond the previous stage. This section is called ANANDATTAM beyond bliss. By this time the saint has attained the peaceful state. 'His afflictions have ceased. He feels that he is completely at the mercy of the Lord. Everything has an end and the saint wants to have nothing else but the blessed company of the Lord. "May I praise Thee. May I melt in Thy love I long to dance in singing of Thee in Thy court; may I leave this false cage; grant me Liberation, O True of Thy true devotees!"

All the ideas contained in the 'Thiruchadakam' are also found scattered in the other hymns of the saint. He put the spiritual ideas in common songs, which people sang while they were engaged in various games and pastimes. Sometimes he addressed the parrot, the quail and the dragon-fly to sing the praise of the Lord and made them the messengers to the Lord. Wherever we read in 'Thiruvagasam' we find only devotion. So it is no wonder that even after nearly thirteen centuries, people think of Manikkavasagar and his Thiruvagasam with love and reverence.

If a man sees a pleader, he naturally thinks of lawsuits and courts. Similarly, on seeing a pious devotee, one is reminded of God and of the life hereafter.

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

THE HYMNS OF SRI SANKARACHARYA

By MISS. MANORANJANA HANDU B.A.

The great monistic thinker Sankaracharya is well known throughout the length and breadth of India, as one of the most profound philosopher-writers ever born. Wherever Indian philosophy is taught, read or even mentioned the name of this great Vedantin rises simultaneously in one's mind. He has enriched the already abundant store-house of Hindu thought through the medium of Sanskrit, by writing many philosophical treatises and valuable commentaries on the scriptures. Besides these deep and abstruse philosophical truths which Sankara expounded there are several short hymns composed by him but which are comparatively unknown to the general readers of Sanskrit. The bhashyas are examples of his great erudition, hence very laudable from purely intellectual point of view. Consequently they have overshadowed the many hymns, he has composed, the recitation of which gives rise to mental tranquillity, so very rare in the modern age.

The चर्पटपञ्जरिकास्तोत्रम् is simple in diction and language whilst its endearing quality is the theme which has a universal appeal for the common man. The द्वादशपञ्जरिकास्तोत्रम् also composed by Sankara is very similar. Sankaracharya is one of the few writers in Sanskrit—be they philosophers, poets, historians, grammarians, or rhetoricians who have paid some attention to rhyme, besides obeying the conventional rules of metre. This hymn was occasioned by the sight of a Brahmana who was

reciting a rule of grammar दुकृञ् करणे even at an old decrepit age when the name of God should have rather been on his lips. Sankara addressing him as "O You fool" (मूढमते) composed the hymn pointing out the inadequacy of the dry bones of grammar, by which ritualism is signified so far as the final liberation is concerned. He begins his hymn in a simple yet significant manner:

"दिनमपि रजनी सायं प्रातः शिशिरवसन्तौ पुनरायातः ।
काळः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायुस्तदपि न मुञ्चत्याज्ञावायुः ॥
भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं मूढमते ॥

"Day and night, evening and morning, winter and spring roll on, time is having its sport, life is being spent away. Yet the vain desire does not go. Worship the Lord, worship the Lord, Worship the Lord, O You fool!" *Altar Flowers.*

The music in these lines is striking, their rhythm is accented by the internal rhyme and it seems to flow on like a rippling stream whilst its theme strikes a sombre note. Pointing out the brief span of life by drawing our attention to the speed with which time passes, upsetting all human calculations and usually forestalling us by the appalling proximity of death—he says—

बालस्तावकीडासकस्तखस्तावस्तखीरकः ।

वृद्धस्तावक्षिन्ताममः परे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न कम् ॥

भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं मूढमते ॥

"The child is attached to play, youth to women, old age is burdened with anxiety.

No one is engaged with the supreme Lord, etc." *Altar Flowers*.

The unsolved riddle, the eternal question which springs in every human mind all over the world has been expressed in various ways by many thinkers; but perhaps nobody has clothed these fundamental teachings in such an astonishingly simple language thus making it intelligible to the greatest and the smallest alike.

कस्त्वं कोऽहं कुत आयातः का मे जननी को मे तातः ।

इति परिभावय सर्वमसारं विश्वं त्यक्त्वा स्वप्नविचारम् ॥

भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं मूढमते ॥

"Who art thou! Who am I? Whence have I come? Who are my father and mother?—thus think everything as unreal, having renounced the world, knowing it to be as unreal as a dream. Worship the Lord, etc." *Altar Flowers*.

It is only natural that a hymn of this standard abounding in ideas so dear to the Hindu sentiment written—not in long, compounded, obscure Sanskrit but in the easiest and simplest words possible should find a permanent place in every heart. Its lines echo and re-echo in one's mind and so forcefully convey its import that one is amazed at the imperceptible yet great influence it wields over the so-called little things of life—in reality so vital!

The second hymn which I must confess is my favourite is the 'Hymn to the Divine Mother craving forgiveness' (i.e., देव्यपराध-क्षमापणस्तोत्रम्). There is also a शिवापराध-क्षमापणस्तोत्रम् which though equally beautiful is somehow not so enchanting. The former hymn is one of the most poignant stotras ever written wielding a great charm and power over the mind of

its readers. So often the weak human being errs in life. Truly has it been said that to err is human—but if the remedy for human weakness did not lie in the hand of One who is readily accessible to a sincere heart, we would have been in a sorry state of affairs. Sometimes we err consciously more often unconsciously and when we realise the gravity of the error committed, our very heart writhes in silent anguish over the misdeed, at such critical junctures when one feels the whole edifice of life, crumbling like a mansion of cards, there must be some pillar of strength to cling on to for support. Sankara with his deep psychological insight into this emotional need of man wrote the extraordinary hymn, through which we cry out in our moments of despair:

इदानीं चेन्मातस्त्व यदि कृपा नापि भविता
निरालम्बो लम्बोदरजननि कं यामि शरणम् ॥

"If thou wilt not even now bestow thy grace on me in whom else shall I who am forlorn take refuge—O thou mother of Ganesa?" *Altar Flowers*.

The life of the average individual today is practically divorced from religion, but religion being an essential part of the human constitution we do turn to it at some time or other. Sankaracharya in his inimitable style, gives expression to our silent and unexpressed yearnings for love from above. We cannot expect it, but the prerogative of prayer is fortunately denied to none of us.

न मन्त्रं नो यन्त्रं तदपि च न जाने स्तुतिमहो
न चाङ्गानं ध्यानं तदपि च न जाने स्तुतिकथाः ।
न जाने मुद्रास्ते तदपि च न जाने विरूपनं
परं जाने मातस्त्वदनुसरणं ह्येवाहरणम् ॥

"Alas! I do not know either thy mystical word, symbol or diagram nor songs of praise to thee nor how to welcome or meditate upon thee. Neither do I know words of praise to thee nor thy मुद्रा nor how to inform thee of my distress, but this much I know O Mother! that to take refuge in thee is to destroy all my miseries." *Altar Flowers*.

Sankaracharya's verses throbbingly describe the pain of human heart at the wrongs and misdeeds it has committed, yet they are so encouraging and soothing bringing peace, solace, and strength. If he believed in the divine healing power of forgiveness are we also not justified in having that faith? Although

जगन्मातर्मातस्त्व चरणसेवा न रचिता
न वा दत्तं देवि द्रविणमपि भूयस्त्व मया ।
तथापि त्वं स्नेहं मयि निरुपमं यत् प्रकुरुषे
कुतुहो जायेत क्वचिदपि कुमाता न भवति ॥

"O mother of the world never have I worshipped thy feet nor given abundant wealth in thy name, yet the affection thou hast for me without compare is because a bad son may sometimes be born but a bad mother never." *Altar Flowers*.

The hymn when finished makes us full of hope and courage for we know that whatsoever may occur, howsoever we may err we have got the sheet-anchor:

कुतुहो जायेत क्वचिदपि कुमाता न भवति ॥

(A bad son may sometimes be born, but a bad mother never) We have only to seek Her benevolence and it will well forth.

Some of Sankara's hymns have a special lilt and cadence of their own. The aesthe-

tic pleasure besides the devotional is also manifest as his choice of words, the metre together with its topic breathes of the music in it. There is a शिवाष्टकम् and a शिवनामावल्याष्टकम् on praise of the godhead Siva and भवान्याष्टकम् his consort Parvati. In the last there is complete surrender to the daughter of the Himalayas for Sankara confesses his inability to propitiate the goddess in any other way:

कुर्मो कुसङ्गी कुबुद्धिः कुवासः
कुलाचारहीनः कुदाचारलीनः ।
कुदृष्टिः कुवाक्यप्रबन्धः सदाहं
गतिस्त्वं गतिस्त्वं त्वमेका भवानि ॥

"Addicted to sinning and worthless companions

A slave to ill thoughts and to doers of evil,

Degraded am I, unrighteous, abandoned,
Attached to ill objects, adept in ill speaking :

In Thee is my only haven of refuge,
In Thee my help and my strength,
O Bhavani!"

(Translation : Swami Nikhilananda)

There are two कृष्णाष्टकम्s, a गोविन्दाष्टकम्, a गुर्वष्टकम् हरिशरणाष्टकम् धन्याष्टकम् and an अन्युताष्टकम् on this list of अष्टकम्s composed by Sankara. In one of the कृष्णाष्टकम् his love of rhyme is apparent as the words seem to synchronise into a melody, fragrant with the name of Sri Krishna, repeated over and over again in different ways :

भजे ब्रजैकमण्डनं समस्तपापखण्डनं
स्वभक्तिचित्तरञ्जनं सदैव नन्दनन्दनम् ।
सुषिञ्छगुणमस्तकं सुनादवेणुहस्तकं
अनङ्गरङ्गासारं नमामि कुण्डलानगरम् ॥

"I worship thee O Krishna, thou art the only ornament of the Vraja village: thou purgest away all sins and pleaseth the hearts of thy devotees. O Nandana! thou hast a crown of the peacocks' beautiful tail on thy forehead, the melodious flute in thy hands and thou art an ocean of love, I bow to thee."

There are two hymns in honour of the divine Ganga so lovingly revered by the Hindus and two in praise of the Yamuna, considered sacred because of its association with Sri Krishna. Inspired by the immeasurable faith in the divine waters of the heavenly Ganga, Sankara's heart overflowed with love and he cried out in ecstasy-

देवि सुरेश्वरि भगवति गङ्गे क्षिप्रवन्तारिणि तरलतरङ्गे ।
शङ्करमौलिविहारिणि विमले मम मतिरास्तां तव पदकमले ॥
पतितोद्धारिणि जाह्नवि गङ्गे खण्डितगिरिवरमण्डितभङ्गे ।
भीष्मजननि खलु मुनिवरकन्ये पतितनिवारिणि
क्षिप्रवन्धन्ये ॥

"Heaven born river! Bhagirathi Ganga! Goddess Redeemer of all the worlds!
In ripples the waters playfully are flowing;
Thou wanderest in Siva's matted hair,
Grant that my mind, O thou who art stainless!
Ever may dwell at the lotus of Thy feet.
Ganga! Jahnavi! Saviour of sinners!
Murmuring, thou flowest on Thy broken stones.
Mother of Bhishma! daughter of Jahnu!
Thou, the almighty Conqueror of evil!
Truly Thou art blest in all the worlds."

(Translation by Swami Nikhilananda)

The blessed Yamuna with its deep stream of water, blue as the complexion of the cow-herd Krishna who sported on its banks

and thereby made it immortal, has no less an effect on Sankara, for he says:

मुरारिकायकालिमाललामवारिधारिणी
नृणं कृतखिविष्टया तिलोकशोकहारिणी ।
मनोनुकूलकूलकुञ्जपुञ्जतुमुदा
धुनोतु मे मनोमलं कलिन्दनदिनी सदा ॥

"O daughter of Kalinda, Yamuna! bearing beautiful waters, blue as the skin of Sri Krishna; you remove the sorrow of the three worlds and hence consider the happiness of heaven futile; you have groups of groves on your lovely banks and quieten the passions of all men, may thou always cleanse our hearts of all sins." The last line comes back again and again at the end of every stanza, giving the refrain a peculiar beauty of its own.

We may mention here some of the other hymns composed by the same blessed hand of Sankaracharya. There are a few in the पञ्चक style: ललितापञ्चकम्, मीनाक्षीपञ्चकम्, साधनपञ्चकम्, कौपीनपञ्चकम्, काशीपञ्चकम्, आरम-पञ्चकम् whilst the rest are miscellaneous collection of hymns addressed to अक्षरपुर्णा, दक्षिणामूर्ति, त्रिपुरसुन्दरी etc, of course there must be many more lost in the vastness of Sanskrit literature which are equally sublime but unfortunately not available to us. Even if one does not understand the intricate meaning of the words the mere recitation of these hymns mysteriously enough lifts one up to a higher plane. One finds great solace in sharing Sankara's thoughts so beautifully expressed even through the mere jingle of words. Sometimes one doubts outwardly but at heart one becomes convinced of the truth of Sankara's message that Brahman only exists and the world is

ephemeral. That the transitoriness of the world is neither an old woman's tale nor a fable; but is as fundamental as a mathematical axiom. So one prays in the words of the great Sage:

न तातो न माता न बन्धुर्न नसा
न पुत्रो न पुत्री न भृत्यो न भर्ता ।
न जाया न विद्या न वृत्तिर्ममेव
गतिस्त्वं गतिस्त्वं त्वमेका भवानि ॥

"No father have I, no mother,
no comrade,
No son, no daughter, no wife, and
no grandchild,
No servant nor master, no wisdom,
nor calling:
In Thee is my only haven of
refuge
In Thee, my help and my strength,
O Bhavani!"

THE RATIONALE OF EVIL IN THIS WORLD

By SWAMI DESHIKANANDA

Why should there be evil in this world? The existence of evil in this world is not as many fancy a mere postulate of the logic or reasoning. For, in our everyday life evil confronts one and all. So it behoves us to understand what evil exactly is and also get at the root cause of evil. Before we discuss the cause and existence of evil, let us try and understand the view points of the common man, and what tradition in general says about evil.

Generally speaking, the problem of evil is an oft discussed topic and is as old as the world itself. This subject still seems to be a disputable factor, nay a mystery in man's life. The common man takes evil to have been preordained and he should suffer from the consequences of evil. Sometimes without much reflection he also murmurs that it is all due to the karma (effect) of his past life and "adrista" which literally means that which cannot be seen, i.e. intelligently understood and apprehended. But he leaves it there without further examining

or reasoning on it. All this he says as he had heard from his elders and handed down through tradition.

What do theistic religions say? Various theistic religions and faiths of the world explain the existence of evil differently. Some of them attribute evil to have been created by a power opposite to God or what is generally known as Satan or the devil. Thus even the most intelligent followers of the respective faiths have often satisfied themselves. The followers of all such theistic religions of the world, not being able to rationally solve this problem of evil when confronted with, seek elsewhere to find out the author of evil. For example, Christianity ascribes evil to Satan, Islam to "Iblis" (Satan or the devil), Zoroastrianism to Ahriman and so on. The Hindu theologians say that it is due to the "Lila" or sport of the Lord. When questioned further these wisemen say that it is a kind of chastisement to bring back persons to adopt a good life under the benign

protection of God. This is what is generally known as anthropomorphic way of looking into the affair. It is indeed strange that God should sport at our misery.

From the above we come to the following conclusions: God, the doer of good, has got equally a strong opponent in Satan or devil, as the author of evil. So God loses his omnipotence if he is not able to check or control the devil! Is it not then better to worship and propitiate the devil rather than God, if we are to avert evil and its consequences? Or, from the stand point of the Hindu theologians, it may be asked, why should there be chastisement at all by an all merciful and all loving God? God is the repository of endless good qualities, they tell at the same breath. Even good parents rarely chastise or punish their children. Why God who is an embodiment of love and goodness should have recourse to correction or redemption through punishing the persons is a thing which passes our understanding. So, "Lila" or sport does not explain the anomaly. Therefore, the inescapable conclusion is, as such, that a personal god is shipwrecked on the rock of the problem of evil.

Now let us analyse life a little: We know we confront evil in our everyday life whatever be the explanations of the followers of the respective faiths and religions. Life itself, it may be said, is a bundle of evil. For birth has its death, old age, decay and disease—none however great, rich or wise, is able to avoid these. Evil is concomitant with life. Hence to avert evil one has to dissociate himself from life. Or evil cannot be perceived and remedied unless one stands out of or aside of life. Is it then to commit suicide? No; it is to have an objective and detached attitude to

life, and know that true Self is separate from the body and the senses. An example may make clear this point: The evils of drink cannot be solved or driven home to one so long as he is under the influence of drink and intoxication. So is the evil of life.

Both the Bible and the Koran, explain the origin of life and evil here on earth, more or less in the same way. The story of the fall of Adam and Eve when recounted and reflected upon give a clue to life and evil. It is said that Eve was tempted by Satan to eat the fruit of knowledge, and Eve in her turn tempted Adam to do likewise. God, when he came to know of it cursed both Adam and Eve with the result that both were born here on earth to redeem themselves and work out their sins by suffering evils. Whatever be the truth, the story gives the moral that evil started with life. And there was desire contrary to the rule of life both in Adam and Eve which was the root cause of the fall of Adam and Eve due to the curse of God. Hence desire is the root cause of the origin of life and evil.

Therefore life is a progeny of desire. Life is a continual warfare between good and evil, virtue and vice and God and Satan. Good and evil is continuously striving hard to gain victory over the other. Desire which is the motivation is a great factor in that. If good desire preponderates over evil, then that person is said to be good, if evil, evil. Desire or hope is the mother of misery or evil. The will to live is from desire to achieve and attain objects of enjoyment. This hope or desire for enjoyment of the objects of the world through the senses and the mind is due to ignorance of one's own true nature and the lack of the true insight into the nature of

the world. This desire to enjoy the objects of the world necessitates birth. With birth old age, decay, disease and death follow. So life itself is the offspring of evil, and desire is the root cause of evil. That desire and life are the origin of evil is made abundantly clear from the story of the fall of Adam and Eve of the Bible.

What do Hindu scriptures say about life and evil? "That man, (individual self) when he is born or attains a body, is connected with evils. And when he dies or leaves the body he discards those evils." (Br. Up. 4. 3. 8.) Birth and evil are an invariable concomitant. So life in general comes from desire, is sustained by desire and in the end ceases in desire. For convenience, we may just also say that life comes from evil, is sustained by evil, and in the end goes back to evil. Though this kind of conception looks monstrous, if not absurd, yet it is, nevertheless, a fact of experience. What life or body one is going to get is determined by the constant desire of a person is borne out by the Gita. "Remembering (desiring) whatever objects at the end he leaves body, that alone is reached by him, because of his constant thought (desire) of that object". (Gita VIII—6) Further the author of the Gita says that good and bad births are caused by good and bad actions of a person in his previous births.

From the above it is clear that actions and desires lead to births in different wombs and thus the Soul experiences evils. How to obviate or avoid evil is the question? The common experience of every person is that desire cannot cease by itself. Desire ceases by satiating desire. But, more often than not, desire grows stronger and stronger by one's satisfying desires. But if one desires for the Atman, the desires

cease. "Of him who is without desire, who is free from desires the objects of whose desire have been attained and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self" (Br. Up. 4. 4. 6.) It is said that the organs of such a Soul or person do not depart or transmigrate. He being truth merges in truth. This clearly proves that desire is the root cause of transmigratory existence. Hence Srutis (scriptures) declare that he who has rooted out his desires will not only be not born but he will produce no baneful result. Further it is also said "for one who has completely attained the objects of his desire and realised the self, all desires dissolve in this very life," (Mu. 111. 2. 2.). Further Sruti says, "when all the desires that dwell in his mind are gone then he having been mortal becomes immortal". (Br. Up. 4. 4. 7.). Sankara while commenting on this Sruti says, "it is virtually implied that desires concerning things other than the self fall under the category of ignorance and are but forms of death. Therefore, on the cessation of desires, the man of realisation becomes immortal..... Because formerly he was embodied and mortal on account of his identification with the body under the influence of his desires and past work; since that has gone, he is now disembodied, and therefore immortal." And this he achieves while living in this very body. Hence liberation does not require such things as going to some other place like heaven.

This is the way, the Vedic Seers say, to put an end to desire which leads to ceaseless rounds of births and deaths. When desires cease, the evils and misery also cease. "When a man completely casts all the desires of his mind, satisfies in the self alone, then he is said to be of steady wisdom" (Gita II-55). So long as man is

not able to see or realise his body, senses and mind as different from his own real self, the evils will not cease for him. And his attitude, due to ignorance of his real nature, that he is the body and senses which are, as said above, evil and the outcome of evil would continue to bring hosts of miseries for him as a consequence of his desires and past work.

How do the Vedantins explain the cause and existence of evil? How do they combat evil at its own den? The Vedantins also observe and experience evil and inequalities between man and man in this world. The Vedantins, as the most practical men, are not satisfied with the preordination theory of semitic religions according to which God acts according to His whims and fancies. And much less with the theory of "Lila" or sport of the Hindu theologians; nor could they persuade themselves in the belief of a Satan or devil opposite to God and outside of them as the author of evil and misery. They go into the root of the problem and declare from the house tops the moral foundations of the world where cause and effect take place as an inexorable law of nature: Effect is nothing but the cause reproduced in another form and by so expounding this rigorous law they exploded the theory of end justifying the means. They say end is nothing but the means perfected and fruited. As the means, so is the end. And the whole world is based on this moral foundation that good acts bring forth good results and evil, evil fruits. This inexorable law of retribution is an original contribution by the Vedantins of yore to explain the existence of evil and inequality found in this world. Thus Vedantins came to the rescue of the personal God who was indicted for the inequalities and evils that are found in the world and

stated that God is not at all responsible for our evil or misery here.

Let us further examine and analyse what this law of Karma or law of Retribution is: Karma denotes action; Karma also means the result of action. In the law of Karma it means the result or fruit of action. Vedantins maintain that man's future is moulded from his present acts. If the future of man is moulded from the acts of his present life, it is but logical to say that his present life is fashioned according to the acts he has done in his past life. So that man is the master of his own destiny, nay, he is his own architect of life. From this, it is now easy to deduce that the evil one now suffers from and the happiness one enjoys here are not the works of a Satan or devil but due to his own action. "As you sow, so you reap" is the fundamental law of nature. This is a most scientific law ever adumbrated by the genius of man. Even the great Buddha who did not believe, as it is told by his disciples in the existence of God or a permanent soul, did accept the doctrine of Karma as propounded by the Vedic Seers. The Vedic dictum is: "As it does and acts, so it becomes; by doing good it becomes good; and by doing evil it becomes evil; it becomes virtuous through good acts and vicious through evil acts" (Br. Up. 4. 4. 5.) Hence a Vedantin accepts with all calmness the position he is placed in the present life as he is enjoying his own desert.

This doctrine of Karma is followed by the theory of rebirth. The present birth is the resultant or totality of what he has done and been in the past. It is proportionate to the law of cause and effect, even as action and reaction are equal and opposite. The author of the Gita says, "a man attains whatever he thinks of at the moment

of death if he has always been imbued with that idea" (Gita VIII-6). In his commentary on 4. 4. 2 in Br. Upanishad, Sankara says, "As a matter of fact, everybody has at that moment of death a consciousness which consists of impressions in the form of particular modifications of his mind that are induced by his past work." And he adds, "one becomes good through good work, and evil through evil work" (Br. III 2. 13). The Upanishadic sages diagnosed this malady of evil we have here and remedied it suitably.

It is now more than clear that we get caught in our own net of actions of past life even as the silk worm gets caught up or lodged in its own cocoon wrought by itself. We create our own evil and suffer consequently as has been said by the Vedas already quoted. How to get over this evil and action is a most pertinent question? The author of the Gita is emphatic that verily none can ever rest for a moment without performing actions for his own nature goads him to do so. And he further adds, "the three-fold fruit of action, disagreeable, agreeable and mixed, accrues to non-relinquishers after death, but never to relinquishers." (Gita XVIII-12). How to become a relinquisher and avoid the fruit of action? "Actions cannot be entirely relinquished by an individual, but he who relinquishes the fruits of action is called a relinquisher", says Krishna in the Gita (XVIII-11). One may work ceaselessly, but he should not lean on to the fruits of actions. It is the desire for the fruit or result of action that brings misery on the doer or the agent. Hence one has to engage oneself in action looking upon pain and pleasure and gain and loss the same, and thus do all works with the principle that one has the right to work only but not to

the fruits thereof—this is the advice of Krishna to Arjuna—Thus being steadfast abandoning attachment—to success and failure one attains to poise of mind. "The performer of works possessed of this evenness of mind, abandoning the fruits of actions freed for ever from the fetters of birth and death attains that state which is beyond all evil." (Gita II-51.) With this exhortation, Krishna commands Arjuna to take up the bow and fight his kinsmen, his Guru and grandsire, Bhishmapitamaha. The instructions and the advice given by Krishna to Arjuna is not only for Arjuna but for all and for all time. We may not have to fight a Kurukshetra battle, but we have to fight the battle of life to overcome the evil that is staring in the face of everyman at every moment of his life all the world over.

This cannot be achieved through murmuring or muttering formulas, though these formulas may have their own values. The evil of desire has to be fought on all fronts. For this the author of the Gita instructs seekers after truth like a master-general. The unappeasable fire of desire which is, as we know, the root cause of evil from the days of the first man on earth has taken its abode in the mind and senses and through which it works its havoc on individuals, communities and nations by veiling wisdom. Hence evil should be obliterated and rooted out by controlling and restraining the senses and mind. The greatest enemy is not from without but is from within. This foe of desire which makes a god a brute, nay worse. So it behoves us to fight hard and vanquish this unseizable foe of desire by restraining the lower self by the higher self. "A man should uplift himself by his own self; so let him not weaken the self. For the self

is the friend of oneself and this self is the enemy of oneself. The self is the friend of the self for him who has conquered himself by this self. But to the unconquered self, this self is inimical and acts like an external foe." (Gita VI-5 and 6). This is not an escapement mechanism as we are told by our modern wise men. For the latter say that religion is an escapement mechanism or a dope. A contemplated world government, a world state with a world police of politicians and war-lords for the well being of the nations can be of little service and utility to bring about peace and prosperity on earth. It should start with individual members of society and community and build upwards the stability of society and community and not from above downwards to the individuals of society. So we want reformers not of others but of themselves. Can religion be thus an opiate or dope of man or society? The emphatic reply is, no. Religion, let me repeat, is neither an escapement mechanism nor the opiate nor dope of people and society. It is on the other hand a true and noble way of life to achieve the real goal and aim of life of individual and communities and nations.

After so much of discursive thinking and theoretical speculation, we should not fail to remind ourselves that evil which confronts us exists only in the relative time-space world of ours. Evil has never an absolute existence. Good and evil are again relative terms: Good is less evil and evil is less good. Good and evil exist or cease to exist with the existence or non-existence of the world. Good and evil stand or fall with the existence or the exit of man. So beyond the world and man, good and evil have no meaning nor do they carry any experience with them.

Man and the world we should know, are a queer blend of good and evil, nay truth and untruth. The immortal element in man is God. Hence it is also said that mortal God is man and immortal man is God. For a Jnani or wiseman good and evil of this world have little value. He is not affected by them though he knows that they torment the common man. Wiseman is not subject to the influence of good and evil even as a man in the sun has no influence or effect of darkness or night. That is why the Vedic Seers, the authors of the Upanishads and the Gita exhort the common man to go beyond the prakriti which is the stuff of the world and gunas of man. Then and then only the source and ground of evil can be apprehended and not while we are in or with the world. Unless the very cause of the world and man is known, the existence of evil is always a problem and would always remain a mystery.

In this endeavour we should also remember that the present birth (life) is but a link in or among the series of the links of the chain of life. It is foolish to think that life began for the first time with the birth of the present body and ends with the death of this body. The anomaly of life here can be known with a better perspective when the series of the links of the chain of life are known. That is to say, the abnormal and so called inconsistent state of affairs and conditions of Life here with its evils and inequalities can be better understood only when the past births and future births are considered, discussed and properly evaluated. Then only the mystery and problem of evil unravel itself. All great men of the world like the Vedic Seers, Buddha, Jina, Socrates, Jesus and others believed in both the past and future births.

From the metaphysical view-point good and evil have no place ultimately. But, however, the common man has to fight hard his way through the world of good and evil and reach a world where there is neither good nor evil. In his inimitable parable, Sri Ramakrishna makes this point clear. "A thorn has run into the sole of a foot. You remove that thorn with the help of another thorn, after doing so you throw away both of them." In the same way evil should be conquered by good and one should go beyond both good and evil to enjoy the tranquillity of life.

This going beyond good and evil is to dissociate oneself from the sense of body idea. A wiseman though he lives in the body, knows himself to be apart from it, which is only an abode of his real Self. For he (wiseman) has awakened from the dream of ignorance. For such a man the happenings of the state of waking experience are on the same level of reality as the experience of dream state. He stands as but a witness to the experiences of both the states of waking and dream. He knows well that one is as much real or false as the other. Consequently he is not attached to those occurrences even as a spectator in a cinema house and hence he is not affected in any way. On the otherhand, an ignorant man (ajnani) identifies himself with his body and senses and is attached to the experiences of waking state believing them to be real, because he is still in the arms of ignorance. A wiseman is not subject to evil or its influence because he is not attached to things of the waking state, knowing them to be unreal like cinematograph pictures. While an ignorant man is tossed about and feels very miserable in this world due to attachment, a wise man is

happy due to his poise and tranquillity derived from detachment.

Now in conclusion let us summarise: Evil as we find in this world is not the creation of a Satan; nor is the preordination due to the cruel fiat of ungodly god; nor is the "Lila" or sport of a god from on High. Theists and theologians flounder because of anthropomorphism or their humanising god as a benign potentate who is their personal God. This personal god sports at our misery! He is the author of the inequalities that are found in this world. The march of reason and higher criticism of scriptures cannot be satisfied with these naive explanations. Nor should we despair in life because of the existence of evil. From the foregoing paragraphs we come to the conclusion that evil has no absolute existence. It is relative to the world and man. Evil starts with life in relation to man's actions. As one sows, so he reaps, good brings good results, bad bad. The most scientific law of cause and sequence or as it is popularly called the Law of Karma gives us the greatest solace and shows us a way of life to live happily here without being subject to evil and misery.

Human birth is the most blessed of all births and an open gateway to attain unmixed happiness and immortality. Every one keenly longs to avoid evil and misery and achieve happiness. Real happiness bereft of misery cannot be had from the objects of the world which are ephemeral and transitory. Real happiness can be had only from the real and not from the unreal. The real in us is called Self or Atman, and the Real in the world is known as Brahman. Self is beyond body senses and mind. Brahman is beyond the phenomenal world. An integral or intuitive knowledge of Self or Brahman

gives man unalloyed happiness and immortality. This is also known as the realisation (aparokshanubhuti) of Truth. The Truth is that Atman (self) and Brahman are identical. Self-knowledge involves knowledge of Brahman and Brahman-knowledge is Self-knowledge. This knowledge is the highest aim of human life. For thereby we come to know who we are, whence we are, whither we are bound and what our objective should be on the advent of life here on earth. From the pragmatic standpoint one attains unmixed happiness and immortality. And the brute in man is transformed to the Divine by sublimating the animal or lower instincts in man. Know ye, therefore, this truth that real Self is God and God is the true Self of man and be free for ever from evil, misery, old age, disease and death.

Self-realisation is the result of final victory over evil and Satan. In that, it may be said man's life is a continuous and

constant fighting over evil (Satan) which leads to the ascent of man. In man's descent or degeneration life would be a continuous compromise with Satan who may take his votary to the highest pinnacle in the sense or view-point of the world but surely lets him down ultimately to "eternal perdition", as the Satan cannot sustain his devotee eternally as God, the truth does. In such a life of war one among a million may become victorious by vanquishing Satan. Evil ceases to exist subjectively to such a hero. To the rest of the world evil is always there objectively staring in the face as it has ever been in the past. Evil has been the weapon of Satan to tempt, beguile and delude man from his proper path of life. If one has to fight evil (Satan) successfully he has to do so through the help of God, the truth. This decides and determines the kind of philosophy of life one has to adopt in life, which we shall discuss later.

The perfected Bhakta no more goes to see God in temples and churches; he knows no place where he will not find Him. He finds Him in the temple as well as out of the temple, he finds Him in the saint's saintliness as well as in the wicked-man's wickedness, because he has Him already seated in glory in his own heart, as the One Almighty, inextinguishable Light of Love, which is ever shining and eternally present.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA

By SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

Translated from original Bengali

(continued from the previous issue)

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE

YADAVAPRAKASA

Seeing Sri Ramanuja of all auspicious signs stepping into his sixteenth year, his father Srimad Asuri Kesavacharya wanted to get him married. Soon he was wedded to a girl of all beauty. His parents, relatives and neighbours were exceedingly delighted. The poor and the indigent were very happy over sumptuous feasts. The enthusiasm continued for a week. Kanti-mati and her husband were very happy to see the countenance of the new bride. Just when they were thus enjoying worldly bliss for about a month, there appeared according to the eternal law of the Ordainer of the universe afflictions in the wake of joy. Being laid down by severe illness, Kesavacharya wound up his human career within a short time. The Acharya family became pale with bereavement like a cloud-screened full moon night. In the hours of high delight, this sudden shaft of bereavement was felt very sorely. Like the she-heron that was the cause of the burning pain for the ancient Poet Valmiki, Kanti-mati grew extremely unnerved. For the time being Ramanuja himself also was unsteadied with grief at the loss of his father; but by the strength of wisdom soon he became calm. Without giving any outward expression of grief, he grew a little calm and began to pacify his mother.

After finishing the funeral obsequies with the help of the relatives, within a short time he came back home. Then the *sraddha* ceremony was also performed in time. After that they lived at Sriperumbudur for a short time only. As neither his mother nor he himself got peace there, they decided to remove their residence to Kanchipura. Accordingly, after having a house built, Ramanuja together with his family shifted and began to reside there. In course of time the force of affliction was allayed.

At that time, in the city of Kanchi there used to live encircled by many disciples a renowned professor, holding the doctrine of non-dualism. His scholarship would captivate all. Driven by his intense yearning for knowledge, Ramanuja soon became his disciple. Yadavaprakasa was very much pleased to see the charming beauty of his new disciple and the lustre of genius in his face. In a very short time, Ramanuja grew to be counted his chief disciple and a favourite of his.

But this love could not last long. Yadavaprakasa was of unequalled genius. The doctrine of non-dualism as enunciated by him is even today renowned as 'Yadaviya Siddhanta'. He was so to say a pure non-dualist and would not accept

God with form. The universe is the changeful, ever-perishable and Virat form of God. But that imperishable Reality of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute that is beyond time, space and causation behind this Virat form is His supreme Reality;—that is what is to be accented and known. Like the great Sankaracharya, he would not call Vivarta (An apparent or illusory form, or unreal appearance caused by nescience, as taking a rope for a serpent, or the cognisance in one thing of something else). In his eyes the universe would not appear to be as untrue as a mirage and totally insignificant. It is one kind of God's own form which is ever changeful. It is unacceptable because it is perpetually unstable and the Supreme Form being eternally steady is acceptable. The Virat-conscious Atman is Jiva and the Supreme Atman is Brahman.

Sri Ramanuja, a form permeated with devotion, was a manifestation of what is known as 'servitude to God'. So the doctrines of Yadava could not be pleasing to him. Out of respect for his Guru, he would never make bold to show the defects in his teachings. In spite of his wishing so, he would very often check himself.

One day, when the other disciples had gone home for their noon meals, after finishing their morning lessons, Yadavaprakasa asked his dearest disciple Ramanuja to massage oil on his body. Still then one of the disciples was putting questions to the Guru for the clarification of the purport of some abstruse passage in his lessons. He was studying the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. The disciple was failing to grasp properly the meaning of the word 'Kapyasam' 'कप्यासं' which occurs in the earlier portion of the seventh Mantra of the sixth part of the first chapter. The

portion of the verse reads as follows:—

“तस्य यथा कप्यासं पुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी”

Taking the word 'Kapyasam' to mean 'the anus of a monkey' as interpreted by the venerable Sankaracharya, Yadavaprakasa explained the passage as follows:—“The two eyes of that Golden Purusha are like two lotuses red like (the posterior of) a monkey”. On hearing this interpretation with the unbecoming and base simile, Ramanuja's heart, soft by nature and sweetened by devotion as it was, melted, and tears rolled down by the corners of his eyes like flames on the thigh of Yadava. Looking suddenly up, quick at the touch of the flow of tears as hot as burning embers Yadava understood that it was not actually live embers but very hot tears of his dear disciple Ramanuja. When he asked in surprise as to what might be the cause of his afflictions, Ramanuja replied, “Revered Sir, I have been sorely grieved to hear such an unbecoming explanation from a noble one like you. What can I tell you, a single tongue only as I have, how sinful and impossible it is to compare the Supreme Godhead—Who is endowed with all gracious qualities, Who is the repository of all the beauties of the universe, and Who is the image of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss Absolute—with the *posteriors* of a monkey? From the lotus mouth of a wise one like you I never expected such a base exposition.” “My boy, I am too touched to the quick at your audacity”, said Yadava; “Very good, what better explanation than this can you offer?” “By your blessings, everything is possible” asserted Ramanuja. With a slight smile of derision the Guru said, “Fine, very good, then speak out your novel explanation; I see you like to

climb higher than Sankaracharya even.” “Revered Sir, by your blessings everything may be possible.” with great humility said Ramanuja again; “Instead of drawing the meaning 'the posteriors of a monkey' from the word 'Kapyasam' ('कप्यासं') we can better construe it as follows:—‘कजलं water; ‘पिबति’—drinks; he who drinks water, i.e., the sun; and the verbal root as (अस) meaning blossoming, the word as (आस) may mean blossomed. In this way the entire word 'Kapyasam' means 'blossomed by the sun. सूर्यविकसितं सत्यं So, that part of the verse will mean 'The eyes of that Purusha within the golden solar orb are as lovely as the lotuses blossomed by the rays of the sun.”

Hearing this exposition said Yadava, “It is not the direct meaning, but only the derived one. However, you have shown much skill in exegesis here”.

Since this incident happened the preceptor took Ramanuja to be a staunch dualistic devotee of God and consequently his affection for him abated a little too.

Another day when expounding the Mantra 'सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म' Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma which occurs in the *Taittiriyo-panishad*, Yadavaprakasa said that Brahman is Truth, Intelligence, and Infinitude, Ramanuja objected to that and explained the verse as follows:—“Brahman is endowed with the quality of truth, is not endowed with untruth; intelligence is His attribute, not nescience; He is infinite, i.e. is not finite. He is endowed with the qualities of truth, intelligence and infinitude. It is by no means rational to hold that all these qualities are He. These are His; but not He, as the body is mine, I am not the body.” On hearing this exposition, the preceptor flared up in wrath

like a brinjal thrown into boiling oil, “You audacious boy, if you don't want to accept my exposition, why then come here in vain? Why not go home and open a school all by yourself?” After gathering himself a little, he continued, “Your exposition isn't in accordance with the views of Acharya Sankara or with those of any other previous Acharyas. So, don't express your audacity for a second time.” Ramanuja was naturally very polite and devoted to the Guru. During the hours of study he would always try to keep mum as far as possible. To contradict was not his intention at all. But what could he do, when he found truth being misrepresented in the exposition of the preceptor? Notwithstanding his unwillingness, he had to contradict his preceptor, for, truth was his very life. Though Yadava used to flout his refutations as insignificant in the presence of the other disciples, yet gradually there began to grow in him a sort of fear of Ramanuja. He thought, “Who knows this boy may in time establish the doctrine of dualism by rebutting the one of non-dualism. Now, how to get rid of him? He should even be killed for the preservation of the age-old doctrine of non-dualism”. It was not due to his excessive affection for the doctrine of non-dualism that he came to make the brutal resolution. It was extreme jealousy which made him think like that. The poet has said:—

प्रकृतिः खलु सा महीयसां
सहते नान्यसमुत्ति यथा ।
अनुहृष्टते घनध्वनिं
न तु गोमायुस्तानि केसरी ॥

“Not to bear the prosperity of others is the nature of the great; for, the lion echoes only the thunder of the clouds that move high up and not the howls of the jackals”.

Needless to say that this cannot be the trait of a really great one. To that noble one, 'सुखनिन्दस्तुतिर्माने सन्तुष्टो येन केन चित्' 'Censure and praise are equal; he is silent and content with anything!' He has neither friend nor foe. He wishes the good of all. He is ever contented. He is full all around. The poet has spoken about the worldly wise whom we popularly call 'great men', who being prevailed upon by tamas think about themselves, 'कोऽयोरस्ति सदृशो मया' 'Who else is there like me.' Yadavaprakasa was a great man of that category. So what wonder, that instigated by malice, his heart longed to see Ramanuja done away with? Though, with the help of his unequalled intellect, he had mastered all the intricate argumentations of the Vedanta and could clearly prove before all that 'Brahman alone is real and the universe illusory', though the whole of Kanchipura was permeated with the lustre of his fame and his disciples used to worship him as a second Sankara, yet for want of spiritual practices, his wisdom culminated in mere verbose and so he could not save himself from the clutches of desires.

One day Yadava called his other disciples in secret and said, "Look here my children, you don't find any fault in my interpretations. But this impudent Ramanuja would often contradict my expositions. What does it matter if he is intelligent, his mind is full of the heresy of dualism. Now, how to get rid of this fiend?" At this one of the disciples put forth, "Revered Sir, it is enough if he is not allowed to come to the school." "Then, exactly what our teacher is afraid of, will come to pass. That is to say, Ramanuja himself will open one school and propagate the doctrine of dualism there. Have you not heard that he has already refuted the doctrine of non-

dualism by writing an elaborate commentary on the Mantra "सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म" (Brahman is Existence, Intelligence, Infinitude)?" opposed another disciple. In fact, in the meantime Ramanuja had grown to be an object of great affection, in the circle of the elite by writing an explicit commentary on the above Mantra. After bandying words in the like manner for sometime it was decided that there was no better expedient than robbing Ramanuja of his life. The resolution being taken they began to conspire as to how it could be effected with ease and without anybody's knowledge. Yadava spoke at last, "Let us all start on a pilgrimage to have ourselves absolved of all our sins by performing ablutions in the Ganges, the destroyer of sins. All of you intimate this intent to Ramanuja and take all care to persuade him to accompany us. For the object of this pilgrimage is nothing more or less than getting rid of this heretic. After doing away with him on the way, we can easily get rid of the sins incurred by murdering a Brahmin by doing ablutions in the waters of the Bhagirathi; and thus the prickle of the doctrine of non-dualism will be rooted out as well".

The disciples were very much pleased to hear these reasonable words of their preceptor and accordingly they set out to induce Ramanuja to go for the propitious bath in the Bhagirathi.

It has already been mentioned that Ramanuja had a cousin by name Govinda. He used to love Ramanuja better than himself. When the Acharya family quitted Sriperumbudur and came to Kanchipura and began to live there, Govinda also came over there and was living with them. Both Ramanuja and he were of the same age. So when Ramanuja became the disciple of Yadavaprakasa, Govinda also became so.

Very often they would go to and return from the School together. The disciples of Yadava persuaded Ramanuja to go for ablutions in the Bhagirathi. So, it is superfluous to say that Govinda too agreed very eagerly to go on a pilgrimage.

One auspicious day, on the auspicious moment, the band of disciples headed by Yadava started towards Aryavarta on pilgrimage. Kantimati, righteous as she was, could not object to this meritorious act of her son though separation from him was wellnigh unbearable for her. After a few days' steady travel Yadava came with his disciples to the Gondaranya at the foot of the Vindhya Ranges. It was so to say, totally an unfrequented place. Thinking this time and place to be a proper one, this villain of a preceptor asked his disciples to be prepared for that savage and grim action. Govinda could come to know of this; simple-natured Ramanuja did not know a jot of this devilish conspiracy. How could his stainless, affectionate and tender heart ever rear this terrific, diabolic and grim idea? A holy man thinks every one else to be so.

One day Ramanuja and Govinda happened to go to some wayside tank for washing their feet, when Govinda found

Ramanuja quite alone to communicate all to him. He made it very clear to him that on the dodge of going on a pilgrimage, this band of sinister rogues had resolved to murder him and said, "These villains will very soon kill you in this desolate forest. So do you fall back and hide yourself somewhere". So saying he took leave of him and joined the other disciples. On enquiry Yadavaprakasa discovered that Ramanuja was not to be found in the group of disciples. Then all busied themselves to search him out; but none found any trace of him in that deep and lonely forest. They began to call aloud his name in all directions; but no response came. At last, taking it for granted that Ramanuja might have been killed by some fierce animal, they were extremely delighted at heart. But knowing Govinda to be his relation, they began to show outwardly marks of great mourning. By dwelling upon the sermons on the true nature of things, Yadavaprakasa began to make his disciples understand the evanescence of life and tried to pacify Govinda with the words, "None is none's". That malice can make a man worse than a beast, Yadavaprakasa the preceptor bears ample testimony to.

Our so-called Pandits will talk big. They will talk of Brahman, of God, of the Absolute, of Jnana Yoga, of philosophy, of ontology, and the rest. But there are very few who have realised what they talk about. They are dry and hard, and good for nothing.

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

OUR COUNTRY — ITS WEALTH AND POPULATION: By BHASKARRAO VIDYAVANSHI & RASIKLAL PARIKH. VORA & CO. PUBLISHERS LTD. BOMBAY-2. PRICE RS. 4/-

The book under review is a school project and it represents the honest and co-operative effort of the staff and students of the C. N. Vidyavihar, Ahmedabad. The book contains as many as 68 charts, confined mainly to the Natural resources, population, food, clothing, and partition of the country.

The charts on monopoly products (showing how India monopolises the production of Mica, Shellac, and Jute in the world), animal wealth, occupational distribution of man-power are specially instructive and interesting. The pictures dealing with "Why this waste?", "Literacy Drive" and "Scope for extensive cultivation" make us realise and ponder over the fact that India is a very rich country but Indians are a depressingly poor people. Nature has been very generous to India but all our resources—human, mineral and animal—are yet to be profitably made use of. Only about 12% of us are literates and with this low percentage of literacy India will find it very difficult to cope up with the progress which the rest of the world is making. The last eight charts deal with the economic effects of partition. We come to understand that the position of minerals, army and revenue resources in the Indian Union as compared with Pakistan is very sound.

This book is highly useful as it reveals to us where we are and where we can be in the various sectors of the Economic field. Though the book does not cover the entire field of Indian Economics, it is clear and significantly illustrated and what it has attempted, it has done well. Visual aids are becoming increasingly popular now-a-days and it is earnestly hoped that all educational institutions will emulate the example of Vidyavihar and take up similar projects.

C. N. Vidyavihar really deserves to be congratulated on its exquisite piece of good work.

K. S. N.

HYMNS. BY. MINOCHER K. SPENCER (PUBLISHED BY THE SPIRITUAL HEALING CENTRE, R. S. PURAM P. O., COIMBATORE) PP. 167. PRICE RS. 2.

To know God is the highest aspiration of man and He can be known through the path of devotion and in purity of mind, soul and body. God is described in most glorious terms in all the Scriptures of the world. It is by reading such sacred books and also those writings of seers and saints and other devout souls that we can get a glimpse into the glories of God and grow strong in our path of divine knowledge. Here is a collection of inspiring hymns composed by Minocher K. Spencer 'after his usual prayers and meditations under the direct inspiration of his Master and published with a view that his joy may be shared by many.' The arrangement of the various hymns is itself very good, being gradual in the description of God, his manifestation in all beings, and the path of attaining his Grace. In the first few hymns God is praised as the Lord of all creations, as the Eternal and as the fountain of love and grace. Later we see how his Absolute spirit pervades throughout the Universe by his manifestations in multiple forms. Next we find that our goal is salvation, and that by complete renunciation and continuous prayers and meditations we shall reach God. Then we find the devotee praising his Master who has prepared him at God's command to release the soul and trusting in his Master that he will take him faster than he can go himself to God. The Supreme Ruler is the same whether we call him Ahur Mazda, Brahman, Jehova, God or Allah. The devotee prays to God to help him to trample the demon of egoism that shuts him from His Vision. In conclusion he exhorts his "brothers and sisters to follow the Master who will take them all to the goal faster from darkness to light and not to delay but listen to God's Call." Whatever sings the Glory of God is worthy of following. This is one of the good books singing His Glory and can be read with benefit. The book is handy and the get up is good.

R. V.

ASANAS. (PART I)—BY SWAMI KUVAYANANDA. YOGA MIMAMSA OFFICE KAIVALYADHAMA. LONAVLA (G. I. P), BOMBAY. PP 188—PRICE RS. 7.

The aims of Yoga Asanas being the avoidance of disease and the establishment of health by the maintenance of physiological harmony, this excellent treatise on the subject naturally begins with a chapter on the essentials of human anatomy and physiology. In the next chapter on the preparations for Asanas the author has rightly dealt on the interdependence of the body and the mind and the necessity for the practice of Yama and Niyama which are often bypassed by those overpowered by a craze for achieving astonishing results without putting forth adequate efforts. Then follows a detailed exposition of select meditative and cultural poses about twenty in number and a few additional exercises of psychophysical value. The technique of each and every pose and its cultural and therapeutical advantages are presented in a masterly way with a wealth of necessary details and full page illustrations, crowned by precautionary advice that saves misguided enthusiasts from attendant risks. The author deserves to be congratulated on the pains he has

taken to make the instructions as complete as possible even from the standpoint of those that venture to practise them without the personal guidance and immediate supervision of an expert in the line. A scientific survey of the Yogic poses at the end of the book furnishes the rationalistic reader with a justification of the advantages claimed for the asanas. The appendices dealing with the full, the short and the easy courses in Yogic physical culture for the average man of health and the glossary of technical terms are supplements of value.

The book coming from the pen of a Sanyasin teacher of Yoga who has dedicated his life for several decades to practical research in the field of yoga on up-to-date scientific lines is a text book of unquestionable authority, originality and practical utility. It deserves to be read carefully and followed widely by all lovers of Yoga in preference to the cheap literature shining in borrowed feathers and now flooding the market. Now that Yoga asanas have been recognised as the best preservers of health and vigour physical and mental the book is an indispensable guide for all, and sundry. The price of the book is reasonable considering its attractive and excellent get-up and numerous art paper illustrations.

S. P.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE 115TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN RANGOON

The 115th birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna Deva was celebrated on a grand scale by the Ramakrishna Mission Society at its own premises on Saturday and Sunday the 18th and 19th February '50 respectively. The programme of the 18th consisted of religious ceremonies like Vedic chanting, Puja, Aratrikam, etc., distribution of prasads, talks on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, and devotional music. More than one thousand persons belonging to all classes, sects and communities of people were fed in the noon and prasads were distributed in the evening to an equal number of people. The function

came to an end after 9 o'clock that night. The public meeting on the following day held at the Mission hall was presided over by the Hon'ble Thakin Nu, the Prime Minister, Union of Burma.

Mrs. Aung San spoke on "Womanhood and Sri Ramakrishna," and Mr. Swamy on "The religion of Sri Ramakrishna." Mr. Raschid dealt on the contribution of Sri Ramakrishna in the cultural life of India against the background of his contemporary history and Swami Akunthananda laid stress on the spiritual aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's message and his gospel of love and universal acceptance of all religions, and pointed out this to be the only solution of the crisis with which humanity is faced today.

Many distinguished visitors participated in the function. A small, neat, handy booklet with the title "Sri Ramakrishna—the Voice of our Age" containing a few important sayings and a short life of Sri Ramakrishna in the words of Swami Vivekananda, was distributed free on the occasion by the Society. A Burmese translation of Swami Vivekananda's "My Master" was also presented to all Burmese gentlemen who participated at the function.

EAST PAKISTAN REFUGEE RELIEF

Since the month of October 1946, refugees have been coming to West Bengal off and on. The Ramakrishna Mission has from the beginning been carrying on Relief work for these people in its humble way. We are at present maintaining many students, both boys and girls, who have suffered or have been displaced as a result of the communal troubles in East Pakistan. We have put some of these students in our institutions.

This Mission is also building up a colony near Agartala for rehabilitating displaced persons who have crossed the boundary of Pakistan and entered Tripura State. As many refugees from East Pakistan were going to Assam and their condition was pitiable, we started relief centres for them at Lumding in the Nowgong District (Assam) in the month of December 1949. The work is still going on. It comprises giving free doles, selling rice at cheap rates, giving medical aid to sick persons, distributing milk to babies and patients, and supplying small capital for running petty business and productive cottage industries. This work is carried on in co-operation with the Government.

The work has been extended, and we have

recently opened two new centres at Karimganj and Silcher in the district of Cachar (Assam). Besides this, in East Pakistan itself many refugees took shelter at our Dacca Centre. Under difficult conditions we made arrangements for sheltering and feeding them. The latest information about them is that there are about 300 refugees in our Ashrama at Dacca.

The Mission has just started Refugee Relief Work at Jayantipur three miles away from the Bangaon railway station and close to the Indian border. Another centre is being opened at Cooch-behar for the same purpose. Details will be published in due course.

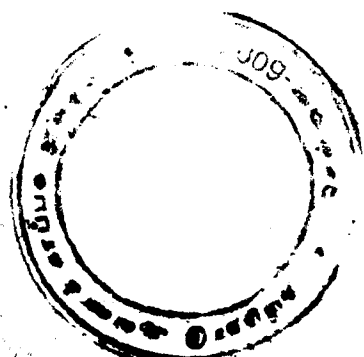
Funds are required for all these works, which have to be conducted on an extensive scale so as to give adequate relief to these unfortunate people. We appeal to the kindhearted public all over India to help us financially, as they have always generously done in the past, so that we may do our best to alleviate the sufferings of our sisters and brothers in this national catastrophe.

All contributions for this purpose may be sent to any of the following addresses:

1. The General Secretary,
Ramakrishna Mission P.O. Belur Math,
Dt. Howrah.
2. The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission,
Mylapore, Madras 4.

and will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged by the undersigned.

VIRESWARANANDA
General Secretary
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at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras—4. Printed by: K. Nataraja Iyer at the B. N. K. Press,
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Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

Swami Vivekananda

THE VEDANTA KESARI

VOL. XXXVII

MAY 1950

No. 1

LETTERS OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA

(Translated from original Bengali)

MATH

MY DEAR HARIMOHAN,

BELUR: HOWRAH

I was simultaneously happy and sorry to have just received a letter written in your own hand after so long a time. What was the ailments you were suffering from? See that you live a very cautious life. Do not ever forget the adage, one who is cautious does not suffer ruin. Him the *prarabdha karma*¹ cannot adversely affect who lives cautiously.

How long do you intend to stay in Sri Brindavan? You may keep quite well if you would find your residence at some healthy village of Vraja, say at Varshana or at Nandagrama.

Make it a point never to cease to have regular studies. And you *must* practise meditation and contemplation with regularity. No quarters whatsoever to indolence. A pure life is a very rare thing. Keep a

jealous eye on purity. Beware, never consider yourself to be free from danger. Be ever resigned in God. Please keep me informed about you by writing now and then.

Swamiji is still at Darjeeling. He is expected to return here in a day or two. And after a short stay here he is expected to move towards Kashmir. Nothing has been settled about my going anywhere. Personally I am just feeling a great yearning for going to a place like Himalayas or Brindavan—now it is for the Lord to decide. I am not keeping quite well. Then I have been at one place for a very long time. It is very urgent that I should go somewhere else. All the other Mahatmas at the Math are keeping well. Accept my love.

Yours with blessings,
SRI TURIYANANDA

¹ Action done in previous life which has begun to bear fruit in the present life.

THE MALADY AND THE REMEDY

When it is the question of survival all other questions must give way. And today it is really the question of survival with India. Many may even evince surprise at being told so. They may ask, "We have an army which covers one third of our national budget. And there is no famine worth the name in the country. How can you say, it is the question of survival with India?"

Well, there are more mysterious ways of dying than of living. A nation does not necessarily live by an army or by an absence of famine. Had it been so India would have been dead and gone long ago. India lived through a thousand years' slavery and dire recurring famines. As she passed through the most trying times of her history she gave out the most amazing proofs of her innate vitality. The soul of India was intact and it carried her body through.

But today, strangely somehow, in the wake of her attainment of independence, to the utter dismay of the discerning souls, India has been giving out definite symptoms of the sickness of soul. When the soul is sick, army and food are no help. A nation may go to the grave in full uniform by the side of a mountain of foodstuff!

The first symptom of the sickness of India's soul is discernible in the fragmentation of the Indian mind, which is a sign of distraction precipitating insanity. We must not fail to distinguish between difference of opinion and fragmentation of the national mind. The former may prove to be a sign of vigorous living, where as the latter is the symptom of an alarming state of indisposition. It is not meant here that different schools of thought are anything to

be despised. But in any case when the perennial unity of the national mind falls to pieces the nation is on the way to ruin.

There are other proofs as well. A considerable section of Indian humanity seem to be working in a way which goes counter to the traditional national genius of India. Aphoristically speaking India's traditional national genius has been assimilative and inclusive whereas these people would fain build a new India of their own which will be rejective and exclusive. There are pretty many other signs of the growing narrowness of the national mind which find diverse expressions in provincialism, racialism, communalism and a cry for bleak homogeneity and drab monotone.

Under the powerful impacts of the deadly blows which the Indian psyche has suffered, the popular Indian mind seems to have definitely adopted the path of weakness which is also the path of death. The first catastrophic effect of such a wrong adoption can be marked in the loss of faith in the sanctity of human life. Nothing could be more disastrous for the national mind.

Those who have dispassionately scrutinized some of the very recent occurrences in India, or those who have been still more unfortunate to have helplessly witnessed some scenes of ghastly horror, will surely feel, if of course they are men of honesty and good sense, a compelling sense of shame and gloom in their hearts. What at all our hoary civilization, lofty culture and unsurpassed spirituality have availed us after all? In spite of every thing we stand here today before the bar of the world poor pals of the ignoble animal measure.

Whatever may be the provocations, and however may be our quintessence—our sages say all men are divine—we have in large number proved ourselves to be savages beneath our shirts. The exalted microscopic minority have to be kept apart. They hardly count in ordinary human affairs. Today it is not impossible to find even among educated Indians such persons as are ever ready to settle the hash of an innocent babe, a woman or an old man just because he goes by a particular name. This is a deadly fact, beyond dispute. Do we understand the implications of this fact?

It is only those whose sensibilities have not been coarsened by the inhumanity of the world that will realise how staggeringly horrible is this state of affairs. This is going on the straight path to ruin. Remember the simple words of Sri Krishna where he speaks about the culmination where anger definitely leads:

क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

Bhagavadgita, Ch II. 63.

From anger comes delusion, and from delusion loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination, and from the ruin of discrimination one perishes.

'The impulse of anger throws the mind into confusions, which casts, a veil over the lessons of wisdom learnt by past experience. Thus deprived of his moral standard, a man is prevented from using his discrimination. Failing in discrimination, he acts irrationally, on the impulse of passion, and paves, the way to moral death.'

When the actions of a large number of the nationals are inspired by anger where,

may we ask, may they lead the nation? If all the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten those little hands then what, may we ask, will sweeten the knotty goary hands of the murderers who committed acts of black anger? Are not those who murder, murderers? This is the beginning of dying from within.

In spite of ourselves we have become the food of our anger. Very few people understand this. Even among learned quarters there prevails an absurd notion that there could be something like righteous anger. There is reason for this also. In quite a considerable bulk of world's literature anger has been lionized, spirit of revenge has been applauded as something heroic. But this psychology is quite foreign to Indian tradition. We have been taught from the very nascent days of our civilization that anger is one of the six 'ripus,' enemies, of human life. Any action prompted by anger cannot but bring injurious fruits to a man. When such actions are done on a national scale they bring the nation to ruin.

True, India has her solid reasons for grievances. But anger can never bring her to the real solution of them. It can only become instrumental in aggravating the causes of those grievances. Just mark how anger has been causing 'स्मृतिविभ्रम', loss of memory, in India. People have forgotten the Indian history and the lessons their sages, acharyas, philosophers and poets have taught. And there is an insane cry for a fantastic racial purism in the nation.

We do mean to say that evil must be resisted with all firmness, energy, sagacity and promptness. But it should be done through the proper agency meant for that purpose. It should be the duty of the people to move that agency in a proper manner.

The problem becomes serious when that agency fails to tackle the situation. But yet when the problem is so serious, it is all the greater necessity for calm and organised action through proper channels. The intricate and complicated state of human affairs is a standing call to human restraint. We can ill afford to be weak or stupid. The most unfortunate things that have happened in India, show only very clearly that, what to speak of the sky-high virtue of non-resistance to evil, even resistance to evil is no work of weak commoners who shake like bamboo leaves in the paroxysm of anger. When such people go to resist evil from without, the only thing they can do is to open the flood-gates of evil from within. For crimes committed by others they become greater criminals. In the name of doing justice to the misfortunes of a dead man, they create misfortunes for hundred more men and would not be satisfied before they are relieved through death. On the other hand they themselves become quite unknowingly and under the pretence of their righteousness, things of joy for the Evil and veritable incarnations of it on earth. Well, no human problems can ever be solved from sub-human levels. The one abiding urge of Destiny upon humanity is to move ahead and above. The moment left behind is swallowed up in the dark eddies of eternity. We have perforce to go ahead. Of necessity we must open new leaves.

If we seek to effectively solve this national problem the first thing we should try to achieve, is national self-control. God forbid, even if India was ever to go to war she must not do so in anger, for anger is a defeat which overtakes the agent even before the fight begins. It is below the dignity of any man to allow himself to be saddled by anger and passion. It is the

self-controlled man, moving among objects of senses under restraint and free from attraction and aversion, (that) attains to tranquillity.

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।

आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥

Bhagavadgita Ch. II. 64.

The nation which seeks tranquillity, which is the mother of all prosperity and happiness, must also move in the same way. As the seed so the fruit. Contrary actions will naturally bring contrary results. Surely it is given to man to get rid of sorrow if only he would but get rid of it!

In tranquillity, all sorrow is destroyed. For the intellect of him who is tranquil-minded is soon established in firmness.

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।

प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥

Bhagavadgita. Ch. II. 65.

If we really honestly aspire to destroy our national sorrow we can strive for it only with the help of an intellect established in firmness. Lunatic, barbarous, haphazard wild actions of horror can only plunge the nation in the more unqualified gloom. Therefore we must rise manfully and possess ourselves first in the firmness of calmness. Is it not foolish to expose our souls to corruption merely because we have been assaulted in body? Shield the soul and the body will be saved too.

One of the greatest necessities of our times, not only for India but for the entire humanity is the cultivation of *Right views*, and the other seven good things enjoined in the Baudha ethics, such as *Right resolve*, *Right speech*, *Right conduct*, *Right livelihood*, *Right effort*, *Right mindfulness* and *Right concentration*.

Unfortunately with most of us the fact is just the contrarywise. But if we aspire to survive we must turn the wheel and approach the right perspective of things. We must refuse to be cribbed and cabined by mere incidents and accidents of life. We must learn to view humanity, its problems and the world in the comprehensive cosmic set up, and see the moment in the perspective of the eternity. We cannot run away anywhere nor is there any necessity. We simply make all our eternity dark by turning over brothers' assassins for we thus make ghosts of ourselves who will have to go the rounds of perpetual damnation in this life and here-after. The murdered becomes the ward of God but the murderer the possession of the devil. Beware, the knife you plunge in the heart of X, Y, Z, is sure to bring out painful drops of blood from the hearts of your beloved.

Forgiveness, forbearance and restraint, are secrets of survival. 'He who forbears

lives, he who does not dies,' says Sri Ramakrishna. If one can assimilate the blows and the quantity of energy released in them one grows in energy and thus in time he becomes invincible and immortal. By assimilation of blows we mean deft handling of them and not cowardly submission.

This is of course the most difficult path conceivable. But salvation is after all a one way traffic. The path of salvation is also the path of survival and the only one at that.

The path of survival of humanity is through gradual divinization and not through spasmodic brutalization. Let the intelligent people keep their intellect and be instrumental in the gradual divinization of humanity without being dejected by occasional set backs of history. The time of crisis is also the juncture to throw up soft new nodes. An intelligent nation is that which knows how to turn its adversity to advantage.

20-4-50

ON SELF-REALIZATION

(From Maharshi's Gospel)

"Realization is nothing to be gained afresh; it is already there. All that is necessary is to get rid of the thought, 'I have not realized.'

"Stillness or Peace is Realization. There is no moment when the Self is not. So long as there is doubt or the feeling of non-Realization, the attempt should be made to rid oneself of these thoughts. They are due to the identification of the Self with the not-Self. When the not-Self disappears, the self alone remains. To make room, it is enough that the cramping be removed; room is not brought in from elsewhere."

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Sri Ramana Maharshi entered mahasamadhi at 8-47 p.m., April 14, 1950

At this time of violent distractions when men most urgently required his serene silent ministrations Sri Ramana Maharshi has passed away. In him we have lost a singular saint of monolithic dignity.

It is usual to say 'we have lost' as we have said here. But is it really possible to lose the saint? Does not the saint live extra-physically? As long as men continue to keep themselves open to the sublimating influence of the saint the saint lives on though physically dead long ago. So it is upto us to have lost or gained the saint.

Sri Ramana Maharshi was a power, a beauty, a solace and a marvel. He was one of the simplest souls that ever walked on the earth and withal one of the wisest.

What was the secret of his power? A simple open secret. He knew who he was. With this one key he could unlock the secret doors of all problems. Being established in the Self he lived in this world like a born sovereign of spirit who is never ruled. Such is the grandeur of the knower of the Self. Strictly speaking only a knower of the Self can be said to be truly independent. He alone has the *svarajya*. It is open to men to attain this power. Those who have active faith in this truth are alone fit to effectively revere Sri Ramana.

He became such an elegant beauty—the bare ancient man—because he attained that secret, where all disharmony dissolve, the Self, the source of all beauty. In him there was nothing that was not beautiful, for he had become purity itself. The grace that beamed through him made the little world around him gracious.

Many have been imparted solace in his

presence. This has been a fact of experience with many, whose words you have to take. How was it so?—He did not even perhaps talk.—He had gone beyond all miseries that the flesh is heir to and thus had become an embodiment of bliss itself. Men, scorched men, flocked there to lean against him and get soothed in his coolness.

This ancient man sitting unmoved at the feet of mighty Arunachala was indeed a marvel. You could look at him on with wonder in your eyes. What all things have happened in this world! But he remained unmoved above movements. This frantic world threw up wild cries around him. But he kept sitting still, all the time tuning tenderly his ears to the music of the Soul. Thus in the fullness of time he became a mute mystic music to hear the enthralling silence of which in the depths of their hearts people rushed to him from far and near.

Was it a mere transient treasure that we had in him? Are all lost now but a paining haunting memory? No. Know thyself and you will know that Sri Ramana is as it were a symbolic name, as if synonymous with self-realization. Can we ever say that the self-realization is dead? It is up to you and me to win up all the treasure that be in this universe. Nay, we need not even win up, for the question does not arise after all. It is there that we are there. When we grieve for him we know him the least, we turn him away.

If we are anxious to truly perpetuate Sri Ramana's transmuting memory we can best do it by becoming true seekers of that great 'I', which he became by knowing, and which is open to all to become.

THE ADVENTURES OF MYSTIC LIFE*

By SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

A HERO'S JOB

There is a proverb which says: "He who seeks adventures finds blows." This is very true. But if we get something more than blows certainly adventures will be welcome. Emerson takes a better view of adventures when he observes: "The thirst for adventure is the vent which Destiny offers—a war, a crusade, a gold mine, a new country, speak to imagination and offer swing and play to the confined powers." A well-directed spiritual life is indeed like waging a war between the higher and lower tendencies. It is like a crusade. We want to reach our Holy Land, avoiding the enemies on the way. It is like searching for a gold mine. As Sri Ramakrishna says, the gold is hidden in our own heart, but we do not know it. We must search for that gold mine and find it. Through our striving new powers are unfolded and we continue our journey to the Spirit and finally the soul reaches its Goal, the Ultimate Reality. Buddha, the Enlightened, gave to this Goal a positive name. He called it *Nirvana*. Nirvana is destruction of craving. It is passionlessness. It is cessation of selfish existence. It is a transcendental state beyond existence and non-existence. Certainly it is not annihilation.

The illumined souls of other religions, if they speak of the Ultimate Reality as transcendental, they also speak of It as immanent. It is something in which all contradictions meet. As Sri Ramakrishna tells us from his own experience, God is with

form; God is without form; and He comes in that form of which no one can speak. Spiritual teachers speak of Brahman, God, Allah, Jehovah, Tao, but they all mean an indivisible spiritual reality. With this Divine Reality, spiritual seekers can enter into living and loving relationship. Swami Vivekananda speaks of religion as the eternal relation between the eternal soul and the eternal God. And his God is not a far off being. He is everywhere. Sri Ramakrishna tells us that there are three classes of devotees. The lowest one says: 'God is there,' and he points to heaven. The mediocre devotee says that God dwells in the heart as the 'Inner Controller.' But the highest devotee says: 'God alone has become everything. He is everywhere. All that we perceive is so many forms of God.'

Sri Ramakrishna says that people are more interested in creation than in the Author of creation. I shall tell you a story which some of you might know or most of you do not. It is a story told by the ancient author, Vyasa, who was also the author of the *Mahabharata* of which the *Bhagavadgita* is a part. So, in a way, he is the compiler of the *Bhagavadgita*. This is the story:

"A certain man had the peculiar ability to grunt expertly like a pig and he did this so well that whenever he grunted where pigs were grazing, they would all turn around to see if any new member had come into their fold. This man's fame spread abroad and he began a tour to obtain money by means of his art. Wherever he went he erected a pandal (a shed similar to a carnival booth)

* Adapted from the lecture delivered at the Vedanta Center, Philadelphia, U.S.A. (3-8-48).

and issued tickets for admission. His success was tremendous, such was the eagerness of people to hear him grunt.

"While he was thus making money in a village, a sage happened to pass by with his disciples. It struck the sage that he could teach a good lesson to his disciples through this incident. Accordingly, he ordered a small pandal to be erected and advertised that better grunting could be heard there free of charge. The people were naturally very eager to hear it and they rushed in.

"The sage brought forth a live pig and by squeezing it a little, made it grunt. Really the grunt was much better than the man's, but the people exclaimed with annoyance, 'Pooh, is this all? We hear this every day, but what is there in it? It is nothing wonderful.' And they went away. In spite of the loud tom-tom which the sage used to attract the people with, no one would enter his pandal, while that of the pig-imitator was crowded to suffocation every few minutes.

"After all the people had left his pandal, the sage addressed his disciples, saying, 'Here is a splendid lesson for us. Men seldom care for reality but always go in for imitation. That is why this world exists, a mere imitation, a reflection in the distorting mirror of Maya, of the great Atman. No external help is required to see the Self; but very few want It and even if you eagerly advertise It, none will come to you except those who love Truth for Truth's sake. Reflect on this.'"

That is why people love the world. It is an imitation, a reflection in the distorting mirror of Maya, ignorance, a reflection of the Atman, the Eternal Spirit, and no external help is required to see the Self. But very few want to see it, or care for the Truth, except those who love the Truth for its own sake. We live in a strange world. People want queer, fantastic miracles. They follow cults that promise them physical perfection and promise to show them the way to attain perpetual health, perpetual youth without an illness, promise them unbounded wealth without any form of poverty, promise them infinite enjoyment without pain or consequence. In-

deed, the world wants miracles. Madame Guyon has said,

"They speak of God's love, but little feel its sway. While in their bosom many an idol lurks, they leave the Creator's hands and cling unto his words."

And this is the experience of mystics.

WHAT IT MEANS BEING A MYSTIC

What do I mean by mystics? By mystics I mean those who love Truth for its own sake, and have followed the path and have reached the Truth. A true mystic is he who has attained an immediate experience of the Ultimate Reality through his intuitive powers transcending reason and sense perception. There are mystics of various types:

There are the contemplative mystics like Plotinus, like the Christian mystic Eckhart, like the Hindu Sankara, like Lao-Tse. Contemplative mystics are usually monistic in their outlook. They believe in the one Ultimate Reality which manifests Itself as many and they stress the Ultimate Reality.

Again, there are those who are called personal mystics. They stress personal communion with God, they stress even the personality of God. St. Paul stressed the personality and the personality of Christ. It was he who made Christianity Christocentric. In India we have Sri Ramana. To him God was personal and one could come into direct contact with Him, retaining one's spiritualized personality, or call it individuality. George Fox was a personal mystic.

There are again our nature mystics who look upon Nature as invested with a religious mystical meaning, like St. Francis of Assisi who saw the same Divine Light in human nature and birds. Wordsworth belongs to this type of nature mystic.

Then again, there are practical mystics who having realized the Truth are eager to do loving service to their fellowmen. This service may be physical, may be intellectual, or it may be spiritual.

Now, when we study the mystics of all lands and of all religions we find all true and great mystics discover the Divine Reality within and outside themselves. They realize that their consciousness is rooted in the Supreme Spirit, and thus express their spiritual experience and sense of purity through their loving service. They are classified according to the characteristics dominant in them. But all mystics, more or less, have similar characteristics.

Why have there been so few real mystics in the world? Ancient Vyasa has told us: "Men seldom care for reality but always go in for imitation." Christ said: "Many are called but few are chosen." What he really meant was that few are called and fewer still are chosen. That has been the experience of great spiritual teachers. In the *Bhagavadgita*, Sri Krishna says:

"Among thousands of men, one here and there strives for perfection; and of those who strive for perfection and succeed, one, perchance, knows the Divine Reality in Truth."

Sri Ramakrishna tells us:

"Seeing the beautiful garden of a rich man, everyone is struck with wonder; but how many seek to know the master of the garden?"

He further explains this idea with the help of a parable:

"Once two holy men, in the course of their wanderings, met in a city. One of them, with his baggage in his hand, was walking about seeing the market place, the stalls, and the buildings. The other was moving about freely without any baggage. The first man asked: 'Where is your baggage?' The second replied: 'As soon as I arrived I found a good place to live in and secured a good room. I put everything in it, and am going about enjoying my sightseeing, enjoying all the fun.'"

Here is a moral for us all. Being born in this world, our teachers tell us that the highest goal is to find the Truth and not to move about from one thing to another just sightseeing and forgetting the highest ideal, the greatest privilege of this life—realization of the Truth and attainment of the Goal.

Spiritual life, as each of us who are trying to live it in our humble way know, is certainly an adventure—a daring feat, a bold undertaking. It has its perils and it has its difficulties, and it has also its pleasurable excitement. It has also its joys. In the course of our evolution, some souls cannot live a dull life. They must have something of an adventurous nature and some of those prefer spiritual life, prefer the adventures of spiritual life or the adventures of mystical life. This spiritual adventure is sometimes likened to a journey to the snow-capped mountains. Great training is necessary. Here is a story of a friend of mine who wanted to climb Mt. Blanc. He went to a guide with a friend of his and the guide said: "All right, I won't tell you now, but you come with me. Let us go for a walk." And they walked and walked for hours together through most difficult paths, and this friend withstood the strain and then the guide was well pleased and he said: "All right, I shall take you to Mt. Blanc." And he did. A good deal of training is necessary.

OBSTACLES AND PITFALLS

Then again, as one climbs the mountains and moves along the stages, one may be attracted by a grand view of the earth below, and may stop his journey, or may be enchanted by a view of the higher regions, and there are wonderful scenes, or sitting at a distance may look at

the charming snow-capped mountains and won't move onward. These are the dangers. So, in the spiritual life, as we go deeper and deeper, as we go into subtler and subtler regions, as we unfold new powers of seeing, new powers of hearing, we may be attracted by the charms of the outer world and this is a greater danger, we may be attracted by the dangers of the psychic world and all spiritual souls have to face this trouble.

Sri Ramakrishna used to speak of a man, an advanced soul. There was a time when he practised disciplines in a very very austere way. He had advanced to a great degree and then he came to have a strange power. He could disappear from the view of others and move about as he pleased. *Rajayoga* tells us that such a feat is possible. Now this man did not have a pure heart. He utilized this power for selfish motives, for living a sensual life, and after a time he lost the power and lost also what he had gained in spiritual life.

Swami Vivekananda once came to have the power of clairvoyance and clairsentience. He could see things at a distance. He could hear what was happening at a distance. It just came to him. As one moves along the path, sometimes these powers come to one. He told the Master and the Master told him to stop meditation for a few days and stop that channel that is leading him towards psychic powers.

My own teacher, Swami Brahmananda used to say that there was a time when he could see in and through people and he could know who was who. That was during the early days of his discipleship when the Master was alive; and seeing persons who were not pure he would not admit them to the Master's presence. But the Master wanted them as he wanted to

help them. This disciple stood in the way of these spiritual seekers. The Master came to know it and rebuked him severely, saying: "Don't you waste your energy on all these psychic powers." Move towards the Truth. Young Brahmananda followed his spiritual path and became greatly illumined later on. When we had the privilege of sitting at his feet we found that he had strange powers by which he could lift our consciousness to higher planes, but he used these powers with great discrimination.

There are many who start their spiritual life with an amount of sincerity, but later on they get interested in extrasensory perception and psychic powers and miss their goal.

Our entire consciousness is likened to a big mansion. I will give you an analogy. There are various storeys: There is the lower basement. There is the upper basement. There is the first floor. Then again, there is the mezzanine in between the two. Having arisen a little above this plane of self when we get into this intermediate region we might develop some psychic powers, see more things than others, hear more than others, and if we are awfully inquisitive we will be caught there and we won't be able to proceed further. It is when we overcome this temptation also, that we rise higher and higher, come in touch with the personal aspect of the Deity. Thus one comes in contact with the higher aspect of the Deity, the Deity as immanent; going further still, one may reach the highest point in which the individual loses himself in universal consciousness. And our teachers tell us there is a stage higher than that. Having reached the highest, the illumined soul can move about wherever he pleases, and wherever he goes he feels that he is a

part of the Infinite Existence. Call that God, the Supreme Spirit, Jehovah, Allah, as you please.

Various are the temptations that might appear before us, and for this reason all spiritual teachers stress the forms of purity. We may practise control, but simply by practising control, desires do not leave us. As the psychologists would tell us, we drive these desires into our subconscious and although we try to keep it under control, it may stay there, colouring, may be, our whole consciousness.

THE HAZARDS AND HURDLES

"Objects of the senses," Sri Krishna tells us, "fall away sooner from a man practising abstinence, but not the taste thereof. The taste disappears when the Supreme Spirit is realized." The religious history of the world tells us how Buddha was tempted by Mara, the Evil One, Christ tempted by Satan, Ramakrishna tempted by what we call *Papa-purusha*, the Evil One. All souls have to pass through these temptations, but these great ones do not succumb to temptations like ordinary mortals.

Our lower nature all of a sudden will come up and assert itself. But if we are established in purity, though we may be tempted we will not succumb to temptations. This is why do all spiritual teachers tell us to be as pure as possible. Of course, we cannot be saints simply by wishing. But in order to practise meditation, in order to practise the higher forms of spiritual disciplines, we must have that much purity without which spiritual life cannot bear fruit.

There is another danger, another hazard, another obstacle, and we must overcome that too. When we came to the great monks, the great disciples of Ramakrishna,

they placed before us a positive ideal. They told us of what Swami Vivekananda had remarked: Eighty per cent of those who take to spiritual life become hypocrites. It is easier to become a hypocrite than to pass through all the troubles and difficulties of intense spiritual life, to keep a show without changing inwardly. Fifty per cent of them become insane. Those who are not pure enough and at the same time try to be in contact with the cosmic force, come to grief. Many people ruin themselves that way. So one should always beware. If we want to pass a high volt of electricity through a weak wire, what will happen? We blow a fuse, and so there is great need for the practice of purity. One should learn the secret of keeping oneself perfectly under control. That is what all the great spiritual teachers teach. As I told you, they were tempted, but did not succumb to temptations and avoided the attractions of passing enjoyments, lust, wealth, and power. They held on to their spiritual path and attained the highest. And these great teachers placed before us their experiences and they placed before us the spiritual path in which the first great stress is on moral purity. If we want to go in for this great adventure of mystical life, we need plenty of training.

Sankara, the great monistic philosopher, who is also our spiritual ancestor, re-organized the monistic order of monks. He declares in his *Crest Jewel of Discrimination*: "Only through God's Grace may we obtain the three rarest advantages: Human birth, the longing for liberation, and a discipleship to an illumined teacher."

It is necessary for us to have a tremendous longing for liberation. It is the will to be free, it is the will to be free from the bonds forced on us by our environment,

by our body, by our thoughts and emotions, even by our little ego. The soul would long to be free. This is the soul's technique. One may be born in the spiritual world, but that is not enough; one should also continue to live and grow in the spiritual world. That is how one attains the highest illumination. It is wonderful to have this spiritual awakening—what the mystics call "conversion." This awakening means centering our life, as it were, on a high spiritual ideal. It is a new aspiration that is born in the soul and the soul feels the need of a larger draught of air, of a more expansive horizon. The soul wants to feel its direct contact with the Infinite Existence, with the Infinite Presence. That is what the mystics call God.

Sankara speaks of four qualifications necessary for spiritual attainment. As I told you, it is not enough if one has the longing for liberation. We must have the necessary qualifications, because spiritual life is a journey—it is a great journey. What are the necessary qualifications? All mystics, more or less, speak in the same terms. There must be discrimination between the Eternal Spirit and the non-eternal, changing phenomenal existence. There must be the spirit of renunciation, the spirit of dispassion without which one can never succeed in spiritual life. You all know the story that the anchored boat cannot move. When the soul is anchored to desire and to objects of desire, the soul cannot move towards the Spirit. So, along with that we need a calm mind, we need controlled senses, we need a mental peace that will not allow us to be affected by outside stimuli. We need a great faith in the teachings we have followed that have been placed before us by our teachers. Dispassion is necessary.

We must have also a great faith in ourselves. Faith in our possibilities of attaining the Goal, and along with that we must practise self-surrender. Our efforts should not be egocentric. Our efforts should be cosmocentric. All spiritual teachers should stress purification, purification. In the *Bhagavadgita*, Sri Krishna tells us that the practice of Yoga is to be done for the purification of the mind because when the mind is pure one can practise meditation.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE MYSTICS

One must learn the secret of bringing about an inner harmony not only in breath but all over the body and one must also learn how to withdraw the mind from outside things and fix the mind on the spiritual theme. And here comes meditation. Meditation, if properly practised, leads to the superconscious state—the soul's communion with the Oversoul. By the practice of the various paths of Yoga, impurities are destroyed, and when the impurities are destroyed that intuitive faculty lying dormant in us expresses itself, manifests itself, and it is with this inner light without an outside guide the soul moves towards the Truth.

As Plotinus says,

"It is the flight of the lone to the Alone."

None is going to accompany us except the pure mind. It is for this reason Swami Brahmananda used to tell us:

"Let your mind be so pure that the mind becomes your teacher. When the mind becomes pure, the mind directly receives the instructions of the Teacher of all teachers, call him Buddha, give him any name, who dwells in every heart,"

and this is fully in keeping with the teachings of all mystics.

That great mystic of the West, Plotinus,

the founder of Neo-Platonism who influenced Christian mystics more than any other mystic, in a way he being a pioneer, speaks of the various stages through which the soul passes, after the first awakening, after its spiritual birth. The soul must purge itself of all sensuality, of all desires, of all impurities, so alien to it. The same ideal is placed by the Sufi mystics before their disciples. The object of spiritual culture is the uprooting from the soul all violent passions. It is the extirpation of various desires so that the heart might become detached from all that is not God.

The Christian mystic Richard of St. Victor declares:

"Let him that thirsts to see God clean his mirror, let him make his spirit bright."

And the rest is contemplation. Contemplation or meditation on the Primeval Being is not an easy task. We must have preparation, and the best course is to take up some Divine Name or some holy prayer and go on brooding over it, go on meditating on it. When that thought current flows unbroken: that is meditation. We use the word "meditation" for all our spiritual strivings. But real meditation is the maintenance of an unbroken spiritual thought. It is a current of thought which is unbroken. Our teachers tell us:

"When we pour oil from one cup to another that stream is unbroken. Meditation is like that."

And meditation leads to absorption, meditation leads to the highest realization. How? One must control one's own thoughts. We may use various imaginations. We may think of God as Light. We may be absorbed with that thought. How is that imagination? Our teachers tell us that there are imaginations and imaginations. We may imagine a castle in the air. But we can never live in that castle. We may think of the horns of the head. We

might meditate on it and even might think that we ourselves have got two horns, but even that imagination cannot be realized. Divine imagination is not like that. It is imagination about the Truth—intensive thought about the Truth. It removes all wrong notions and then the mind becomes a neutral ground. When we add acid to alkali we get a neutral substance or something like that, and when the mind has become, as Patanjali says, "free from all waves," it is then that the Inner Truth flashes itself and this is spiritual realization. But for this a good deal of preparation is necessary.

A Christian mystic of the Greek Church says, referring to his realization,

"A strange word will I say to thee. There is some hidden mystery which proceeds between God and the soul. This is experienced by those who achieve the highest heights of perfect purity of love and faith, when man, changing completely unites with God, as his own through ceaseless prayer and contemplation."

Here the mystic is telling us something about the highest forms of spiritual practice done by mystics. Spiritual life is certainly an adventure. It has its hazards and dangers, but it has also its divine visions, it has its divine experiences, its divine joy and bliss. Attaining this, the divine realization, Lao-Tse declares:

"To be in accord with man is human happiness, but to be in accord with God is the happiness of God,"

and there ends all sense pleasures.

Great Plotinus declared when he had known the highest experiences:

"I am roused from the body to my true self, and emerge from all else and enter myself and behold a marvellous beauty,"

And when this realization is attained, Plotinus says:

"We are then kindled—the soul shines with a new light, with a new joy, with a new peace. I live a supremely good life and become identical with the Godhead."

Having reached the highest illumination, Sankara declared :

"My ego has disappeared. I have realized my identity with the supreme Spirit. What is this joy that I feel—the joy of mystic realization? Who shall measure it? I know nothing but joy, limitless, unbounded."

Here we get a glimpse of the goal the soul has reached after all its adventures in the journey to the Spirit.

Eckhart, the Christian mystic, said :

"I am as certain as that I live, that nothing is so near to me as God."

He is the source of all consciousness. He is the Ultimate Reality. Where the two grow one, one loses its nature. The soul loses itself in the superconsciousness.

Another mystic tells us of her experience:

"When the soul is illumined by the presence of God, when God and it are lost in each other, it apprehends and possesses great joy. The soul swims in joy and knowledge."

Now, this is the experience of all spiritual teachers.....

St. Francis the great Nature mystic declares :

"Suffer me to rejoice in my Lord. I feel so united with him that I needs must sing"

Here we get a glimpse of Divine communion. One of Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples, Swami Turiyananda, was in his death bed. He was fully conscious of the Divine Reality and he repeated the great texts of the Upanishads :

"Brahman, the Supreme Spirit, is intelligence. He is eternal bliss."

My own spiritual teacher, Swami Brahmananda, was about to pass, and calling all the disciples he said :

"The Lord is the only Reality. Everything else is unreal."

And speaking of his own experience, he said of Brahman :

"That is the only Reality. I am floating on the leaf of faith in the ocean of Brahman. Ah! the blissful ocean of Brahman."

Here we get a glimpse of the Divine bliss that comes to the mystic as a result of following his adventurous journey through many difficulties, through many sufferings, through many heartaches.

He comes to divine realization and he is filled with bliss—the peace that passeth all understanding.

THE SIMPLE SECRET

Now, do we want this high spiritual ideal? If so, we need training. If so, instead of just floating on the surface of our consciousness, floating on this world of sense we must learn to float in Brahman; go deeper and deeper.

A story is told that once a disciple of the Sufi mystic Junayd came to him and said :

"I am told that you possess the pearl of divine knowledge; either give it to me or sell it to me"

Junayd answered ;

"I cannot sell it, for you have not the price thereof; and if I give it to you, you will have gained it too cheaply. You do not know its value. Cast yourself headlong, like me, into this ocean of God in order that you yourself may find this pearl of Divine love and wisdom."

And that is exactly what Sri Ramakrishna told his disciples :

"Dive deep, O Mind, dive deep in the ocean of God's Beauty. If you descend to the uttermost depths, there you will find the gem of Love"

—the gem of Divine knowledge and the gem of bliss.

The illumined soul's love for God expresses itself as his love for man—love for the God in man, but love, that Divine love, that Divine realization, each one of us must realize for ourselves. None of us can do that for others. Let us remember the secret of mystic life—

"Dive deep, dive deep in the ocean of God's Beauty."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

By ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

The Golden Age sung by poets like Homer, Virgil and Valmiki, the *Satyayuga* of the philosophers like Pythagoras, Laotze and Plato, is gone and in this cycle of Creation we are in the Age known as Iron Age or *Kaliyuga*. The number of human inhabitants of this planet is multiplying at an incredibly rapid speed; human life and values count little or nothing in this Age. Men have neither the leisure nor strength, determination nor even the right environment to probe into the mysteries of life and death, inquire into the meaning of existence, to detect and realise the hidden sources of happiness and inner peace, of a healthy living and sound philosophy of life. Machine is becoming omnipotent enslaving both man, who creates and moves the machine wheels, and gods who once gave poetry, inspiration and exemplar to our forbears, centuries ago.

The artificiality of life is now so intense and commonly accepted that both the academic scholar and the illiterate proletariat live far removed from the fondling love of Mother Nature. We have mastered an infinitesimal part of the forces of Nature and in our vanity and self-conceit we have dispensed with God and the Absolute. Like extrovert children who prefer their little toys to all the wealth and charms of life, so we also have set aside the wisdom of the ancient and modern seers, sages and living philosophers. At one stroke of their pen, at an explosion of their most powerful scientific means of

destruction, they have annulled all that gave life, inspiration and meaning in life to the thoughtful, sober-minded, pure, conscientious, and the Truth-seekers everywhere. The nemesis of our folly, vain egotism and this senseless advertised fame of mammon-power is smitting us hard enough. We have called sanity what is really madness; we have worshipped gold and sex as our real God and all, whatever be the lip-service we pay to religions and churches. We have enslaved man, the image of God on earth, through military power, glittering gold and subtle diplomatic games. We have become blind in mind and stone-dry at heart when we have accumulated the means of production and distribution of wealth in the hands of the few monopolists and money-lords, when we have denied rights to a dignified, healthy, human living to the have-nots who form over eighty nine per cent of world's population. We call Life what is really Death.

It is the sacrifice and expiatory of the offering of the purest and the bravest, the most enlightened and the enterprising that become a ransom to the imbecility and orgy of the violent and the ignorant. They are the price of redemption, the Pelican birds of the ancient Greek mythology that out open their chests with their bills to feed their young ones with their own blood and, in feeding them, die as a supreme sacrifice.

In this madhouse which many of our clever diplomats are trying to create from

behind their closed-door conferences and meetings, the industrialists and economists are trying to create from their schemes and plans, we still come across human beings with their deeper humanity left untouched, unsullied, untarnished. The vast number of rural population and a small percentage of our city dwellers are those in whom the ape and tiger have not been awakened and are still human beings, quite as much receptive to the influences of supernatural forces from within the heart of man and from up above God's star-lit skies and heavens. In fact it is this potential divinity and the unawakened lion of Godhead in the heart of every human being that is really the asset and hope of peoples and nations.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, then, is both old and modern; he is old in so far as he keeps link with the leaders of redemption in the history of human civilization; he is modern because he lived and interpreted the gospel of freedom, emancipation or redemption from ignorance and sin in a way best suited to the intelligence and psychology, aspirations and outlook of the modern age. In fact, Buddhas and Christs are not every day occurrences, not of every century either. In the providential design of the Universe, however, they come when mankind need them and the encircling gloom all around seek for a lighthouse for the stunted and benighted mankind to look to and be led by. Then is the advent of a prophet. Here is the meaning of the birth of a prophet, who is both a poet and philosopher combined, plus a God-sent messenger to teach people the path of redemption. In fact, like Ramakrishna, Confucius, Buddha and Christ have proclaimed aloud that they did not come to teach novel doctrines

but to live and preach the eternal, ancient, perennial philosophy and abiding wisdom of all ages. They are only called ancient and modern in so far as they appeared in different periods of history with messages best suited for that age for mankind to grow, fulfil and realize themselves.

Even in this Cosmic Rays and Atom Bomb Age the fruits of virtue and the nemesis of sin are the same as in the days of Solon, Manu, Moses, Lycurgus, Hammurabi and other legislators of ancient times. Virtue is its own reward, sin its own nemesis. There is no evidence as yet that Mankind is moving much forward from the comma the mighty civilisations of ancient Greece and Vedic India produced. The noise of machine has increased only to disturb the mental calm and spiritual quiet of the soul. Yet when sages appear even in this time of aeroplanes and television they still speak the same old language wherewith we establish that there is something called Perennial Philosophy and Eternal Religion. The parables and illustrations may be modern, but the same Ancient One vibrates through every breadth of life and words such sages uttered. Sri Ramakrishna is typical of this renovation of the Eternal Ancient that in India means the wisdom of the *Rishis*, the Vedic Culture and Aryan Dharma. Sri Ramakrishna, the living embodiment of the synthetic genius of India then stands at the gateway of modern world pointing with his finger, as it were, the way mankind should follow, specially India, for their salvation and resurrection.

Prophets are the immediate, direct, sovereign messengers of God heralding the path of freedom. But we need apostles to carry the message, make it a living and working force in the society. Seers, Incarnations,

Prophets deliver the message at a particular place at a particular time. They sow the seeds of perennial wisdom, but the missionaries take the message to every door in every village and town of the country, of the world. Christ was the incarnation of God to deliver the gospel of redemption to mankind, but St. Paul was the typical apostle and missionary to take that message to the remotest corners of the then known world. Without St. Paul there would have been no Christianity. Similarly the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the Prophet of Religious Harmony, would not have reached the the farthest limits of America, Europe and Asia if there were not Swami Vivekananda, the greatest missionary—apostle of Neo-Vedanta and the St. Paul of *Sanatana Dharma*. Hence since the days of Lord Buddha and Asoka we have a new missionary zeal and dynamism created in India through the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission-Movement.

The vacuum of machine civilization, frustration of power politics and futility of mammon power are all so uncompromisingly challenged through the living faith Sri Ramakrishna bequeathed to Mankind. Faith, living faith that moves mountains, realization and identification of man with God, of *Jivatma* with *Paramatma*, is the legacy and testament India of Ramakrishna gives to the world at large. Not academic scholarship, not pomp of wealth and power, not the tyrannizing authority, but simple faith in living God, inner purity, sincerity of purpose, Self-realization and fundamental human values are proclaimed anew as the pathway for gaining inner strength and freedom. While on the one hand the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, his invisible power and influence for many

more generations and centuries to come, assert the central truth of all perennial philosophies and systems of religions of history that God alone is real, everything else is shadow, and that human soul is no other than God, we see the world today, on the other hand drifting more and more away from the kernel and shell of religions, power-politics, flesh-blood-level philosophies fighting hard to replace the irreplaceable philosophy of Man, the Eternal, the Divine.

The future of mankind, then, is drifting more and more to machine-matter trends. Man is today less than even a cog in the machine he created. If man does not hold the sovereignty over the machine the natural result is that man will become product and produce of machine. There are already calculating machines available in the markets. Eggs are hatched scientifically; babes can be produced in test tubes. Man grows self-complacent in his vanity and he is growingly becoming self-forgetful and nominally religious. God and religion are in books and temples, in cooking pots or stereotyped caste-system. So society falls to pieces, mankind sinks low. Procreation of human weaklings increases, the fertility of Mother Earth is being outbalanced, outdistanced by the senseless thoughtless procreation-flood that inundate the world, specially the Asiatic countries, that create the artificial struggle of existence more acute, that destroys the last traces of humanity in us, that creates and intensifies the international tension, that lays atom bombs and closed-door diplomacy, that seals the death of civilization and humanity through the Hiroshimas and Nagasakies of the world wars. Prophets may come and go, but the worldly-wise will go on for ever. How narrow and

strait is the path that leads to Life Eternal and Samadhi-Nirvana and how few follow it, find it, realise it !

Whatever may be the probable trends of thought in the kingdom of Caesar, for those who are conscious of the duty they owe to their Motherland to be passionately true to her voice, message and mission, it is of utmost significance that the gospel of Ramakrishna is being carried out through missionary zeal and spirit. The Ramakrishna Mission combines in itself the brains of pure, unadulterated *Advaita Vedanta* and the heart of Mahayana Buddhism. The missionary zeal is the characteristic of this movement which gives the most catholic interpretation of the soul of India that is the life and gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. The Buddhist missionaries of yore and the Christian missionaries of all times have set us an example in the aggressive spreading drive that was so badly lacking in the *Sanatana Dharma* of India. Swami Vivekananda came like the St. Paul of the Neo-Vedantic Hinduism, which is essentially and basically the Religion of Humanity or *Manava Dharma* and as such the "Mother of all religions". Through centuries of dejection, degradation, foreign domination and social stagnancy we have

become so self-complacently individualistic, so criminally isolated, that we need many patriotic sons and daughters of Bharat-varsha with "muscles of iron and nerves of steel", approaching the Vivekanandian dream-type.

The great Prophet of harmony of all religions, the incarnation of the eternal spirit of India, is come and gone as also his beloved disciple, the lightning flash of twentieth century Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda. But if every generation, in every nook and corner of India and the world, do not produce sons and daughters of such Universal Religion, this world may not survive the threat of Atom Bombs and Cosmic Rays. False humility by which we disown our true capacities and possibilities do not help us: Religion is strength. Self-confidence, God-confidence. The task in India and the world is great indeed and if power politics and mammon-worship cannot solve them, it is sure Religion, Dharma, the eternal message, redeeming gospel of Buddhas, Christs and Ramakrishnas alone could bring humanity, peace and justice to India and the world. But even the prophets who have gone before us are ineffective unless we do our duty, for we really are *That*.

ON TRUTH

"Have Bhakti within, and give up all cunning and deceit. Those who are engaged in business, such as work in the office or trade, should also stick to Truth. Truthfulness is the *tapasya* (austerity) of this age of Kali.

"Unless one always speaks the truth, one cannot find God who is the soul of truth.

"Everything false is bad. Even false garb is bad. If your mind is not quite in accord with the garb, then terrible ruin shall visit you.

"One must be very particular in telling the truth. Through truth one can realize God."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA.

THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA IN THE MAHABHARATA*

By DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

Among the Dharma-sastras or sacred books on duty, the *Mahabharata* occupies a pre-eminent place. Because of its comprehensiveness and depth of analysis in the realms of morality, philosophy and religion, it has been described as the fifth Veda. On matters relating to man and his destiny, his welfare here and in a hereafter, the *Mahabharata* is a veritable mine of knowledge. A verse of the great epic says :

'As regards duty, wealth, pleasure and spiritual freedom, what is here may be found elsewhere; and what is not here is no-where else to be found':

धर्मं चार्थं च कामे च मोक्षे च भरतर्षभ ।

यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न कुत्रचित् ॥

(18-5-50)

The excellence of a virtuous life and the need for choosing it in preference to the path of wickedness and vice are emphasised and taught in the epic through remarkable stories and interesting episodes. The main narrative itself which is about the feud between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is an allegory of the war between the good and evil and the final triumph of good. The five Pandavas represent the force of good, while their cousins, the sons of Dhritarashtra, stand for the powers of evil. It is true that the epic story refers occasionally to the blemishes of the former and the excellences of the latter. Some critics have sought to explain this by what is called the inversion theory, according to

which originally not the Pandavas but the Kauravas are supposed to have been the righteous party. But a more straightforward explanation seems to be that, so far as mortals go, none of them are absolutely good and none bad beyond redemption. There is a soul of goodness in things evil, and an element of evil in things good. The object of the *Mahabharata* is to teach that good and evil admit of grades, that the duty of man consists in increasing the good in him and diminishing the evil, and that his ultimate goal lies beyond both good and evil.

The word 'dharma' has a multitude of meanings. In the present context, we shall understand by the term, goodness or righteousness, duty and religious merit, which are related senses, each with an ethical significance. It is out of the goodness of an individual that a willing devotion to his duty proceeds; and as a result of conscientious performance of his allotted work, a person reaps merit, though he may not consciously aim at it. And, it is through dharma, again, that he goes beyond the relativities of life and thus gains freedom from bondage.

The principles of dharma, in accordance with which one has to mould his life, are to be known from the sacred books. 'Let scripture be your authority', says Sri Krishna to Arjuna, 'in settling what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Knowing this, you should do such action as

* A talk broadcast from AIR, Madras on March 31, 1950.

is sanctioned by scriptural ordinance' (*Gita*. XIV. 24.) Obedience to scripture, however, does not mean surrendering one's own sense of right and wrong. Even for understanding scripture one has to exercise one's power of judgement. After discoursing to Arjuna in the *Gita* through its eighteen chapters, Sri Krishna asks his disciple to reflect on the teaching and do as he liked. *निमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु* (XVIII. 63) But very often one may find oneself in baffling moral situations where not much light comes from scripture and one's own judgement fails. What should one do then? The answer of the Mahabharata is that one should follow the example of great people.

'Logic totters, the scriptures differ, the view of no ascetic seems to be valid, the truth of dharma appears hidden in secret; the way of the great people, then, is to be followed' (*Vana*, 314. 119).

What is the purpose of dharma in the lives of individuals and in the conduct of groups? The way of dharma integrates one's character, and also organises a society by a judicious adjustment of the claims and counter-claims of its members. Dharma means literally 'what supports or upholds'; it is that which holds people together.

धारणाद्धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ॥

(*Karna*, 69. 59)

The duties that are prescribed for the different castes, *varna-dharmas* as they are called, have for their aim the preservation of society. Each man has his station in the particular social group to which he belongs; and he should perform the duties that pertain to his station. Caste in the Mahabharata, it must be noted, is not the rigid, cast-iron institution which it came to be in a later age. Ordinarily, it is the caste of a person that determines his calling. But

this is not an inflexible rule. The Brahmin Drona and his son, Asvatthama, were devoted for the most part of their lives to the theory and practice of the arts of war. Vidura, born of a Sudra woman, was the very embodiment of piety. When Krishna went to Hastinapura on his ill-fated peace mission, he chose Vidura's hospitality, even refusing the King's. In the *Vanaparva* the story is told of the Brahmin Kausika seeking wisdom from a virtuous hunter, being directed to do so by a loyal housewife. So, it is character and conduct that ultimately count, not mere caste. According to a verse in the Mahabharata it is not only birth that should be pure, but also knowledge and action (*विद्या योनिश्च कर्म च* ॥ III. 1. 27).

There are certain cardinal virtues which everyone should cultivate, no matter in which caste he is born. Without these, it is said, people would be no better than beasts. In the *Vanaparva*, Hanuman taunts Bhima saying, "Born in the animal kingdom, we do not know dharma; but men who are endowed with intelligence, show kindness to all beings". (*Vana*, 149. 93). Many are the lists of virtues given in the Epic. In one of them eight virtues are mentioned: performance of sacrifices, Vedic study, bestowal of gifts, penance, truth, forgiveness, self-control, and non-covetousness. Of these, the first four are said to lead to the way of the fathers, and the other four to the path of the gods. (*Vana*, 2. 75-76). It is not as if these virtues are exclusive of one another. Truth, for instance, covers all virtues; it is not simply truth-speaking. In the *Santiparva* there are the following verses:

"Where truth is, there always dharma is; truth is the ancient dharma; truth alone should be worshipped; truth, indeed, is the way

supreme. Truth is virtue, austerity and Yoga; truth is the ageless Brahman; truth is said to be the supreme sacrifice; in truth is everything established".

सत्यं सत्यं सदा धर्मः सत्यं धर्मः सनातनः ।

सत्यमेव नमस्येत सत्यं हि परमा गतिः ॥

सत्यं धर्मस्तपो योगः सत्यं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।

सत्यं यज्ञः परः प्रोक्तः सर्वं सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

Santi. 160-4-5.

Ahimsa or non-violence is similarly praised. It is not mere non-killing or refraining from inflicting injury on others. It means regarding others as one's own self. The rule of virtue is: Do not do to others what you do not wish others do to you. Even to make the least difference between what is yours and what is not yours is to violate the principle of *ahimsa*. One of the incidents in the main story illustrates this well. Yudhisthira's four brothers drink of an enchanted lake and die. Yudhisthira himself goes in search of them, and when he reaches the lake, the voice of a Yaksha warns him not to drink before answering the Yaksha's questions. Yudhisthira passes the test; and the Yaksha, being pleased, asks him to name one of his brothers whom he wishes to be restored to life. Yudhisthira wants Nakula to live again. The Yaksha wonders why he asks for Nakula who is only a step brother, and not for either Bhima or Arjuna who are his own brothers. The reply that Yudhisthira gives is that it would be cruel on his part not to ask for the life of one of the sons of his step-mother. To prefer one of his own brothers to a step-brother of his would be to go against the principle of *ahimsa*.

What is the end of dharma? It is not a narrow hedonistic view that is taught in the Mahabharata. Pleasure and wealth, within limits, may be sought after. But through

these no lasting good can be gained. Desire does not cease by enjoyment; on the contrary, it increases like fire fed by fuel. It is true that in some places in the Epic the pursuit of dharma is said to lead to fame in this world and happiness in the next:

कृते धर्मे भवेत्कीर्तिरिह प्रेत्य च वै सुखम् ॥

(12. 174. 16).

But the final view seems to be that not for such transient benefits should dharma be followed.

"Never from desire, nor fear nor greed, should dharma be renounced; no, not even for the sake of preserving life. Dharma is eternal; pleasure and pain are evanescent. The soul is eternal; the means of life are non-eternal".

न जातु कामाक्ष भयाक्ष लोभाद्धर्मं त्यजेज्जीवितस्यापि हेतोः ।
नित्यो धर्मः सुखदुःखे त्वनित्ये जीवो नित्यो हेतुरस्य त्वनित्यः

(18. 5 76)

Dharma too, in the sense in which we have been considering it, is not an end in itself. It is the means to *moksha*, which is the final end. When the Lord of the *Gita* exhorts Arjuna to relinquish all dharmas, he refers to the supreme goal where there is transcendence of all dualities including that of good-and-evil, merit-and-demerit. It does not mean that a man who has reached the goal is or can afford to be immoral. What the Hindu scriptures teach is that in his case there is no need for an external rule. He is a law unto himself; for he has attained self-rule, *svarajya*. He no longer falls into the tract of transmigration, for he has broken through the cycle of birth and death.

There are three main paths to perfection or release from bondage. They are: Karma-yoga or the path of dedicated service, bhakti-yoga or the path of devotion

to God, and Jnanayoga or the path of self-knowledge. In the *Bhagavadgita* and in the *Mokshadharma* sections of the *Santiparva*, as also in various other contexts in the Epic, these paths are explained at great length. As selfishness is at the root of all evil, it must be removed; and the way to remove it is Karmayoga. Ordinarily men busy themselves in work in order to enjoy the fruit of work. But such enjoyment does not result in peace. So, the best method of freeing oneself from the evil of work is to work without a desire for profit. But is work without desire possible? The answer which the Gita gives is:

'True, no action is possible without an end in view. But instead of having different ends for different deeds let all deeds have one and the same end, namely, God-realization or moksha.

Here we are already in the realm of bhaktiyoga. Love of the finite does not satisfy for long; on the contrary, it is distracting and disappointing. So, let the object of love be the Infinite which is God. Many are the stories related in the Epic of bhaktas who were liberated through constancy of devotion to the Deity. And, if God cannot be loved, let Him at least be hated, even as Sisupala hated Him. For, such hatred may serve as a means to blessedness; but not forgetfulness of God.

ON KINGS' DUTY

(*Bhishma advises Yudhishthira: From the Santi Parva of the Mahabharata*)

"Nothing except truthfulness brings success to Kings. Adopt straightforwardness in all actions.

"A King who is always soft is violated on all sides; and the world dreads the severe; so one should adopt both (softness and severity).

"A King should build up his victory by means other than war; victory through war is said to be the worst.

"Death through Dharma is good, not victory through a sinful act."

Jnanayoga is the way of knowledge. It is not complete with a mere theoretical understanding of the nature of the ultimate Reality; the Real must be intuitively realized. One has to know it by being it. Through constant study and reflection, and through continued meditation, one should pull down the veil of maya, and realize the non-dual spirit.

At the base of all this ascent to the heights of spirituality is dharma. Dharma also follows the pilgrim, as the dog followed Yudhishthira to heaven. In its plenary sense dharma means God and spiritual freedom, moksha-dharma. The quintessence of the teaching of the Mahabharata may be put in the form of a syllogism gathered from the Epic itself:

'Where Krishna is, there is victory;
Where dharma is, there is Krishna;
Where dharma is, there is victory'.

यतः कृष्णस्ततो जयः ।

यतो धर्मस्ततः कृष्णः ।

यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ॥

Yes, victory is assured through dharma—not mere victory over external enemies which is not after all a difficult thing and which does not solve all problems, but victory over all that is base and despicable in human nature and the winning of eternal life which is the life divine.

A NOTE ON ANATTA

By SRAMANERA SANGHARAKSHITA

This 'Note' is a rejoinder to Prof. S. N. L. Shrivastava's article, 'The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Vedanta,' which appeared in the January, 1949, issue of this journal. In the following article, captioned, 'There is An Unchanging Atman', Prof. Shrivastava gives his reply to the present 'Note.'—Ed.

The doctrine of Anatta, the doctrine, that is to say, that there is no permanent, self-existent, separate ego-entity or soul (*atta*) in things, is one which permeates every phase of Buddhist philosophy and religious discipline. Without comprehending this doctrine it is impossible to enter into the spirit of Buddhism, and, the Buddhist would add, impossible to set one's foot on the pathway to Nirvana,—not, however, because he considers mere belief in any doctrine essential to salvation, but because the doctrine of Anatta indicates the principal condition of the possibility of religious progress, and to reject it and cling to its opposite, the doctrine of *Atta*, therefore implies the non-recognition of the means of progress and consequent failure to attain the Goal. In discussing this doctrine, however, we should be careful to distinguish between its general philosophical form as a universal truth and the particular psychological form in which it arises in connection with the problem of the nature of the unity of consciousness. I am led to make these remarks in consequence of having quite lately read Prof. S. N. L. Shrivastava's acute and instructive article entitled *The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Vedanta* which appeared in the January, 1949, issue of the *Vedanta Kesari*, wherein he has endeavoured to controvert the position I adopted in an article on *Progress and*

Religion which appeared in the November, 1948, issue of the same journal. I refer to his article as "acute" since it embodies the principal line of Atmanist argument in a particularly forcible manner, and as "instructive" since it has helped me to clarify my ideas on the subject. My reference to the doctrine of Anatta in the article just mentioned was merely incidental, and the subject therefore did not receive the fulness of treatment which its importance perhaps merited. It is in consequence hardly surprising that Prof. Shrivastava should have raised against it the objections which he did. In this Note I shall first of all endeavour to make good the omissions of my previous article by explaining as clearly and compactly as possible the Buddhist conception of the unity of consciousness, and then endeavour to show that Prof. Shrivastava's objections are either untenable or based on misunderstanding of the Buddhist position.

It is well known to students of Indian philosophy and religion that Buddhism envisages the universe not as static but as dynamic, not as being or not-being but as becoming, flux or *Anicca*. This process of becoming should not be understood as a mere succession of discrete states, events, or things, but as an uninterrupted flow, a pure continuum. Now although the

Buddhist doctrine of Anicca is, as already observed, well known to students of Indian philosophy and religion, and although it is clearly understood by them to refer to the objective experienced order of existence, they but rarely realize that it refers no less to the subjective experient order of existence. For the doctrine of Anicca is the expression not of a local but of a universal truth, and as such must be equally true of the object and subject of experience. The consciring subject-consciousness and its conscita are therefore both impermanence, flux, becoming, anicca. It is easy to understand, indeed difficult to deny, that the object of experience constantly changes, and it is not impossible to understand that this change is not a succession of discrete states, but a continuous flow; but owing to the deeply engrained conceptualism of the human mind it is almost insuperably difficult to understand that the subject of experience constantly changes too. The mind finds it natural to conceive one end of the subject-object relation as static and the other as dynamic. It feels that although the world changes the 'I' which is conscious of that change persists identical and unchanging. A reference to one of the simplest forms of consciousness, that in which the subject conspires an apparently unchanging visual object such as a box or upright post will perhaps help to elucidate the matter. Such an object remains unchanged, but my consciousness of it changes continually, for the consciousness of this instant differs from that of the last instant inasmuch as it includes the memory of the latter; and the consciousness of the next instant will differ from that of this instant inasmuch as it contains within it the memory of this instant. If A represents the 'unchanging'

object, and B1, B2, B3 and so on the successive instants of the time-series, the stream of consciousness may be represented as AB1, AB2+AB1, AB3+(AB2+AB1) etc. "My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing—rolling upon itself, as snowball on the snow" (Bergson). To posit an unchanging and identical subject of experience is therefore an error of the first magnitude. Subject and object are both continua. But how, then, it may be objected, does the conception of an unchanging and identical subject arise? It arises, as Bergson has so beautifully explained, because the consciring subject does not attend to the presentation—continuum steadily and continuously but by a series of separate acts of attention. In consequence of this discontinuous or intermittent attention the stream of psychical life, which is in reality a continuous flow, appears to be a succession of discrete or discontinuous states: those parts of the flow upon which interest fixes the attention of the subject are illuminated, as it were, by the light of consciousness, and stand out in apparent isolation against the darkness of the intervening parts. But the psychical life is none the less in reality an absolutely continuous flow. Then, as Bergson says, "As our attention has distinguished and separated them artificially, it is obliged next to reunite them by an artificial bond. It imagines, therefore, a formless *ego*, indifferent and unchangeable, on which it threads the psychic states which it has set up as independent entities." Thus arises the erroneous conception of an identical and unchanging subject of experience. It is for such reasons as these that I observed "The

unity of personality is to be understood to consist not in the persistence of an unchanging and identical locus of experience in the midst of a multiplicity of experiences, but in the continuity of the series of experiences"—which series of experiences it should, perhaps, have been made clearer, includes both subjective and objective factors. This is a brief exposition of the celebrated Buddhist doctrine of Anatta in its subjective or psychological reference. The doctrine has, however, as observed at the beginning of this Note, a philosophical or universal reference too. But to that it is not now necessary to advert. Let it suffice to say that the root-cause of the erroneous conception of a permanent and unchanging ego-entity in the subject, and of an eternal and identical substance in the object, is in both cases the illegitimate abstraction of supposedly separate, individual and discrete events, states or things from the pure continuum or becoming which is Reality.

Prof. Shrivastava appears to have imagined that I believed the unity of consciousness to consist simply in the continuity of the experienced object, and he therefore observes "Is not the succession of our psychical states (which is what we really mean when we speak of experiences) *objectively* presented to us? Its objectivity is a patent and incontrovertible fact of our experience. This would not have been possible unless there were a subject-consciousness distinct from it *to which* it was objectively presented". Except for substituting the word 'continuity' for 'succession' I agree wholeheartedly with what the learned writer says. An object is of course unthinkable except in relation to a conscious subject. But Buddhism is concerned to point out that this consciring subject is, no

less than the object which it conspires, not an unchanging entity but a continuous flow. That Prof. Shrivastava mistook my meaning is, no doubt, due partly to the merely incidental nature of my reference to the matter, and partly to the misleading impression made by the analogy of the flame of the lamp. Analogy fulfils, indeed, a useful function in discussion; but this function is illustrative rather than demonstrative, and the limitations of analogy are so obvious that it is unnecessary to insist on them. Prof. Shrivastava found the analogy of the flame of the lamp unconvincing because he thought it intended to prove something which it was not, in fact, intended to prove. This simile is used in Buddhist literature to illustrate the continuity of the five aggregates of existence (*pancakkhanda*) in which both subjective and objective elements are present. Although the lamp-flame is, of course, an object, it does not represent merely the object of experience but the experient subject too. The comparison of the unity of consciousness with the flame of the lamp does not, therefore, resolve the subject into the object. If students of Buddhist thought bear this in mind they will be saved from much misunderstanding of the subject. Needless to say these observations apply with equal force to the hardly less celebrated simile of the parts of the chariot. Analogy, like the kusa grass, cuts the hand of him who grasps it unskillfully.

Into the question of whether the Buddhist Nirvana is, or is not, identical with the Vedantic Atman it is, I feel sure Prof. Shrivastava would agree with me, presumptuous for those who have no personal experience of either to enter too confidently. A few remarks on the subject may not, however, be out of place. We must be

clear, to begin with, what the Buddhist means by Nirvana, and what the Vedantist means by Atman: we should not import our own conceptions into these terms. The Buddha has made it abundantly clear that empirical individuality (*atta*) is ultimately unreal. He has made it equally clear that this empirical individuality does not exist in Nirvana. Nirvana, like everything else in the universe, is anatta, for the doctrine of Anatta expresses a universal truth. Prof. Shrivastava says that "Like Buddhism Vedanta also holds that clinging to the empirical egoity is the root cause of our suffering and bondage". But he says later on "The Atman in Vedanta is emphatically not 'self' in the narrow, empirical, individualist sense". In what sense, then, is the term 'self' to be understood? The Vedantic Atman, as I understand it, is the eternal, unchanging witness-consciousness of the whole of existence, and therefore stands in the same relation to the objective universe as the imaginary ego of conceptual thought stands to its illegitimately abstracted states. The difference between the two is therefore not one of kind but of degree, not qualitative but quantitative: One is simply bigger than the other. From the depths of their vast spiritual experience the Buddha and His disciples have most solemnly warned us of the subtlety of Atmanism. The self is not to be conquered by capitalizing the word. Clinging to a so-called higher or universal self is a thousand times more dangerous to the religious life than attachment to the empirical ego. The heart must be thoroughly cleansed from the highest as well as the lowest, from the most refined no less than the grossest, form of the Atman-idea before it can realize Nirvana. Even without going into

the question of the positive meaning of Nirvana in Buddhism it will, I think, be obvious that its negative meaning alone emphatically precludes the possibility of identifying it with the Vedantic Atman, or at least with the logical form in which the latter appears in scholastic Vedanta. Prof. Shrivastava tells us that "The Vedantin also says that Atman is *jagad-vilakshana* or something different *sui generis* from the entire universe." Why, then, is the Vedantin so anxious to describe it by the same term as he applies to empirical individuality-atman? Having decided to call the greatest obstacle to the spiritual life by a certain name, it would surely avoid much unnecessary confusion if that very word was not used to describe the goal of that same life. This confusion in the use of terms reminds me of the difficulties which arise when Christian theologians endeavour to prove that God is personal. They are emphatic that He is not a personality in the sense that man is, since human personality is essentially imperfect, whereas God is by definition perfect. Although confessing their incapacity to separate human personality from human imperfection and thus to arrive at a conception of personality predicable of a being, they are nevertheless reluctant to admit that God is impersonal, and therefore maintain that He is "in some sense" personal, or that His personality is of a kind inconceivable by man. Having triumphantly capitalized the word they then declare that God is Personal and imagine that they have solved the problem. The pitiful inadequacy of such a 'solution' is only too painfully obvious. Equally inadequate is the Atmanist attempt to show that the Self (with an initial capital letter is) not a self in the sense that the empirical ego is. The truth

of the matter is that neither personality nor selfhood are ultimately real, and must therefore be transcended in the realization of Nirvana; but so strong is man's attachment to them, so reluctant is he to renounce them, that he endeavours to persuade himself that a 'higher form' of personality or selfhood exists even in that ultimate Reality which is the goal of his religious quest. Although unable to agree with Prof. Shrivastava that "That Vedantic Atman and Buddhist Nibbana mean the same thing" I sympathize wholeheartedly with the motive which, as I infer, prompted him to identify the two conceptions; but the unity of religions is to be found, I believe, through the understanding of the continuity of the religious quest in history rather than by the wholesale equation of religious doctrines. Unfortunately, the study of the Science, Psychology and Philosophy of Religion on a critical and comparative, yet broad and sympathetic basis, is almost unknown in India. The unity of religions is therefore held to consist in a superficial doctrinal identity a view which encourages neither sound scholarship nor sincere religion, and which moreover results in intellectual dishonesty, systematic misrepresentation and wholesale text-torturing in a vain attempt to establish the foundations of religious unity. Religious ideas, although springing from a single stem, the religious quest of man, are no more identical than the leaves, flowers and fruits of a tree are, though springing ultimately from the same trunk. The unity of religious doctrines is to be found in their source rather than in themselves.

In conclusion, it remains to connect this discussion of the Problem of Self in Bud-

dhism and Vedanta with that of *Progress and Religion* wherefrom it originally sprang. Prof. Shrivastava writes "The author has essayed to show that change is not progress and that true progress means rising higher and higher in the scale of moral refinement and spiritual experiences. So far I quite agree with him." If, however, the learned writer really does agree with me he will be compelled to relinquish his Atmanist viewpoint. For, as it was the ultimate purpose of my article to show, real progress, as distinct from mere change, is impossible if there is a permanent, unchanging locus of experience such as a soul, self, ego or atman (with or without capitals). It was, in fact, because Atmanism precluded the possibility of religious progress, and therefore of liberation itself, that the Buddha gave such prominence to the doctrine of Anatta. Nagarjuna wittily remarks that those religious aspirants who deny the truth of Sunyavada (the metaphysical aspect of Anattavada) are like men mounted on a horse who deny that they are on horseback. For it is the absence of any permanent, unchanging self-nature that makes religious progress possible. When Prof. Shrivastava quotes me as saying "It is in the achievement of that which is beyond existence and non-existence that the goal of all existence is to be found" and then appends the question "Is this not Atmanism, pure and simple?" I must therefore reply: No, it certainly is not. For if Atmanism was true that achievement would be impossible, to say nothing of the question whether the Atman of Vedanta is really beyond existence and non-existence. Buddhism and Atmanism therefore remain, as they always have been, and doubtless always will be, poles apart.

THERE IS AN UNCHANGING ATMAN

By PROF. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA, M.A.,

Before going through this article one is expected to read the previous article, ('A note on Anatta' by Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita), to which the present one is a reply.

The controversy involved is to be taken to have ended here. Ed.

I am happy, indeed, to learn that my article on *The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Vedanta* published in the January 1949 issue of this esteemed journal has evoked interest and elicited criticism from Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita. In my said article I had argued that *from a strictly philosophical stand-point*, the unity of our experience (and also, I should now add, the continuity of our experience) is neither possible nor intelligible without the admission of a fundamental consciousness for which our experience is a unity and a continuity. This consciousness in the Vedantic terminology is the Atman. I had also pointed out that Vedanta could happily agree with Buddhism on the question of the denial of the self, if 'self' be understood in its empirical signification as the psycho-physical complex, the bundle of the 'five khandhas' in Buddhist terminology. The Atman of the Vedantic conception is trans-khandhas, trans-physical-khandhas as well as trans-psychical-khandhas. It is utterly futile to try to prove that the Atman has no reality because we can find no permanent entity in the sphere of the physico-psychical flux. I also tried to reconcile Buddhism and Vedanta by pointing out further that the Buddhist Nibbana could not possibly be different from the Vedantic Atman because of the similarity of the description of both. Both are described as trans-individual transcendental experiences,

ineffable, indeterminable by the categories of thought such as existence or non-existence, beyond pain and sorrow, full of peace and bliss and untainted by lust and desire.

I very much regret that my aforesaid observations have not commended themselves to Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita who has come forward with his reinforced attack on Atmanism in his "A Note on Anatta" appearing in the present issue of this journal. He has obliged me to turn once more the searchlight of philosophical criticism on the arguments which he has advanced to show that "to posit an unchanging identical subject of experience is an error of the first magnitude."

I now proceed to consider the points raised by Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita in his aforesaid Note. I shall consider them in the same serial order in which I find them in the Note.

(1) At the very outset, the writer remarks that "the doctrine of Anatta indicates the principal condition of the possibility of religious progress, and to reject it and cling to its opposite, the doctrine of Atta, therefore implies the non-recognition of the means of progress, and consequent failure to attain the Goal." May I ask a pertinent question: If there is no permanent and identical individual, whose is the 'religious progress' you talk about, and 'who is to attain the Goal'? Can the idea of a Goal be

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compatible with the conception of reality as endless becoming? The concept of a Goal (all the more so when it is capitalised) necessarily implies two things, (1) that there is a permanent and identical individual which reaches the Goal and (2) that somewhere there is an ending of the becoming, a static pause. If you object to there being a static pause anywhere in the universal flux, then your Goal can only mean a Goal beyond Goal *ad infinitum*, which is tantamount to saying there is no Goal—the only logical conclusion of a thorough-going and uncompromising doctrine of universal flux. I repeat the question I raised in my former article; what meaning can 'spirituality' have, if there is no 'Spirit'?

(2) Now, I take up his attempt at refuting my argument for the reality of the Atman. I had argued that an ultimate unchanging consciousness is an inexpugnable logical presupposition of the very possibility of the unity of our experience. The unity and continuity of our experience is a fact which cannot be denied. Whatever be your ontological theory about the nature of the external world, whether you take it as a discrete succession of events or things, or as an uninterrupted flow or process, you cannot deny that you have an infinite multiplicity of experiences or experientings of the world and of individual things therein, experiences of all variety—sensations, perceptions, feelings, imaginations, doubts and beliefs and trains of ideas—stretching from the past through the present to the future. All these experiences have a continuity, in spite of the discreteness of the sensations *etc.* My present experience at any moment of my conscious life is continuous and unified with numberless experiences of my past. Day suc-

ceeds day, and my each day's experience is unified with the experiences of days gone by. Could this be possible if there were no identical experienter persisting through all the days. We may select any segment or section of our conscious experience for any length of time and we shall find that the various items experienced therein are knit together into a unity and continuity which could not be possible unless they were *all* presented to the *same* consciring consciousness or percipere. If I who wrote the first line of this article did not persist as the *same I* till writing the last line of it, the unity and continuity of thought which is present to my consciousness after the completion of the article would not be a possibility. In an attempt to refute my argument, Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita has pointed out to me that my argument proceeds on the assumption of the discreteness or discontinuity of experiences for whose unification the postulation of an identical subject is necessary, whereas reality according to the Buddhist conception is an uninterrupted flow or a flux. Let me point out to him that the substitution of 'flow' for 'succession' of experiences will not alter the situation so far as the reality of an identical and unchanging experience is concerned. Granting that the objective reality is *in itself*, an uninterrupted continuum, a non-discrete flow, only different parts of it can successively pass through the focus of consciousness of the individual experient, just as, taking an analogous example, a flowing river, an uninterrupted continuum *in itself*, passes its parts successively over the *same* river-bed or any given section thereof. The uninterrupted continuity of the objective continuum, in so far as it is an *experienced continuum*, presupposes the reality of an

experiencer to which different parts are given and which itself could be no part of the continuum; otherwise, there would be no consciousness or experience of the 'continuum as continuum', of the flow as flow'. The moving panorama of the objective (which includes both the physical and the psychical) would never be apprehended as a moving panorama unless there were an unmoving witness behind it. The subject, as such, cannot be included in the objective or that would render the objectivity of the objective an impossibility. It is often forgotten that what we call the 'subjective' in our experience, the sphere of psychical presentations, is also objective and it is futile to search for the enduring subject in the sphere of psychical presentations. This was the fatal mistake which David Hume and William James, the modern exponents of no-soul theory committed. Searching for the 'self' in the flow or succession of psychical occurrences, they found its postulation unwarranted.

"For my part," says Hume "when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble upon some particular perception or other—of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."

Similarly, William James declares :

"If the passing thought be the directly verifiable existent, which no school has hitherto doubted it to be, then that thought is itself the thinker and psychology need not look beyond."

Bergson gives us a chip of the same block when, as quoted by the writer of the Note, he observes :

"My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on

increasing—rolling upon itself, as a snow-ball on the snow."

It should not be difficult to see what a rotten reed the magic wand of this line of argument is. It is an inadequate and incomplete scrutiny of experience which fails to find anything besides and beyond the procession of psychical presentations. Our experience testifies to the reality, not only of the stream of psychical presentations, but also to that of a self-distinguishing *percipere* of that stream. Berkeley showed a deeper insight than Hume or James when he said :

"How often must I repeat that I know or am conscious of my own being; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else—a thinking, active principle that perceives, knows, wills and operates about ideas."

If we closely and intimately scrutinise any psychical occurrence, say, a thought or a feeling, we cannot but find it as given, as objectively presented; it could not possibly bear the mark of givenness or objectivity except as given to a subject which also is revealed in self-distinction from it. The subject-consciousness is in necessary correlation with object-consciousness. With every psychical occurrence given as an objective fact, the self-distinguishing subject is also intuited (*pratibodha-viditam*). If thought itself were the thinker, as James says, there would not be the incontrovertible experience of the objectivity of thought. The nature of the object is radically different from that of the subject. The object is not self-revealing or self-evidencing; it is evidenced to another, the consciousness that knows it. This latter, the subject, is self-evidencing (*swaprakasha*). It is interesting to note that Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita has himself admitted that the stream of psychical

presentation is not self-luminous but is illuminated by the light of consciousness." Says he :

"the stream of psychical life which is really a continuous flow, appears to be a succession of discrete or discontinuous states: those parts of the flow upon which interest fixes the attention of the subject are illuminated, as it were, by the light of consciousness and stand out in apparent isolation against the darkness of the intervening parts." (*italics mine*)

I welcome this admission of a consciousness which illumines the stream of psychical life. In the very nature of things, this 'consciousness' could not be a part of, or, in any way included in, the stream of psychical life itself; otherwise, some "intervening parts" of it could not be left in "darkness", the entire stream would always be lit up. Another thing is abundantly clear. What is this 'illumination'? The writer's insertion of the words 'as it were' after 'illuminated' in the above quotation makes it clear that he does not take illumination in its literal physical sense, but only in a metaphorical sense. Evidently, it is the illumination of knowing or consciring. Well, then, by his own admission, my critic has brought me to the vindication of a knowing consciousness other than the stream of psychical life. After having conceded this much; he has to concede further that this consciousness cannot be a parallel stream but an identically persisting being-consciousness, otherwise "the darkness of the intervening parts" would render impossible the unification and continuity of the previous with the subsequent part of the psychical stream. The psychical stream prior to the 'intervening' gap would become discontinuous with the psychical stream after the gap.

The writer of the Note has commended to us the Bergsonian explanation of the unity of experience, according to which each preceding experience is itself gathered up into the subsequent experience and thus our experience goes on swelling, like snow-ball rolling on snow. I beg to point out that the analogy which this argument presses into its service and by means of which makes itself plausible, is entirely misleading, because, the unity of consciousness is radically different from the unity of a material object such as a snow-ball is. The difference between the two kinds of unity is thus brought out with admirable lucidity and persuasiveness by Prof. G. F. Stout :

"The unity of consciousness is radically different in its nature from any unity which can belong to a material thing. Every material thing is extended in space and therefore consists of parts spatially external to each other and spatially separable from each other. It is divisible into component portions, each of which exists independently as a material thing or parcel of matter in the same way as the whole which is constituted by their union. The cup, for instance, which I hold in my hand is apprehended by me as one thing; but the separate subsistence of its parts as distinct bodies is forcibly brought home to me, if it falls on the floor and is broken in fragments. On the contrary, the unity and distinctness of an individual consciousness is not thus composed of parts, each possessing independently a separable unity and distinctness of the same kind. It cannot be broken into fragmentary thoughts, feelings and volitions, or fragments of thought, feeling and volition, each persisting, like the pieces of the cup, when I have ceased to think, feel and will. A material thing is composed of material things; but a conscious self is not composed of conscious selves."¹

¹ A Manual of Psychology: (4th Ed.) Pp. 13-14.

There can be no likeness between the unity of experience and the unity of the snow-ball formed by rolling on the snow.

Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita has asked in what sense the Vedantic Atman which is "the eternal unchanging witness—consciousness of the whole of existence" can be called 'self.' I can only dwell very briefly on this question. Yes, according to Vedanta there is only one foundational knowing-consciousness which is called Atman from the individual stand-point and Brahman from the cosmic or universal stand-point. It is called the Self (capitalised because of its pre-eminent status as the foundational fact in reality) because it is there in the inmost depths of our being as that by whose light of consciousness all things become known, the Innerscient of all our experiences. This infinite universal consciousness is the 'individual self' as limited by the *upadhi* of the individual body-mind, even as universal space limited within the jar is the 'space of the jar.'

I have now to take note of two more points dwelt upon in his article by Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita, one, concerning his remarks on 'religious unity,' and the other, his refutation of my identification of Nibbana with Atman.

(3) "The unity of religions" says the writer, "is to be found, I believe, through the understanding of the continuity of the religious quest in history rather than by the wholesale equation of religious doctrines. Unfortunately, the study of the Science, Psychology and Philosophy of Religion on a critical and comparative yet broad and sympathetic basis is almost unknown in India. The unity of religions is therefore held to consist in a superficial doctrinal identity, a view which encourages neither sound scholarship nor sincere religion, and

which moreover results in intellectual dishonesty, systematic misrepresentation and wholesale text-torturing in a vain attempt to establish the foundations of religious unity. Religious ideas although springing from a single stem, the religious quest of men, are no more identical than the leaves, flowers and fruits of a tree are, though springing ultimately from the same trunk. The unity of religious doctrines is to be found in their source rather than in themselves."

I would comment that the unity of religions rests, not only on their common source, the religious quest, but also and more significantly, on their common Goal—an experience of Ultimate Reality described in identical terms by the mystics of all religions. Of religious unity "on a critical and comparative yet broad and sympathetic basis," free from "intellectual dishonesty," I should like to have a sample from the writer himself.

(4) As regards my contention that the Buddhist Nibbana could not possibly be different from the Vedantic Atman-Experience, I have already pointed out above that because the descriptions of both are remarkably identical, I regard them as the same. Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita has failed to mention what *differentiate* of Nirvana distinguish it from the Atman-Experience of the Vedantic conception. If "empirical individuality does not exist in Nirvana," it also does not exist in the Atman-Experience. True, the Buddha gave prominence to the doctrine of Anatta, but only so far as the "five khandhas" are concerned, *not transcendently*. It only stands to reason to confine Anatta-vada to the realm of the psycho-physical objective continuum.

I should like to close this all too brief an article on a profound subject with a question and some verses of the *Dhamma*.

pada which I would request my critic to deeply ponder over:

Could the Buddha who found in 'impermanence' the root cause of all sorrow, declare a way out of all sorrow without finding a Permanent?

Reading in between the lines of some of the verses of the *Dhammapada*, one cannot help getting the impression that though the Buddha denied the presence of an enduring soul in the realm of empirical existences, he had an idea of a transcendental entity which survives death and attains immortality, which reaches to the other shore of existence. I give below some verses of the *Dhammapada* and crave the indulgence of Sri Sramanera Sangharakshita to ponder over their implications:—

"He who has reached the goal, who is free from worry, who is free from Craving and who has rid himself from demeritorious tendencies—such an one has thereby destroyed the darts of existence and wears this body for the last time (*antimo'yam sannaussayo*)."—351.

"He who is free from Craving and from attachment, who is master of the science of words and their grammatical arrangement, who knows the order of letters in their prior and posterior relations and implications—such an one is called a great sage and wears this body for the last time (*sa we antimasaviro*)."—352

Now, what is the *implication* of the words "wears the body for the last time"

in the above verses? Is there not a 'wearer' of the body distinct from the body who wears the body time after time, and then having freed himself from craving, attachment *etc.*, wears it for the last time? We are reminded of the verse in the *Bhagvadgita*—"As a man casting off old garments *etc.*"

Then, again,

"Wakefulness is the way to immortal existence (*amatani padam*); heedlessness is the way to death (*maccuno padam*). The wakeful die not the heedless are as good as dead."—21.

What is the *implication* of the attainment of 'immortality'? The mortal, as such, can never attain immortality. The immortal must be there already in the mortal coil. What is not immortal originally cannot become immortal eventually.

Yet, again,

"Through a round of countless births have I passed fruitlessly in search of the maker of this tabernacle—and painful is the round of births. But now, O Builder of the Tabernacle, I have seen thee; never again shalt thou build me a house. All the rafters are broken and the ridge-pole is broken asunder; and the mind at rest in Nibbana has passed beyond gasping desires."—153 and 154.

Surely, there must be some one who goes through the round of countless births, building a tabernacle again and again till it finds its final rest in Nibbana!

"The yogi endowed with complete enlightenment sees, through the eye of Knowledge, the entire universe is his own Self and regards everything as the Self and nothing else.

"The tangible universe is verily Atman; nothing whatsoever exists that is other than Atman. As pots and jars are verily clay and cannot be anything but clay, so, to the enlightened, all that is perceived is the Self."

Sri Sankara in *Atmabodha*

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FOWLER COUPLE

After hearing that heart-rending, terrifying, and ominous news from Govinda, for some time Ramanuja did not know what to do. The world seemed all darkness. When he looked around after some time, he beheld that his dear friend Govinda too was hastening away to join the disciples of Yadava leaving him behind. It was scarcely a long time then for the night to fall. This young man of eighteen, helpless, friendless, knew not what to do. He mused, 'Let me call Govinda near me.' He mused again that then the other disciples would come to know of it. Gradually Govinda became invisible behind the trees. Then, a great strength, never experienced before, all on a sudden braced him up and as if some one from within spoke forth, "What fear? The Lord Narayana is there". To save himself from the hands of his roughish classmates, Ramanuja left the path without any delay and entered into the deep forests southwards. Without looking back even for once, he went on walking at top speed for about an hour. Now and then when he heard as if some one was calling his name he would quicken his pace all the more. Unable to move any more due to hunger, thirst, and exhaustion, he sat down under a tree. When it grew difficult even to keep sitting, he lay down there and forgot the entire world in the embrace of sleep, the redeemer of all pains. When he woke up he saw that the sun had declined towards the west. But his hunger and thirst had left him. Feeling himself very vigorous he thanked God, the redeemer of the three kinds of sufferings, times without number. After washing hands, face, and feet, when he was thinking whither to go, he found a fowler couple approaching him. The fowler's wife came near him and asked, "Ah! my child, have you lost your way and so you are sitting alone in this lonely forest? It seems you are the son of a Brahmana. Where's your home?" "My home is very far off from here. Have you heard of Kanchipura in the south? There.", replied Ramanuja. Enquired the fowler, "How could you happen to come to this dangerous forest infested with robbers? No party of wayfarers dare frequent these parts even during the day time. Apart from that, the wild animals always move about in the place undauntedly. I know Kanchipura. We are also going in that direction. Finding you alone in this terrible place, we just came to enquire about you." "Where is your native place, and pray, wherefore are you going to Kanchipura?", enquired Ramanuja. The fowler said, "We were born in some forest-village at the foot of the Vindhya. Thinking that we had been living away the span of our life in the profession of fowlers, my wife and I have set out on a pilgrimage for the good for our hereafter. We wish to go to Rameswaram via Kanchipura. It is good we got a companion so good as you, who, it seems, have lost your way. Be not afraid. It would seem the Supreme

Lord, who is the refuge of all, has brought us here for giving you protection." Though Ramanuja was at first a little unnerved to look at the appearance of this black, tall, and red-eyed fowler, yet a kind of sobriety of his face, tinged with affection, a sort of attractive sweetness in his words, and the address of his wife, candid and broad with affection, dispelled gradually all suspicions from his mind and he agreed to follow them. Not much of the daytime was left. The fowler said, "Let us quickly cover up this forest regions to find our resting place for the night on the banks of the broad subterranean river which flows by not very far from here." About an hour's walk brought them to the banks of the river. The fowler collected some pieces of wood and ignited a fire. Then he levelled a part of the uneven ground and asked Ramanuja to take his rest there. His wife and he then retired on the other side. The wife told the husband, "My dear, I am feeling very thirsty; can you look for some water near about?" "The night is almost come. Now it isn't advisable to quit this place, dear. Tomorrow you will quench your thirst with the pure water of a good well near by. There are beautiful steps in the well." The fowler's wife acquiesced in.

Early the next morning, got up Ramanuja, finished his morning duties and then followed the fowler couple. Shortly they came near the well mentioned above. Ramanuja got down the steps, washed his hands and face and quenched his thirst with the cool limpid water. Then he brought above handfuls of water for the wife of the fowler to drink. But, when, even after doing so thrice, the acute thirst of the fowler's wife was not assuaged, he got down the well and brought water for the fourth time, he did not find them there any more. He looked here and there, but

nowhere were they to be seen. He could not make out how within a few minutes they went out of sight. Then it struck him that they were not men, they were Gods. Lakshminarayana became his guide and protector in the guise of the fowler-couple. On seeing the steeples of the temples and a cluster of houses in the vicinity he thought that it might be some city. He enquired of a passer-by, "What is the name of the place, sir?" Looking in his face in wonderment the passer-by said "Hallo, are you from the clouds, eh? Can't you recognise the reputed city of Kanchi? Your appearance shows that you belong to this part of the country alone; but you are talking like a stranger. Are n't you the disciple of Mahatma Yadavaprakasa? I have seen you many times in this Kanchipura itself. Of course you may not know of the well wherein you have washed your hands and face and by the side of which stands that big and venerable sal tree. Its water assuages all kinds of misery pertaining to the flesh. So people from various places come here as they would to a place of pilgrimage, with a desire to drink of its water." When so saying the passer-by had gone away, Ramanuja, like one just awakened from sleep, unable to make out anything, looked awe-struck. The next moment when he remembered the fowler-couple, that numbness of the mind was removed. He understood clearly that the limitless grace of Lakshminarayana alone was the cause of his protection. With his heart overwhelmed with love, tears rolling down he sang forth in adoration of the lotus feet of the blessed Narayana:

ॐ नमो ब्रह्मण्यदेवाय गोब्राह्मणहिताय च ।

जगद्धिताय कृष्णाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥

"Again and again I salute that Brahmanyadeva, Govinda, Krishna, Who is the doer of good unto the cows and the Brahmanas and the universe at large."

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MR. GANDHI: THE MAN. BY MILLIE GRAHAM POLAK. VORA & CO. PUBLISHERS LTD. 3, ROUND BUILDING BOMBAY 2.) PP. 146 PRICE. RS. 3/- (SH. 6/-)

It is well known that Mr. and Mrs. Polak were the fellow-workers of Gandhiji in his South African Days. Living along with him, they entered in the intimacy of his life. As such Mrs. Polak is in a position to give us in a direct and life-like manner one story after another of Gandhiji's life in South Africa.

The readers will be able to see that there is hardly any manifestation of the main trends of Gandhiji's ideas and actions developed in later years that did not have its first expression in that long drawn campaign of his at South Africa. The authoress gives a lively account of the various instances of her testing Gandhiji's peculiar views and even boldly criticising some of them as extravagances. Gandhiji stood for eternal principles of truth and non-violence which he not only practised in his own life but brought upon all human problems and wanted society to be fashioned according to these principles.

The book affords quite an interesting reading throughout, revealing Gandhiji as one of the most tender souls.

We need hardly say that this book should have a special place amidst Gandhi-literature. R V.

MODERN THOUGHTS AND ZORASTER:
BY E. J. DIVECHA. PP. 142.

Books on Zoroastrianism are not very common. This book is a sincere attempt to interpret the great principles for which Zoroaster and Gatha have stood. The author, in a lucid style, has given a scientific touch to the subject which would otherwise have little attracted modern minds.

The author's plea that 'Gatha is not theistic even in its outlook' and that 'it is the only scripture that explains creation rationally and scientifically' deserves the earnest attention of the readers. The author seems to be over-enthusiastic to prove that Zoroastrianism is the only natural religion of the world and Gatha is the only rational scripture. This has given rise to certain lapses and overemphasis on certain points. The author's acquaintance with the recent literature

on Christianity and Theism of the East seem to be limited and the sincerity of the author transparent. The book however, fulfils a long-felt want, viz., a comprehensive study of Zoroastrianism. The book is neatly printed and well got up.

1-4-50

K. S. N.

THE ARYAN PATH—VOL. XXI. No. 4.
EDITED BY SOPHIA WADIA; MALABAR HILLS, BOMBAY 6, INDIA.

The path by which the noble ones of the earth go is the Aryan Path. It is that path which flows irresistibly through all time and space like a mighty river of good and beauty.

The Aryan Path, one of our valued contemporaries, is a way-farer on that high path. If then it is what it is, it is but what it should be! It is, forsooth, no credit for the noble one to be noble, though it is a dire discredit to be ignoble. But in the mean time it is indeed a blessing to the people.

The Aryan Path has by its very profession held upon itself such a comprehensive responsibility, that strictly honestly speaking it should not be fair to pour praise upon it. When the world groans in misery the supposed custodians of the human weal are indeed morose missionaries. It would seem after doing their highest best they have but done twinkling little. The world goes on in its old, clumsy, unclean way, the creatures darting forth dark shafts of cries in the murky sky. How then until there is a glorious rise of an immaculate smile on the lips of our last man, can any of us be deemed praiseworthy?

What then is the strong point in *The Aryan Path*? That it is *The Aryan Path*, that it gets going in a determined dynamic manner on the Aryan Path.

If we would but key down our note a little, it is no mean complacency or glory, if you like, to have been given to foot on the Noble Path. Well, the rebel flame that leaps up in the sky defying the compulsory discipline of evil, is after all a beauty, a compelling one, specially when the world perspires under the blanket of dreary darkness.

If you want to be administered by that beauty, just take up any issue of the Aryan Path, why not the April, 1950 issue itself?

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

EAST PAKISTAN REFUGEE RELIEF (II)

The public are already aware that the Ramakrishna Mission has started relief centres at different places, like Jayantipur near Boangaon Railway Station, at Gitaldaha, 23 miles from Cooch Behar both in W. Bengal; at Karimganj, Silchar and Lumding in Assam and at Agartala in Tripura State. The work is going on in full swing at all places.

The Jayantipur centre was started on March 16 last. The Mission distributed during the period from the 16th March to the 26th March 11 mds of milk, 36 mds 35 srs of 'chirha', and 4 mds 7½ srs of 'gurb' among 30,000, refugees.

On the 15th March, the Mission started refugee relief work at Gitaldaha in Cooch Behar which is two miles away from the Pakistan border. It has undertaken the feeding of nearly 500 refugees and supplying milk to their children.

At Lumding in Noagaon District, Assam, the Mission has been giving free doles to the most needy, supplying rice at a cheap rate, giving medical aid to the sick, distributing milk to the children and patients and providing small capital for running petty business and productive cottage industries.

At Silchar about five to six hundred refugees are fed daily and diet is given to children and patients. Of the 1,019 refugees received in the Camp from the 11th to the 24th March 466 left for other destinations. This work is being done in co-operation with the Government.

At Karimganj also the Mission has been running three relief camps in co-operation with the government. Free kitchens have been opened and food is supplied twice daily to more than six thousand persons. Children and patients are supplied with medicine, milk and barley. Refugees are being escorted by the Mission workers in trucks and motor buses from the bordering village of Sutar-kandy, eight miles from the town. They also issue passes to them for free railway travel.

At Agartala the Mission has given medical relief to 564 patients, 411 adults and 153 children,

during the period from the 19th March to the 25th March. Qualified doctors are in charge of the Medical Relief Camp. The Mission is also building up a small colony for rehabilitating the refugees who have entered India. This work needs expansion very urgently.

About 189 refugees are given shelter and food in our Ashram at Dacca in East Pakistan.

At Narayanganj in Dacca District the Mission has started relief work since the 19th March for refugees waiting to be transferred to India. It has taken charge of three camps sheltering ten thousand refugees.

Clothes and medicines are urgently needed. Most of the refugees are in a miserable plight when they arrive in India. They do not, very often, have even a second cloth to wear. Epidemics such as cholera are likely to break out unless preventive inoculations are used.

A great effort will have to be made for the quick rehabilitation of the refugees in suitable colonies. Otherwise many of them will have to face disease and death.

The suffering of the people in all the above areas is beyond description. We earnestly appeal to the kind-hearted public to come forward and help us with adequate funds so as to enable us to serve our suffering brothers and sisters. Contributions in cash or kind will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P. O. Belurmath, Dt. Howrah, W. Bengal.

March 31, 1950.

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA
General Secretary.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

EAST PAKISTAN REFUGEE RELIEF (III)

The Ramakrishna Mission has been conducting refugee relief at different places in W. Bengal and Assam like Jayantipur near Bongaon Railway Station (24 Pargs.), Singabad Railway Station (Malda), Gitaldaha Railway Station (Cooch-Bihar), Dowkie (Jaintia Hills), Lumding Railway Station (Nowgong), Silchar and Karimganj (Cachar) as also Agartala (Tripura State).

At the Jayantipur Centre from the 16th March to the 8th April 198 lbs of dry milk were distributed to 5,940 children and the sick and 49 mds 12 srs of chira and 13 mds 38 srs of guri among 23,672 persons. The Mission, in co-operation with the Red Cross Society has been managing a Transit Camp at Singabad Railway Station (Malda) and has provided about 20,000 refugees, mostly Santal and cultivators, with shelter and food. At Gitaldaha Railway Station we have undertaken the daily feeding of 500 refugees and supply of milk to children and patients. Here 6,660 refugees have been served with food.

Our Transit Camp at Lunding at present provides food for 1,500 to 2,500 persons daily. From the 11th March to the 5th April, the Camp has catered for 30,000 refugees. The Mission is helping in the inoculation of new arrivals, registration of refugees, exchange of Pakistan currency notes to Indian ones, securing admission to hospital for those who are invalids. At Dowkie, halfway between Sylhet and Shillong, the Mission has opened a new relief centre, which supplies parched rice, milk, barley water and medicines to about 1,000 refugees among whom there are many cases of cold, fever and acute dysentery. 196 pieces of cloth were distributed among them. Our Silchar Centre is feeding twice daily about 1,045 refugees and also giving on an average diet to 43 children and 40 patients. Of the 1,900 refugees received in this camp from the 11th March to the 8th April, 772 have left for different places. The total number of refugees served from the 8th March to the 8th April in the three relief camps at our Karimganj Centre is 11,798. Here more than 3,125 persons are fed twice daily, 1,393 were vaccinated and 2,963 inoculated for cholera. Workers have been deputed to undertake rehabilitation work at this place. In all the above centres the sick and children are provided with diet and milk, and expectant and ailing mothers are attended to.

At Agartala during the week ending on the 8th April medical relief was given to 1,587 patients. Three qualified doctors are in charge of this medical relief camp. The Mission is also building up a colony for 100 families of whom 60 families have already been settled and the rest are be-

ing settled. All these families have been provided with sufficient agricultural land. Effort is being made to rehabilitate 200 more families.

In co-operation with the Provincial Peace Committee, the Mission is managing three camps sheltering about 10,000 refugees near the steamer ghats at Narayanganj. Free doles are being distributed and facilities secured for them to come to India. The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Dacca, which had 300 refugees under its roof, have at present 160 refugees who are fed daily. Besides 325 pieces of new cloth have been distributed among them.

In this work of relief and rehabilitation the Mission is co-operating with the Government and other private organisations.

Clothes and medicines including preventive inoculations are very urgently required. It is needless to say that strenuous efforts should be made for the quick rehabilitation of the refugees to save them from disease and death. The misery of the people beggars description. The task of relief and rehabilitation is stupendous. We appeal to the generous public to help us with adequate funds to relieve these helpless people. Contributions in cash or kind will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the General Secretary Ramakrishna Mission, P. O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, W. Bengal and The President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4.

April 20 1950.

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

General Secretary.

AN APPEAL

Due to recent occurrences in East Pakistan thousands of brothers and sisters ousted from their paternal hearth and home entered almost penniless into Karimganj—a small border Subdivisional town in the district of Cachar, Assam.

With a view to render them temporary shelter, the local Ramakrishna Mission started relief in co-operation with the Volunteer Corps, the Merchants' Association and the Municipal Board, Karimganj in a high school of the town on the last 13th Feb., '50, the very day the exodus began. The Government also was not late to come forward with their sympathetic attitude and financial help. Owing to heavy influx of refugees the Mission have

to expand and extend the relief shelters in order to give them adequate relief.

At present there are three transit relief camps in different parts of the town under the management of the Ramakrishna Mission with three free kitchens—feeding the incoming displaced persons twice daily. The total number of refugees registered in the three camps upto the 7th April, 1950 is 70407. Patients and children are regularly served with proper medicine, milk and barley. Amongst the refugees 3693 persons have been vaccinated and 6495 inoculated with cholera injection. Cloths have been distributed among extremely needy persons. The contribution being too small we cannot cope with the situation.

Escort and Free Passes:—On the two main entrances that link Eastern Pakistan with the Karimganj town—one by railway and the other by a motorable road—our volunteers receive refugees and both from Sutarkandi, the bordering village, eight miles from the town and from the Railway station our volunteers escort the refugee passengers, by trucks and buses, serving the children and patients with milk and barley when necessary. In co-operation with the Railway authority we have issued free passes to outgoing refugees, the total number being 30,000 approximately upto the 7th. April, 1950.

Some 3000 displaced persons are coming daily to our Camps for shelter and as far as our information goes thousands are still waiting for days together at some motor and railway stations in Pakistan—conveyance there being quite inadequate. Many are coming on foot also. The sufferings of the people beggar description.

We, therefore, earnestly appeal to the generous public to come forward and to offer their ungrudging helping hands so as to enable us to serve our destitute and displaced brothers and sisters. Besides foodstuffs clothes, medicine, barley and powder milk are immediately and urgently needed. Contributions in cash or kind will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Karimganj, P. O., Dt. Cachar, Assam.

April 8, 1950

SWAMI GOPESWARANANDA
Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission,
P. O. Karimganj. Dt. Cachar.
Assam

SANKARA—RAMANUJA JAYANTI

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH, MADRAS 4

The birthday of the two great Acharyas, Sri Sankara and Sri Ramanuja was celebrated at the Math premises on the evening of Sunday the 23rd April, 1950.

The function began with a prayer by Sri K. Balasubramania Iyer. Sri Rama Sastri of the Mylapore Sanskrit College speaking in Tamil paid a glowing tribute to the spiritual brilliance of the two Acharyas and pointed out, with suitable illustrations, that man, while commencing his spiritual journey at the Dvaita level with his eye on the goal of Advaita has necessarily to pass through the intermediary stage of Visishtadvaita. He also stressed the fact that as far as the Acharyas were concerned, the essential principles of spiritual life were almost the same and that there was no conflict or rivalry between the two systems.

Then Prof. P. Sankaranarayana addressing the gathering in English began with an exposition of the fundamentals of Advaitic sadhana. He referred to the misconceptions prevailing about the Advaita philosophy and tried to show how they could be avoided. He said that both the Acharyas insisted upon knowledge, discussion and discrimination and that it is upto us to study both the systems and understand them fully without hastily plunging into a criticism of either. For even the great ones of the past, the Acharyas themselves, studied and understood the standpoints of the other faiths.

Lastly Prof. P. N. Srinivasachariar talked in English on Visishtadvaitic Philosophy. Saying that it was the most congenial platform where we have an idea of Religion not as a proof of God but as an experience of God, the speaker first gave an account of the experiences of the three great mystics, Vamadeva, Prahalada and Nammalwar. He further added that according to Sri Ramanuja the goal is unitive consciousness and that while the Jiva and the Brahman are distinct entities, in actual experience they are non-dual. God incarnates as Avatars and enters into the hearts of the human beings as Antaryamin out of His infinite love for them that they should attain salvation. Thus between this descent of God and the ascent of the human being by their sadhanas,

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BOMBAY 1

there is a meeting taking place and there is unitive consciousness—oneness with God. Thus this system of philosophy is not to be confused with logic or metaphysics but it is ultimately becoming one with God.

The meeting concluded with thanksgiving by Swami Kailashananda. After the evening Aratrikam prasadam was distributed to the devotees.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
AND TEMPLE DEDICATION CEREMONY
AT THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA,
PATNA

The opening and the dedication ceremony of the newly built temple and the 115th birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna were held at the Patna Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama premises with great *eclat* and solemnity from the 28th March to the 4th April 1950. Some distinguished Pandits well versed in Vedic rituals were brought from Banaras and other places to perform the Puja, Homa and other functions appropriate to the sacred ceremony. His Holiness Srimat Swami Virajananda Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, graced the occasion by his august presence. On the 28th March, preliminaries of the dedication ceremony such as *Graha* and *Vashtumanilala Puja*, flag hoisting and *Homa* as also *Laghu-Rudra* sacrifice were gone through from morning till noon, and in the evening "*Kali-Kirtan*" was sung

by Swami Ramananda Maharaj and his party. On the 29th March, a big procession of men and women was held within the Ashram Compound and His Holiness Srimat Swami Virajananda Maharaj performed the installation ceremony in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering. Special puja, Bhajan, Kirtan, Homa and other ceremonial functions went on throughout the day in the midst of universal rejoicings. In the evening Sri Santosh Kumar Mukherjee delighted the audience by his sweet "*Rasleela-Kirtan*." On the 30th March, some renowned artists of the City of Patna entertained the gathering with vocal and instrumental music of a high order. From the 31st March to the 2nd April, the Kirtaniya Sri Suryanarayan Thakur and his party performed "*Lila Kirtan*" in Hindi in the newly built Prayer Hall attached to the Temple, and on the 3rd and 4th April, Srimat Swami Omkarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission read *Srimad Bhagavatam* and *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*. During these days a little over five thousand people including about two thousand and five hundred *Davidra Narayanas* partook of the Sacramental food (Prasad) in the Ashrama premises. As a matter of fact, this sacred function which was unique in the history of the Patna Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama was a splendid success. The solemnity of the ceremony was heightened all the more by the gracious presence of His Holiness Srimat Swami Virajananda Maharaj on the occasion.

ON VIRTUE

"It is the moral character of a neighbourhood that constitutes its excellence, and how can he be considered wise who does not elect to dwell in moral surroundings?"

"A man without virtue cannot long abide in adversity, nor can he long abide in happiness; but the virtuous man is at rest in virtue and the wise man covets it.

"He who has really set his mind on virtue will do no evil.

"Wealth and rank are what men desire, but unless they be obtained in the right way they may not be possessed. Poverty and obscurity are what men detest; but unless prosperity be brought about in the right way, they are not to be abandoned. If a man of honour forsake virtue how is he to fulfil the obligations of his name? A man of honour never disregards virtue, even for the space of a single meal. In moments of haste he cleaves to it; in seasons of peril he cleaves to it."

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THE VEDANTA KESARI

JUNE, 1950

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Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease.
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

Swami Vivekananda

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VOL. XXXVII

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No. 2

LETTERS OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA

(Translated from original Bengali)

Sri Ramakrishna my Refuge

MATH BELUR
HOWRAH

MY DEAR HARIMOHAN,

Just received another letter of yours. Happy to learn that you are keeping better.

Live very cautiously. Let me repeat, he who is cautious does not suffer ruination. You are right in saying that you will make that very place your abode where your health keeps home. Almora is quite a tolerable place. If you like, you may go there. We have many acquaintances there; and I hope facilities for staying will be available.

I too have received a letter from Premananda the other day. I am scheduled to leave for Kashmir along with Swamiji the day after tomorrow. If it so comes about we may go to Kedar and Badri after we have visited Nainital and Almora. Afterwards we go to Simla and thence through the Punjab to Kashmir. Such is the tentative programme.

If this journey in the company of Swamiji had not materialized I should have surely gone somewhere, for my health had considerably gone down.

Now the point is, you too must take good care of your own health. If instead of uselessly spending energy by suffering from diseases again and again, you can utilize that energy in the contemplation of God, much good will accrue out of that. You may apprise me of all your doubts and thoughts by writing now and then. May be you will be benefitted with the replies that may follow. You may know, I am used to thinking of you and praying for your good.

Do not be grieved at the behaviour of Krishnachaitanya Babaji...Live in your own *bhava* (attitude) and wish all well. It is unnecessary to wrangle or quarrel with anybody.

It is very good that you have been studying the *Gita*. The *Gita* is the essence of all the Shastras. Arjuna became free from delusion after listening to the *Gita*. And whoever else may earnestly study the *Gita* will certainly get rid of all his doubts. Never give up studying the *Gita*.

All's well here. Accept my love and blessings.

Yours with best wishes,
SRI TURIYANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna my Refuge

MATH BELUR P.O.
HOWRAH,
4-11-98

MY DEAR HARIMOHAN,

Perhaps you know that I reached here from Almora on the last Vijaya Dasami Day. Just on the eve of leaving Almora I had received a letter of yours the receipt of which could not be acknowledged in a hurry.

Swamiji's health went very bad. Now he has improved a lot. Three or four days back he went to live in Calcutta. Kalikrishna and Gupta are attending on him. He intends to stay there for a few days. Now he is keeping quite well. Since coming here I have not been keeping well. I was keeping extremely well on the hills.

How are you keeping now? Suren came here four or five days back. He is doing well. I got all information about you from him. The winter is just descending in Calcutta and the climate is not bad now. If you now come down here at least for three or four months, I hope you will keep quite well. I am feeling a longing to see you. If I had not to move under the pressure of urgency, I should have liked to come after once seeing you there.

Where is Premananda and how is he doing? I have written to him after coming here, but I have not yet received any reply. Please convey my love and greetings to him. My Vijaya greetings to you.

You must live very cautiously. Do not be overdaring in any matter. Too much daring is the root of many a mischief. Know that where there is fear, there is victory. I hope you remember *maniratna mala*?

If even after studying the books you cannot comprehend them and they do not come to any use, futile is reading and keeping company with holy men. Reflect within yourself as to why I should have spoken so many things. And never flinch from doing what you think to be right. Accept my love and blessings.

Yours with good wishes,
SRI TURIYANANDA

P. S. *Sudhri bigri beg hi bigri pher sudhre na*
Dudh phate Kanji pade dudh pher bane na

The good soon becomes bad. After once becoming bad he does not become good any more. Milk rots easily but it never becomes milk again.

CREATIVE UTILIZATION OF ADVERSITY

यदच्युतकथालापसपीयूषवर्जितम् ।

तद्दिनं दुर्दिनं मन्ये मेवाच्छन्नं न दुर्दिनम् ॥

That day I deem to be a bad day which is devoid of the ambrosia of the talks and conversations about Achyuta (Vishnu), and not the cloudy day.

ADVERSITY A UNIVERSAL CONCERN

Adversity is the most common encounter of life. It confronts, nay affronts almost every individual, every nation at all times. Life itself, in a sense, is an unceasing wrestling with adversity. The baby appears in the world in a hostile set up and lives upto its death by just escaping death. If somehow a man escapes the compactness of adversity in a particular period of his life he is sure to face it at some other period of his life.

Adversity presents itself sometimes in a stark nude unmistakable form, and at other times in disguise. It may appear even in the very shape of prosperity. A man becomes rich and he falls a prey to the vices that riches alone can breed. The ruination of most of the royal dynasties that one comes across in the histories of different nations were mostly germed during the heydays of their pomp and glory. We can now very clearly see how Hitler's peak-days of victory were just the measure of the crashing fall he was destined to have.

Adversity appears sometimes in gross and sometimes in subtle forms and it may have different manifestations with different men. For an ordinary man of the world poverty is an adversity. But for a genuine spiritual aspirant poverty is an indispensable blessing. A savage who is satisfied with half-baked flesh cannot think of a greater adversity than his failure to kill an animal,

whereas a highly sensitive soul will surely consider it an adversity if he had failed to use uniformly sweet and courteous words towards his servants.

There cannot be anything like absolute adversity. Neither is adversity locked up in a particular set of circumstances, for, how one should view those circumstances depends upon one's psychology. A man who is fundamentally physical will react differently, from a man fundamentally mental against the same set of circumstances. Again, a spiritual man will perhaps view the entire set up differently from both. Yet it remains a fact that adversity overtakes every man. It is the most unwanted but unfailing visitor of every home. So adversity is a universal concern.

Gautama the Buddha viewed the entire life as an unbroken piece of adversity. One of the four noble truths declared by him is, 'the truth that there is misery.' The depth of the passion with which he sought and afterwards found a path of deliverance for mankind shows how poignantly he had felt the pangs of adversity.

Adversity is seldom welcome. And when it is unwelcome adversity stands worse complicated. The very disconcerting appearance of adversity throws many a mind out of its precarious balance on which it generally subsists and then what follows is a very sad tale. The man insults adversity and adversity insults him and in bad time

the catastrophe is complete—the man is battered, shattered and done for.

Of the many things we ignorantly waste in life, adversity stands out first. And of all adversities the unpreparedness to receive adversity is the greatest one. We seldom recognise that the sense of preference for a particular situation in life is indeed a potential danger. Adversity very often arises out of the very stuff of our character.

Without Yoga there is no bliss. Without समत्वम्, evenness of mind, there is no Yoga. And when we have sense of preference we cannot have the required evenness of mind. Ninety-nine percent of the people who fail in life will be found to be men of strong sense of preference. This practice of duality of hugging happiness and hating adversity is a dangerous game. It sets a man against his own possibilities and sometimes best of his opportunities which come to him just in a slight disguise.

If we would but look with open eyes, we shall see that most of our institutions are but monuments to our adversities. If one may say so the human civilization itself is in fact a growing cemetery of man's adversities. We owe all our knowledge, philosophy and science to our adversities. The spirit of enquiry which is the mother of all inventions, is the rebel daughter of adversity.

THE SECRET OF ULTIMATE PROSPERITY

Adversity brings direct hits for some and indirect hits for others. Very rarely one is found to be appreciating the direct hits of adversity and it is not all that can appreciate even the implications of indirect hits. They are rare, but indeed we had such men who ran after a thief just to pass on to him things which he could not conveniently carry; who followed a dog which was carrying away his *chapati* just to smear ghee on it. One of the most courageous and intelligent of human beings was a lady. She was Kunti, the mother of Yudhisthira. It is a mighty education to know what she prayed for:

"O Father of the Universe" She cried, "may there be calamities for us always and at every step whereby we shall have that sight of you, which saves us from experiencing another birth."¹

We have here the key to the creative use of adversity. Yet another more daring adventurer of spirit was Rantideva about whom we read in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Rantideva's prayer was:

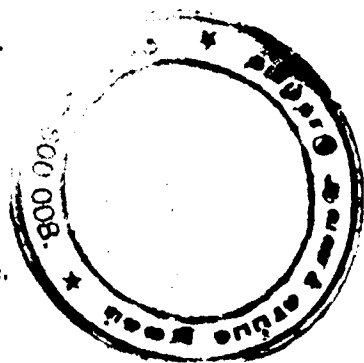
"I do not desire from God that great state which is attended by the eight supernatural powers or even deliverance from rebirth. Dwelling in the hearts of all creatures, I bear their suffering that they may be freed from misery."²

¹ विपदः सन्तु नः शश्वत्तल तल जगद्गुरो ।
भवतो दर्शनं यत्स्याद अपुनर्भवदर्शनम् ॥

Srimad Bhagavatam i. viii. 25.

² न कामयेऽहं गतिमीश्वरात्
परमहृदियुक्तामपुनर्भवं वा ।
आर्तिं प्रपद्येऽखिलदेहभाजा
मन्तःस्थितो येन भवन्त्यदुःखाः ॥

Srimad Bhagavatam ix. xxi. 12.



We have but to feel the throb of this ancient heart and be sublimated; we have but to look into his imaginary face and become invincible. What a divine dragon hunger to eat away others' sufferings! What was adversity for him but a most welcome sweet hour of self-consecration?

Then look at the Son of Man, the Crucifix. What a mighty creative use he made of the direst moments of his adversity! It was as if the sweetest moment of his life. When his precious blood dripped from the severe wounds brutally inflicted upon his soft divine form he made one of the greatest creative prayers that was ever heaved on earth! "Father, forgive them....." The strength and solace of Christianity are not so much in the Sermon on the Mount as in this small prayer. The creativity of the Christ-power gushes forth irresistibly from these few words and there is not a soul that lives which is not touched and transmuted by them. Bearing the cross is no carrying a wooden frame of absurd duplication. It is the readiness to receive in eagerness the direst crises with perfect obedience to God—nay, it is more, it is thanking profoundly for being robbed of what we held the dearest. It is being forcibly pulled to the very heart of God, and thus become the very parcel of Him. This is creative utilization of adversity—this bearing the cross. And need we say this is the only secret of ultimate prosperity?

When Sri Nityananda was rather severely assaulted by two ruffians, his love for them welled forth in the profoundest pity, at the impact of which the two ruffians turned great devotees in the fullness of time. What was adversity for him but

the most desirable moment for self-expansion, the creative leaven of which brought about the bravest efflorescence of spirit in the most unexpected quarters?

Those who rise to live in the wide all-absorbing consciousness of the spirit view things with strange eyes. They not only do not resent adversity, they even consider it a rare blessing. The very idea of being relieved from their adversity pains them. We quote below a passage from the life of the saint Durgacharan Nag to illustrate our statement the truth of which otherwise might be reasonably doubted:

"Once a devotee of Nag Mahasaya while sitting on the verandah of his house found that white ants had eaten up the posts that supported the eastern side of the verandah. He struck at the post and the poor ants fell down helpless 'Alas! what have you done?' cried Nag Mahasaya moved with pity. 'Poor creatures, they found peaceful abode here for a long time. It is very cruel of you to have molested them thus.' As he said this his eyes were filled with tears of kindness. The devotee was stricken with wonder and remorse. Nag Mahasaya then approaching the ants said: 'Make yourself comfortable here again. This time you need fear no harm', and helped them to build ant hills there...They once more established themselves and in time the posts gave way. But he would never allow anybody to disturb them."³

This unusual use of adversity will surely defy all ordinary understanding. This is simply strange! But this is exactly the way of the seers. Have we not been told in the Gita,

"That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled man wakes. That in which

³ *The Saint Durgacharan Nag* (The Life of an ideal Householder), Pp-122.

all beings wake is night to the Self-seeing Muni."⁴?

How truly says Thomas A Kempis:

"Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread but few to the drinking the chalice of His Passion.....Many reverence His miracles, but few following the ignominy of His Cross..... He hath many that are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation. He has many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence. All desire to rejoice with Him but few are willing to endure anything for His sake".⁵

But how is it possible for us to achieve Christ in fullness unless we be ready to receive him both in his 'consolation' and 'tribulation'? When we reject him in 'tribulation,' we reject, we know it or not, one half of our God. And when we rush after the other half of God it is bound to be elusive, for it is no God in Himself but a construct of our ignorant timid mind. God is no mere sweetness, He is the thunderbolt as well. Thomas A Kempis even advocates adversity as an abiding necessity of life as will be clear from the following words:

"It is good for us now and then to have some troubles and adversities; for oftentimes they make a man enter into himself, that he may know that he is in an exile, and place not his hopes in anything of the world. It is good for us sometimes to suffer contradictions, and to allow people to think ill and slightly of us, even when we do and mean well. These are often helps to humility and rid us of vain-glory. For then we most earnestly seek God to be witness of what passes within us when outwardly we are slighted by men and incur

their discredit. Therefore ought a man so firmly establish himself in God as to have no need of seeking many human consolations."⁶

THE TEST AND THE TRUST

If affluence is a test, misfortune is a trust. Those who live their lives thoughtlessly fail to pass the test as well as to keep the trust. But bold wakeful and thinking people can profit from both. Much depends upon how we use the circumstances. After every term of his incarceration Mahatma Gandhi came out a greater man. But ordinarily prisoners came out at most times as only greater criminals. This is because they unfortunately never learnt to use their adversity in a creative manner which indeed is an essential part of life's total education.

The resolution must be, if we fall on our back we shall avail the opportunity to look into the fathomless sky and be touched by that healing power that vastness alone has. We should not merely endlessly curse everything and everybody in this world for failing to make our little lives as sweet as candy. We seldom think that sweet was no sweet unless there were the savour sour. One who always complains is less than a man. To say the least a man must be a maker of his destiny. Let him model out his own stature out of the clay of his life. He must wrest from the intriguing hands of darkness at least one grain of light. That is the man's way. Why lose eyes weeping all the time and not save eyes by seeing

through? No individual or nation ever became great in this world without making the best of the worst. The cultivator who fails to accept the challenge of the drought will not reap his harvest. It is then one must clench fast the spade. In adversity we must have that incorrigible self-confidence, the fire of which has the power to forge the very soul of destiny.

We harness the wild energies of nature for lighting our houses, growing our crops, running our factories and for doing hundred other things. But peculiarly enough we allow all our precious adversities to pass by in their clumsy bizarre way, little knowing that adversities symbolize as much of the wild wealth of destiny.

Life is a continuum. Nothing happens here in isolation. If so, the moments of adversity must be serving as the conduit of ancient prosperity from which we surely seek to be benefitted. If we psychologically estrange a segment of our life from the mother-body, our lives are bound to become effete, weak and palsied. Therefore it behoves all who aspire to secure a golden harvest out of their lives, to peer into their adversities with bold clear open eyes just to find out how best they could help their adversities to help themselves. Those who cover their eyes in fear at the very dim distant sight of the adversity are left mauled by it in the ditch of ignominy by the way-side of life.

FACING THE COLLECTIVE ADVERSITY

We have by now patterned our life on this planet in such a manner that adversity is no longer a personal property of anybody. It belongs to the community at large. The famine that is stalking over the unfortunate of Mao's China today is after all an adversity which belongs to you and me,

the humanity at large. How this adversity can be creatively utilized? This is just a great opportunity for self-expansion of the people of the other parts of the world who are not as badly off as the people of China. And in self-expansion is the ultimate good and goal of life. If the world was really civilized there need have been no death out of starvation. Improvement of the standard of our civilization will depend on how progressively we move towards the creative utilization of every piece of adversity that befall this planet in the obscure lives of the unknown individuals. The one way of robbing the adversity, which befalls a nation, of its menacing power, is the collectivization of that adversity on a global basis. This will only mean a proper distribution of localized prosperity. We can ignore others' perils at our own.

In order to attempt any creative utilization of adversity in a comprehensive manner, we must first achieve a collective apprehension of the entire adversity of humanity. It should also be understood that localized prosperity is also a potential adversity. We have also known from world-experience that adversity is almost an axiom, though there is nothing like absolute adversity. So for any intelligent planning of life-economy on this planet we must have to think out how best we could stop the abuse of adversity, i.e. to say how best a quantity of energy which is explosive, i.e. adversity, could be transmuted into a power which is purposive. For this we require the services of the thinking hearts and feeling brains.

We human beings have developed a blind habit of priding ourselves on the achievements of human civilization and of science in particular. We call this habit 'blind' because we do not seem to see the

यस्यां जायति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥ "

Srimad Bhagavadgita ii. 69.

⁵ *The Imitation of Christ*. II. XI.

⁶ *Ibid* I. XII.

vast accumulation of human sufferings and miseries that stand adversely out-balancing all our fond little things of childish pride. Collective creative utilization of adversity is impossible as long as we suffer from this peculiar disease. If we had but adequately known how many millions of people are homeless wanderers on this globe, how many millions have not a square meal, a drop of medicine to intervene between their disease and death—perhaps we would have been humbler men and more humane. Over and above this we have A-bombs, H-bombs, armament race, cold wars, *apartheid*, colonialism, totalitarianism, hypocrisy masquerading as democracy and how many other tiny but powerful engines of adversity a-work on our planet. The field is indeed a big one! The soil is only too hungry for cultivation. But where are the farmers?

COME TO A DESERT HARVEST

God seems to have a strange fancy for shuffling humanity like playing cards at odd intervals of time. If we study history with an open mind we shall find that whenever exclusiveness had hardened in the mind of any nation, that nation had to face some calamity which perforce brought it near other human groups and thus saved it by free blood infusion as it were. Those nations which failed to make any creative utilization of this beneficent ministration of adversity went swiftly down the path of death. Those nations which smiled even when they bled lived long in power and prosperity. But when these nations again in evil counsel refused to share their power and prosperity, they hatched the eggs of adversity in the very nests of their prosperity.

Prosperity is a dynamism. When it fails

to grow and expand on any pretext it gets degenerated into adversity. Again as there is no absolutism about adversity it can by resolute, cautious and adroit application be transmuted into prosperity. He indeed is a great leader of men who knows how to enter the heart of the atom of light secreted in the womb of gloom and thus rob adversity of its ruinous power. In very recent history we have witnessed one such act of great leadership. The last Britisher may take quite a long time to get himself reconciled with their renunciation of the Indian empire. But we are sure that the future historians will learn to view the great leadership of Mr. Clement Attlee as one of the most sagacious and creative utilization of adversity that was ever done in the history.

Of late waves after waves of adversity have befallen India. When in the very wake of a huge wave of change the national psychology had somehow fallen a prey to several diseases which threatened the very solidarity of the nation, destiny has brought down blows. If we can put our adversity to daring searching analysis and scrutiny we shall discover that through the very portals of adversity there runs the path of national self-betterment.

This adversity has been an annihilating blow to all the little fears, selfishnesses, prejudices, boundaries and fond wrong calculations. It had set its own working machinery in such a way that millions had to break through their small houses and seek refuge in a bigger house, which is the charity of man. Man does not live by bread alone, neither he lives by mere wealth. Man does not live without bread and wealth either. Man dies even amidst plenty if that plenty is not christened with the milk of human charity. The blow of the present

adversity in India is upon the source of human charity. Charity must spring forth from every heart and inundate the wastelands of every piece of human suffering. It is indeed open to us now to make such use of our adversity as in the very heart of the desert we may reap a golden harvest.

As we have told previously, adversity brings direct hits for some and indirect hits for others. It is not all minds that can appreciate the imperative of the indirect hits. There are other goodly kindly people who like to sympathise in ornate language from a safe distance. There are yet others who seek to capitalize others' adversities. These are the most unfortunate people and they make the most destructive use of adversity that could be imagined. They ruin themselves in their wrong attempts to prosper. History abounds in such examples. We have almost uniformly wasted the two mighty adversities that betook the world in the form of the two world wars. But remember, truth remains the same: if you ignore your brother's calamities, you will not have a brother to share your calamity, which is sure to visit you too in course of its world-itineracy. You will not be ignored by calamity! But if you are intelligent enough to utilize your brother's adversity in the form of sharing your prosperity, which is otherwise your adversity, then you would have done an unfailing investment!

The individual is the ultimate concern. Creative work always begins with an indi-

vidual before it finds a mass-following. Creative utilization of adversity also fundamentally depends upon private enterprises, for in fact it is a true spiritual *sadhana*. And like all true spiritual *sadhanas* it must have its basis in the subjectivity of the individual. It is only the man *दुःखेषु अनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः*, who is of unshaken mind in adversity and who is free of the desire for happiness, that is a fit instrument for the creative utilization of adversity. He is no less than a man who is *स्थितधीः* of steady wisdom.

This mighty adversity of India which we experience today has in fact opened up vast scopes for true selfless service. Intelligent people should hasten to see that they do not allow this precious opportunity so liberally brought to them to pass by without making the most of it. But in doing so one has to work strictly according to the true karma-yoga ideal. The attitude should be that of serving the suffering Narayanas and not of arrogant helping. The purity of the motive is the essential thing. But it is not as easily attained as it is said. He alone has the essential purity of motive who lives every moment a life of applied God-consciousness. He alone can welcome adversity with a full-throated song:

"I look behind and after
And find that all is right
In my deepest sorrows
There is a soul of light."

14-5-50

"True manhood consists in realizing your true self and restoring the moral order or discipline (or *li*). If a man can just for one day realize his true self, and restore complete moral discipline, the world will follow him. To be a true man depends on oneself. What has it got to do with others?"

CONFUCIUS

¹ Poem by Swami Vivekananda, P-20.

"FROM THE UNREAL TO THE REAL" *

By SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

"From the unreal lead me to the Real. From darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to immortal Bliss."¹

There is no gainsaying the fact that with all our worldly achievements we are in a state of unrest, bondage, and delusion. We live in the midst of uncertainties. Our freedom is limited like that of a bird in chains fluttering its wings; our knowledge is a glimmer in darkness; our joy is marred by sorrow. The world is, in fact, a mass of incessant changes. Nothing here is constant. Animate or inanimate, large or small, gross or subtle, everything is moving, varying some way or other. Absolute rest or immutability is nowhere in nature. It is a biological truth that our physical body, of the existence of which we feel quite sure, is in a state of flux like a whirlpool,—fresh elements of matter are ceaselessly entering into it as the effete are getting out. The Hindu philologist Yaska mentions six conditions to which every living thing is subject: origination, existence, growth, change, decay and death. The mind, too, is changeful. Indeed, pairs of opposites, such as birth and death, growth, and decline, strength and weakness, creation and destruction, success and failure, smiles and tears, love and hatred, light and darkness, harmony and discord, good and evil, make the panorama of life. Nothing remains stationary. The world seems to be a passing show. We feel at times we are dealing

with shadows, treading on shifting sand, as it were, where there is little possibility of rest and security in the true sense.

Nevertheless, we try to be reconciled to the situation. But our soul cries: "Is there no Reality beyond darkness and death, beyond shadows and sorrow, where life has no end, where light never fails, where joy is pure and measureless? If there be such an existence, how can we attain it? Time and again in spite of his preoccupations, man turns to the invisible Deity with supplication to lift him from the mortal plane to the abode of eternal life, light, and joy. There is in the depth of his being an innate longing for such a Goal. Knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly, rightly or wrongly, he is seeking That. His inclinations and desires derive originally from this fundamental urge.

Generally speaking, philosophers have maintained two different views of the world of change. According to some, it is real: according to others, it is apparent. The former hold that we know things as they are in themselves; the latter, that we know things not as they are in themselves, but as the senses perceive and the mind conceives them. Even physical science now admits that it deals with appearances of things and not with their reality.

"The frank realization that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances," says Eddington.²

Whether the world process is conceived as real or apparent, in neither case can its eternal basis be denied. Both the physical and the mental universe are changing. We perceive change only in relation to something less changing or relatively unchanging. The series of relatively unchanging will lead ultimately to the absolute unchanging. The ever-changing universe of mind and matter must have an unchanging background.

The unchanging Self of every individual is the knower of his outer and inner world of change. The external objects change, the body changes and so does the mind, but not the witnessing Self.³ Changes can be known only by an unchanging witness. In the same way the changefulness of the entire physical and mental universe point to the existence of an immutable, all-knowing Being.

The truth that pure being or existence is the essence and the one-Self of all was realized and declared by the Vedic Seers many centuries ago. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* we find the sage Aruni teaches this to his son, Svetaketu:

"Of all these created things and beings, O my dear, pure existence is the origin, pure existence is the support, pure existence is the end....In that subtle essence all this has its being. That is Reality. That is the Self. That Thou Art, O Svetaketu."⁴

Since pure existence is our inmost being, we can know it directly as our very Self. So by determining the character of the Self, we can determine the character of pure existence. Our true Self is not only

self-existent, but also self-aware, because every other existence presupposes the existence of the Self as a conscious reality. Consciousness is not its attribute, function, or state. The Self is pure consciousness, awareness itself. Therefore, pure existence is identical with pure consciousness.

Then again, the Self is the dearest of all. Anything that is dear is dear for the sake of the Self.⁵ It is the one source of all joy. It is all bliss. Therefore, pure existence is Bliss Itself. So we find that pure existence, pure consciousness, and pure bliss are identical. The ultimate reality is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

"When the spiritual aspirant attains secure position in This, which is immutable, formless, featureless, supportless, then he becomes free from fear."⁶

He attains Self-fulfilment.

The ever-free, ever-pure, self-shining, blissful Being is the very Self of each and every individual. Yet, such is the mystery of life that man does not realize himself as such. On the contrary, he knows himself to be a physical or psycho-physical being subject to birth and death, youth and age, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, pain and pleasure. This individualized self, identified with the body and the mind is but a reflection of the real Self. Prevailing through ignorance, the apparent self works and rests, grows and decays, suffers and enjoys while the real Self ever shines in intrinsic glory. Though essentially the same as the Real, yet he thinks himself to be altogether different from the Real and far away from That. So he worships the

* Meditation conducted by Swami Satprakashananda at the Vedanta Center of St. Louis Missouri, U. S. A

¹ Br. Up. I: 3. 28.

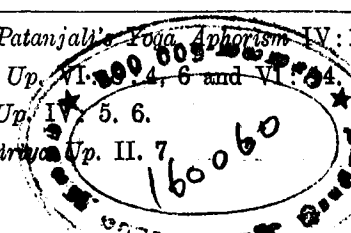
² *The Nature of the Physical World*, Introduction

³ See *Patanjali's Yoga Aphorism* IV: 17 and Swami Vivekananda's Commentary

⁴ Chh. Up. VI: 2. 4, 6 and VI: 2. 3.

⁵ Br. Up. I: 5. 6.

⁶ *Taittiriya Up.* II. 7.



Supreme Being as the Divinity dwelling in heaven far above and prays to Him for freedom, immortality, light, and joy. As he advances in spiritual life, he knows God to be the Soul of his soul shining in the depth of his heart. Thus he discovers the Kingdom of heaven within himself. Then he meditates on God as his Self or the Self as God and eventually realizes their identity and becomes eternally free.

"When the seeker realizes the truth of Brahman (the Supreme Reality) through the perception of the truth of Atman (the Self) in this body as a self-luminous entity, then knowing the effulgent Self as unborn, eternal, free from all modifications of nature, he becomes purified from all sins, all imperfections."⁷

The same blissful Being is within and without us. He is both transcendental and immanent. He is God impersonal as well as personal. He is with form and without form. He has many aspects.

"On realizing the Blissful One who enfolds the universe and is hidden in all beings in an extremely subtle form finer than cream, one becomes free from all fetters. This Divine Being, the Maker of the universe, the all-pervasive Self, ever dwells in the heart of all beings. He becomes revealed through disci-

mination, reflection, and meditation. Those who realize this become immortal."⁸

As the luminous sun, the origin and center of the planetary system, lights up space, holds the planets with the satellites in their respective paths and supplies them with life and energy, even so the Supreme Being, immanent in the universe of mind and matter as its effulgent Self, projects and sustains, enlightens and enlivens it. Think that the same Divine Being is shining within you as the center of Consciousness—as the witnessing Self. Imagine within your heart a radiant space in which the Divine Being is manifest as a luminous orb energizing and enlightening your mind, the senses, and the body, co-ordinating all their functions and holding them intact. Meditate on the luminous orb as your very Self, as the Soul of your soul, as the life of your life, as the one source of all strength, goodness, knowledge, and joy. Know that you are not the aggregate of the body, the senses, and the mind, but the self-existent, self-shining, blissful Being, pure, free, and immortal. This is the way from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to eternal Bliss.

Peace! Peace! Peace!

"He whose conquest cannot be conquered again, into whose conquest no one in this world enters, by what track can you lead him, the Awakened, the Omniscient, the trackless?"

He Whom no desire with its snares and poisons can lead astray, by what track can you lead him, the Awakened, the Omniscient, the trackless?

Even the gods envy those who are awakened and not forgetful, who are given to meditation, who are wise, and who delight in the repose of retirement from the world."

DHAMMAPADA

⁷ Svetasvatara Up. II: 15. ⁸ Svetasvatara Up. IV: 16, 17.

IS BUDDHISM THE ONLY RELIGION THE WORLD CAN HAVE?

By KRISHNADAS BUDDHAPRIYA

The following discourse was contributed by one of our readers after going through the article, Buddha and the Future of His Religion by The Hon. Dr.

B. R. Ambedkar, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., Bar-at-Law in the Vaisakha Number of The Maha Bodhi—Ed.

A. The Buddha is marked off from Jesus, Mohammed and Krishna by his self-abnegation. Jesus declared himself to be the Son of God, Mohammed introduced himself as God's messenger and Krishna claimed that he was Parameshwar.

B. Direct and simple evidence to measure the degree of self-abnegation! I cite a passage from the Itivuttaka, 22 attributed to the Buddha making claims analogous to what you put in the mouths of Jesus and Krishna on the authority of Christian and Hindu scriptures.

"When the aeons had unrolled, brethren, I became one of the Splendid Devas...I was reborn in the Highest Abode. There was I a Brahma, a great Brahma, conquering and unconquered, the all-seeing Controller..... Thirty and six times, brethren, was I Sakka, Lord of the Devas. Countless hundreds of times was I a rajah, a world-ruler..."

On your assumption this passage is a proof of the Buddha's want of self abnegation! It is a blasphemy to even hint that these great luminaries, all of them, had no self-abnegation. Christ was the friend and lover of the low and the down-trodden and he courted crucifixion for the redemption of humanity. The story of Sri Krishna is one of self-renunciation and humility; for was he not the destroyer of pests like Kaliya, suppressor of wicked rulers, guest of Vidura, friend of Sudama, charioteer

of Arjuna and maker of kings though he never cared for a kingdom? Through the cloud of legends we can yet get a glimpse of his great self-denial and love for the righteous and the oppressed.

A. But it is highly presumptuous to proclaim oneself to be God.

B. Well, one sees in religious books only what one looks for. To suggest that a divine personality held in the highest reverence by millions of men and women for centuries is a pretender to Godhood is certainly offensive to many who have the faith. We must have the patience to search for the truth, to search for the original behind the imitation. Union with Godhead is the goal of every being according to many authoritative texts of the Hindus. Those who have replaced their 'ego' with Parameshwar and have no trace of a narrow 'self' left behind, alone can truly think and say so. Hundreds of Godmen have realized this identity with Godhead and pronounced in a similar strain. That their realization is no vain boast is proved by their selfless conduct and spiritual virtues as manifested in their character. In the Bhagavadgita Sri Krishna speaks of himself as the friend and guide of Arjuna, as a distinguished member of the Vrishni clan, as an ideal lover of God (for the verse रामेव चारं पुरं

प्रपद्ये यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसूता पुराणी XV. 4 with the verb in the first person singular number shows clearly how Krishna himself as a teacher took refuge in the Creator of the universe in a manner worthy of being imitated by others who cultivate devotion to God) and as the Supreme Divine Being. According to Hindu religion an incarnation of God, or the fully developed man, realizes the unity of his own self with the Divine and becomes the very self of all beings. One who studies the relevant texts without prepossession have no difficulty in understanding such apparently contradictory statements. One who has realized himself to be the very self of all cannot have evil and imperfection for he loves all as himself and never boasts of his powers.

A. What about miracles, supernatural powers and divine authority claimed?

B. Scriptures of all the living religions originated at a time when people had not the sense of historical accuracy and scientific method which we have to-day. Their aim was to train the heart of man and not merely intellectual analysis. The philosophical portion of all the religions more or less satisfy the rational mind. It is unfair to compare the rational and philosophical part of one religion with the mythical and ritualistic part of the other. Buddhism too has its legends and supernatural interventions in full measure; magic and heavens and hells too. It is according to the wish of Brahma Sahampati that the Buddha looked down upon the earth and came down. Buddha told Kassapa that he could become multiform, pass through walls, walk on water, touch and feel moon and sun, etc. Lotuses sprang up under the feet of *Kantaka*, the horse, when he carried Buddha out

of the city, etc. etc. If Krishna and Jesus said they spoke words of God the proof lies in the words themselves. The most exalted utterances attributed to them could not have come from a mind that is not sunk in God; and inferior utterances are but compositions of selfish man promulgated under their name. This in no way can detract from their greatness. Certainly the Buddha propounded a rational religion; but let us not forget what he himself admitted:

"Even so, brethren, have I seen an ancient Path, an ancient track traversed by the Perfectly Enlightened ones of former times."

(S.N. II. 103—4.)

The Buddha knew that truth is as old as time and absolute originality is an impossibility. The past grows into the present and the present into the future. That Hinduism is not all dead wood is clear as a door nail to all who have acquaintance with the cultural history of India from the age of the Vedic Rishis to Gandhiji. As for courage of philosophic conviction Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva are not inferior to the Exalted One of Buddhism.

A. However, Hinduism, I maintain, is not founded on morality; at least, morality is no integral part of it, while Buddhism is morality. Buddhist religion is nothing if not morality.

B. Buddha clearly affirms that Nirvana is the Goal of his religion; morality is only its auxiliary. Addressing the Brahmin Unnabha he says:

"Plunged in Nibbana, Brahmin, is the holy life lived, with Nibbana for its goal, and ending in Nibbana."

To him as to the Upanishadic sages morality was only a means. *Majjhima Nikaya*, I. 134 reports his words thus:

"...using the figure of a raft have I shown you the Norm, as something to leave behind, not to take with you. Thus, brethren, understanding the figure of the raft, ye must leave righteous ways behind, not to speak of unrighteous ways.

So morality is not the alpha and omega of Buddhism; for as the text affirms, even righteous ways are to be left behind. Hence what God is to other religions is *not morality but Nirvana* to Buddhism. As for the allegation that Hinduism has no moral basis, it is an old cry started by Missionaries of some proselytizing religions eager to swell their rank and file from the Hindu population and repeated by all depreciators of Hinduism whenever need arises. Hinduism, it must be noted, is as much founded on morality as any other religion; nay if other religions have anything to learn from Hinduism it is certainly the great moral principle of religious tolerance which is evident throughout the history of Hinduism as well as a really metaphysical and rational background of all morality which the philosophy of unity upholds as the goal of all religion. Says Prof. Paul Deussen,

"'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' is the requirement of the Bible. But on what grounds is this demand to be based, since feeling is in myself alone and not in another? Because the Veda adds here in explanation, 'Thy neighbour is in truth thy very self,' and what separates you is mere illusion," *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 49.

The foundation of all morality must be sought in this great metaphysical principle more or less found in all religions but specially developed in the Vedanta, the cream of Hinduism. For, the Vedantic monism teaches that there is one universe, which through the senses we see as matter,

through the intellect as souls and through the spirit as God. Here is the explanation of all ethics, of all morality. Buddhist philosophy says that this sense universe which is a mass of change is alone sufficient and no divine ground is necessary. Since it is irrational to think of change without its correlative changelessness, we have to admit that the Reality is one all-comprehending existence both changeful and changeless, as the wave and the sea, viewed as a change or as an immutable unbroken Absolute Being as one's vision and insight helps one to see. A man becomes a world-mover when his little self is dead and the one Truth called God or Nirvana or Brahman stands in its place. Then only frictions and clashings, hates and jealousies, vanish. Restraint sustains the fabric of society; it can never be had unless the indecent hurry for an ever increasing measure of sense pleasures and personal power is checked. One who has a glimpse of a reality behind the sense phenomena, a unity of all existence, alone can hold himself back from the temptation to seek pleasure at the cost of other's suffering. Copy book maxims of morality has not yet achieved this. Utilitarian standards cannot explain the ethical relations of men. Morality as a form of social contract will have to be kept up by police vigilance. Ethics based on an ideal, the perception of the super-sensuous and on the inherent divinity of man and its corollary universal self-hood, can alone be self-sustaining. It is only the religion of the Upanishads 'the fairest flower of philosophy and religion that any country in any age has produced' that can supply more than anything else this *raison d'être* of all morality. Those who seek for a moral code also can find plenty of moral dicta

and rules in every page of the well known scriptures of the Hindus. The very first stanza of the *Isavasya Upanishad* of the *Yajur-Veda* declares the greatest ethical principle ever known to man. A religious Hindu is necessarily moral; an immoral Hindu is never religious. See *Katha Upanishad*, II 24. None is so blind as he who would not see.

A. *The essence of the Vedic religion is keeping up of observances; that is the Vedic Dharma and not morality.*

B. It is true that the bulk of the Vedic religion as interpreted by ritualists deal with observances. But the philosophical and ethical core of Hinduism can be traced in some form or other to the earliest works. There was no party-line in Hinduism and there was a free and luxuriant growth of religious ideas suitable for multifarious types of minds.

"Injure none, deny the position of none; take man where he stands and, if you can, lend him a helping hand and put him on a higher platform, but do not injure and do not destroy. All will come to truth in the long run."

This is the true position of Hinduism. The majority of men are always wanting good things of the world either through force or propitiation. No wonder that Vedic religion had attractive promises extended through a network of rituals and observances. But the Veda is not all liturgy. It was perhaps Buddhism that re-introduced magic, and images and gorgeous rituals to India when philosophic Hinduism replaced vedic ritualism in some measure. The term Dharma has a variety of meanings attached to it, and no doubt Buddhism developed it very beautifully. The very fact that the term existed before Buddhism

shows that the signification which the word acquired in the new setting is only a development of an idea already existing, however crude and hidden it might have been in its source. The sense of a moral law and order as a counter-part of the natural order was already developed during the early vedic period centering round the terms *Rita* and *Satya*. The Buddhist Dharma is only an extension of this conception. The Vedas mostly used Dharma and Yajna as synonyms. Even the conception of Yajna was not merely one of crude magic. The Pancha Maha Yajnas mentioned in the *Yajur-Veda* clearly recognize moral obligation; for it emphasises one's duty towards past generations, invisible Powers, companions in common life, and other creatures. The essence of morality lies in self-control and renunciation; never in self-indulgence. This is exactly what is emphasized by Hinduism through Tapas, gifts, Vratas and the like. When the Buddha himself declares that he has only seen an ancient track traversed by the Perfectly Enlightened ones of former times, it is idle to contend that the Buddha was the first teacher in the world who made morality the essence of religion.

A. *Nishkama Karma of the Hindus does not mean doing good without the expectation of reward; it means only the regular duties and observances of a Brahmin. So even for Krishna religion did not consist of morality.*

B. Interpretation of texts have always been a bone of contention for opposing schools of commentators. Each one is at liberty to read his own meaning into old texts. Where agreement is not easy, one has to accept the result of the synthetic test applied by the best students of the text

It is easy to deprecate every scripture and pluck threadbare even books that time has winnowed for us. But a seeker of truth must be humble to read spiritual texts in the spirit in which they were written. It is a travesty to explain that Karma in the *Gita* means only Brahminical rites and observances. Arjuna was goaded to do 'Karma,' to fight; it was no priestly observance. If we deny the generic meaning of the word Karma, what other sense can apply in the following contexts? Does *Gita*, III. 5 say that Nature impels all to perform rituals? Does *Gita* III. 8 propound the absurd proposition that living is impossible without Nitya-karma? Does *Gita* III 22-24 reveal that Krishna as the creator and sustainer of the universe was only doing rituals and that the world would have collapsed had he not performed Brahminical observances? Are there Karma, Akarma and Vikarma among acts of Nitya-karma? "All Karmas" in XII. 6 can never mean rituals alone. If Karma has no generic meaning, Sahaja-karma and Svabhava-niyatam-Karma alluded to in Chapter XVIII would mean only regular rituals which would be arrant nonsense. Verses XVIII. 9 ff. say that work must be done as duty (karya) without attachment, whether it is pleasant or otherwise. Verse XVIII. 15. brings under the category of Karma whatever is done by body, mind and speech. The essence of karmayoga is elimination of egoism and emotionally dwelling upon reward accruing in future, making one's attention to the means of attaining the result suffer thereby. All this is clear to those who read the *Gita* with an unprejudiced mind and proper guidance. That Krishna was not a slave of the ritualistic religion is amply clear to all those who do not refuse to see it in the *Gita*. II. 42-45. If morality was not the very

heart of Sri Krishna's teaching, he would not have gone all the length to describe the Daivi Sampat, and emphasized the Sattvic mode of life and thought as the very essence of his philosophy of conduct.

A. *Whatever all that be, Hinduism stands condemned by its Gospel of social inequality propounded through the false and mischievous doctrine of Chaturvarnya. Neither a Sudra nor a woman could become a teacher of religion in Hinduism and reach God through Sannyasa. Buddha uprooted and destroyed this Gospel of inequality.*

B. Caste is an accident in the social evolution of the people of India. Its rigours were never felt in ancient India where automobiles and industries did not attract crowds to cities, and politics was unknown. In a sparsely populated country, short of extermination of the weak by the powerful, caste was the only way of bringing about social adjustment eliminating competition and fixing all to some vocation. Some sort of caste did exist and still exists in all countries. Today caste is a thing of the past as it ought to be. It would be an obsession of the past if we yet discuss it as a living issue. Adherents of Hindu orthodoxy who hold that caste is the crux of their religion as well as the iconoclastic reformers who, as a consequence of the stubbornness of the shortsighted castemongers, out to annihilate Hinduism, are both fanatics not a whit helping the progress of the nation. Chaturvarnya, ideally conceived, is only a division according to attitude, temperament and outlook. There are texts in *The Mahabharata*, and *Sukraniti* to lend support to this view. In Hinduism Saints were produced in all castes. Divine honours are paid to the

Non-Brahmin Alvars in the South and others in other parts of the country. The great saint Sri Narayana Guru of Malabar, a great Sanskrit scholar, poet, philosopher, and reformer who was dubbed as a low-caste by jealous priest-ridden Hindus was one of the great teachers of Hinduism in recent times; for by his insight and spirituality he has made himself a beacon light to many and raised a whole class of scheduled castes to a position equal to that of any so-called high caste, in wealth, intelligence, education and morality, not through any political power, but through the magic power of the *Gospel of samadarsana* and *Unity* taught in Advaita-Vedanta, the very crown of Hindu Religion. Hinduism cleansed of its excrescences is not a gospel of inequality but a Gospel of *Samadarsana*, of *Sarva-Bhuta-Atma-Bhava* or universal self-hood. Abuse of caste indulged in by weak and selfish men or classes (which country or century is free from selfish classes and groups?) cannot be made an excuse to condemn and destroy the spiritual core of Hinduism which the world needs so imperatively. The forces working for building up privileges and breaking them down are found in all times and among all people. There is ample evidence that caste was a flexible fourfold division based more upon aptitude and temperament, than rigid heredity even in early times. We read in the *Mahabharata* how a Sudra Paijavan performed Soma Yaga, and in the *Rig-Veda* how Kshatriyas like Viswamitra and Devapi acted as priests. The Sudra Aitareya and Vaisya Kavasha became Rishis meriting honour from all. That the Sudra Vidura was a Sannyasi is clear from the fact that his cremation was objected. Besides the Brahmadivas of the Vedic times, we

read of Sulabha and other ladies, who are spoken of as Sannyasinis in the Puranas. This is all recounted not to say that Brahminical caste is good and natural for all times. My aim is only to say that the motive of the caste-system as conceived originally by some great ancestors is not all bad as is generally supposed, though it has degenerated and seriously handicapped social unity by preventing equality of opportunity at certain stages of its decline. Now let us turn to Buddhism as we have it in China, Tibet, Burma, Siam and Ceylon. Are these nations, professed followers of Buddhism, head and shoulders above the rest in morality, in equality? It is for investigators of criminology to tell us whether the percentage of murder, cruelty, theft and the like are negligible in those countries compared with this land of inequality and Hinduism. It is again not a very correct statement to say that the Buddha uprooted and annihilated Chaturvarnya. Nothing of the kind. He only said caste has no place in the religious Sangha.

"Just as, brethren, the great rivers...on reaching the mighty ocean renounce their former names and lineage and one and all are reckoned as the mighty ocean, even so, brethren, do the four castes, the Nobles, the Brahmins, the Vessas, and the Suddas, go forth from home to the homeless life under the Norm-Discipline of the Tathagata and renounce their former names and lineage, and are reckoned just as recluses..." *Some sayings of the Buddha* p. 250-1)

"In accordance with the tolerant spirit of the Hinduism in which he [the Buddha] was brought up," says Sir Francis Young-

husband, "he neither hurled vituperation on the orthodox nor did the orthodox denounce him and have him tried and tortured".

In the words of the same author Buddha was only a "great Hindu reformer" who

offered his advice "with all courtesy rather than with any accompanying denunciation of those who differed from him."

Some of the foremost disciples of Buddha were learned Brahmins like Mahakashyapa, Sariputra, Maudgalyayana, and Katyayana. His only aim was to instruct upright intelligent young men to know and realize in this very life that *unsurpassed holy life* even for a month, and not, as he tells Nigrodha,

"desiring to win pupils, not wishing others fall from their religious vows, not wishing others to give up their ways of life, not wishing to establish you in wrong ways or to make you give up ways that are good."

His one aim was to put down corruption and increase wholesome things. Nor was Buddha a gospeller of sex equality in the sense in which we often take that term. He was extremely unwilling to admit women to his religious Order. Only after repeated importunities of his aunt Mahaprajapati and his beloved disciple Ananda that he permitted the latter to ordain women also, but with strict reservations. One of the eight rules he specially laid down for women deals a blow to the equality gospel; for he said:

"A sister, even if she be a hundred years in the robes, shall salute, shall rise up before, shall bow down before, shall perform all duties of respect unto a brother, even if that brother has only just taken the robes." (*Vinaya* 2-10).

Finally he told Ananda openly:

"If women had not been permitted to go forth from the home unto the homeless life under the Norm-Discipline set forth by the Tathagata then would the righteous life last long, the good Norm would last, Ananda, a thousand years. But, now Ananda, since women have been permitted...only for five hundred years, Ananda, will the good Norm stand fast".

After Buddha's passing away the order charged Ananda with the offence of introducing women to the order and so causing its decay. What Buddha did was only the exposing of the hollow claims of spiritual superiority of a class based on heredity without genuine spiritual character to support such claims and not wiping out of social distinctions based on conventions.

A. Was the *Gita* written for the main purpose of giving a perpetual lease of life to the mischievous and false doctrine of *chaturvarnya* when it was about to crumble under the blows of Buddhism?

B. Of the 700 verses in the *Gita* only about half a dozen verses refer to the Chaturvarnya. The colophon ending every chapter definitely states that the subject-matter of the book is Brahmadivya and Yogasastra; that is to say, the science of Divine Reality and instruction on spiritual union with God. The Chaturvarnya found in the *Gita* is rather a classification than a division based on prerogatives which would be opposed to *samadarsana* taught as the philosophical goal of the book.

Fourfold classification of society into seer, protector, provider and labourer is not a conception entirely original to the *Gita*. We meet it in other parts of the *Mahabharata* too; and in one place the great epic definitely rules out a fifth varna. In works composed prior to the *Gita* also we find the same spirit recognised in some measure. For instance the *Atharva-Veda* 5.17.9 and *Aitareya Brahmana* 2.19. refer to intercaste marriages. In very ancient times the first three varnas inter-dined freely, and in the Sutra period food cooked by the Sudra was not objected to by the rest. The *Upanishads* speak of Kshatriyas who taught the highest religion to Brahmin pupils. The *Aitareya*

and the *Kaushitaki Brahmanas* mention that a Sudra Kavasha was acknowledged by Viswamitra, Gritsamada and other sages to be a rishi, with these words of approval: *Namaste astu team vat'nah sreshthosi*. The *Matsyapurana* mentions that Vatsapri, the son of a Vaisya, called Bhalandana became a Brahmana and *mantrakrit*. One Rigvedic verse states that persons of different vocation were born in the same family. The *Satapatha* and *Aitareya Brahmanas* state that *yajnadiksha* conferred Brahminhood.

The word *brahmana* occurs only 8 times in the *Rig-Veda*, and the term *brahman*, meaning sage or preceptor, 46 times. In *Rig-Veda* 10. 62. 10 Yadus and Turvasas were considered dasas though they were Aryans. We may infer from *Rig-Veda* 1.101.5., 1.175.3. and 3.34.9 that the Dasyus were only people who had no *vrata*. The terms *varna*, *vrata* and *varnin* are etymologically derived from the same root. We may not be wrong in inferring from this fact that the Arya-varna merely represented a community of worshippers who followed a particular rule of life or Dharma and maintained a high standard of culture through marriage, *upanayana* and *yajna*. In order to partake in a sacrifice, according to *Aitareya Brahmana* 7.2 and *Satapatha Brahmana* 13.4.1.3 a Kshatriya had to become a brahmana for the time being. The *Vishnupurana* 1.6. states that the Chaturvarnya was a classification based on division of labour for the propagation of the institution of *yajna* or the law of sacrifice governing the evolution of the universe. There are many passages similar to the *Gita* 18.42 which declare that spirituality makes a *brahmana* and worldly occupation makes the classes. This is only a natural extension of the earlier idea that higher spiritual

culture could make anyone a rishi. According to the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and the *Mahabharata*, there was only the brahmana varna in the beginning. From all this it is quite clear that there was a strong current of feeling from very early times making virtue and conduct the criterion of the different varnas at least in the minds of some of the Aryan leaders.

To assert that the originality of Sri Krishna lies in justifying Chaturvarnya on the Sankhya theory of *guna* is not correct. The originality of Sri Krishna lies in harmonising the ideas of Samkhya, Yoga, Vedanta and Dharma existing at his time, and not in strengthening the varna conception which was already accepted in the spirit in which he has taught.

Had Buddhism been successful in effacing caste, it would not have existed in India all these centuries. It was not in any way successful in either destroying the basis of caste or in raising the moral level of the people who came under its influence a bit above that of other nations who profess Christianity, Hinduism or Islam.

The doctrine of *ahimsa* is not a new discovery of Buddhism as we find it in some form in the earliest *Upanishads* also. At no period of history Hindus gave up *himsa* under the influence of Buddhism. Some Hindus abstained from meat even before the Buddha. In spite of the *ahimsa*-gospel, after Buddha, all Buddhist nations are meat-eaters even to-day. A large number of Buddhists have embraced Islam and Christianity in China, Japan, Burma, and Ceylon finding that Buddhism could no more hold them.

There is no truth in the saying that Hinduism was about to give up the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas. Though some of the orthodox systems of Hindu

philosophy accorded the Vedas only the status of Aptavachana, the authority of it was recognised fully; nay the infallibility of the Vedas was strengthened in a measure unknown before by the theistic schools of Hinduism which flourished after Buddhism. To say that Brahmanism hated Buddhism is an exaggeration. It is a well known fact that the Hindus accepted Buddha as one of the Avatars and copied Buddhist rituals, art, architecture and iconography.

A. *The prakriti of an individual always changes and no one guna can dominate a person throughout life. Hence neither a fixed system of classifying men into varnas nor any permanent assignment of occupation is possible. The theory of fourfold division must therefore fall to the ground. How could Krishna explain Hitler and Mussolini rising from ordinary levels to the position of dictators, capable of dominating the world?*

B. According to the great law-giver Apastamba, varna and asrama are *samaya-charika dharmas*, i.e., practices based on social conventions. These are inherent in society changing and adjusting to the surroundings in some degree. When Sri Krishna says that He created Chaturvarnya what he meant must be that he created humanity with the inherent fourfold division as He, the Cause of all causes, is the source of the entire creation.

That society is a changing, growing and decaying phenomenon was sufficiently known to the Hindus who called the world *jagat* or a moving concern. At the same time they felt that it was absolutely necessary to give some sort of permanence and continuity to social patterns in order to help the individual in receiving a culture and thereby developing the better type of social and spiritual personality. While

admitting that a person has the freedom to hold views and work at any trade that he chooses, it is easy to see that he who changes opinions and vocations like a weather cock is a misfit in society and failure in life. In every society therefore an individual's place is determined by certain standards based on aptitude and training or nature and nurture called *guna* and *karma*.

For the production and development of a better strain of people even to-day Eugenists advocate study and control of the influences that lead to the improvement of inborn qualities in a series of generations. That this was the aim of the formulators of Chaturvarnya is evident from the ancient mass of literature available on the subject. A child born of sattvic parents with inborn sattvic qualities may not necessarily be so throughout life; nor one born with tamasic traits may be put down to that category throughout the entire period of life.

Ancient Hindu writers always recognised that in-born qualities or *gunas* had to be improved and sustained through education and training. The place of *samskara* in determining one's permanent status was fully recognised. Scores of passages may be cited to show that it was *samskara* or improvement effected through a consciously adapted way of life with a view to achieving certain spiritual and higher social ends that determined the varna and not merely the *gunas*. That is why Sri Krishna emphasises equally *guna* and *karma*. It is easy to see that *samskara* or *karma* often produced greater effect on the individual and a permanent result was secured when the recipient had the inborn fitness inherited through the *guna* to receive it. Since the *Gita* fully recognises the value of *samskara* in establishing and fixing the *guna* for the

whole life, the fourfold psycho-physical division of varna, which had nothing to do with social isolation, exclusiveness or prerogatives, stands unassailed in the nature of man.

Even to-day political party-lines divide people into opposite camps and produce mutual acrimony more than the caste divisions did in olden times. All sign-board painters and brick layers do not become Hitlers and Mussolinis over-night, but only those who have the inborn fitness whatever might be the name-label they bear. Krishna who had seen a servant woman's son like Vidura becoming one of the most righteous men of his age and several cowherd women acquiring God-absorption above Brahmin hermits and recluses, and also noticed pompous rulers surrounded by priests and courtiers turning wicked, would not have found it difficult at all to discover that the powerful tendencies brought forward by each soul from past births can cancel circumstances and environments which stand in the way of expressing the genius in them.

While Chaturvarnya is a classification and not a stratification, caste system is a distortion of it and not its descendant. It may not be necessary to revive the caste in any form but the principles behind varna can never be destroyed. For every society has to produce seers, protectors, providers and workers, failing which it has to face decay. Let it be remembered that while varna is an ideal like asrama, jati or caste is a historical and ethnological process. The famous indologist Senart translates varna as class and jati as caste. The latter represents varieties of races, vocations as well as other constituted and conventional distinctions which arose from historical causes. It is a growth from within brought

about by tribal differences, difference in occupation, residence, and the like. No ruling authority regimented people into castes through recruitment or tests of the gunas.

Under the stress of political vicissitudes, investigations make it clear, tribes following different vocations have sometimes given themselves out for brahmins, to get social promotion. The Abhira brahmins are herdsmen and cultivators. When the Scythian rulers settled in India, they became Kshatriyas and their priests, brahmins. The natural desire to follow heredity in occupation with a view to keeping trade secrets in particular families and improve the skill in a particular art by generations of systematic efforts is not a phenomenon confined to India. Inherent disinclination of a man to marry outside his own fold is found even in Buddhist countries. In India perhaps a halo of sanctity was thrown over these naturally existing conditions through sacred laws and verbal traditions at a time when society required a particular type of protection. All such distinctions are being gradually killed out under modern conditions especially through education and political influences. And therefore it is idle to rake up such problems and retard harmonious social progress.

A. What mental and moral relief can Hinduism give to scheduled castes and depressed classes?

B. The noblest and best part of Hinduism can raise any man from animal level to true manhood and make a God of him. When one has assimilated the essence of Hindu culture, labels like Depressed Class and Scheduled Castes will hold no significance. For one will then see the whole universe as a reflection of the

Eternal Being and therefore each soul, whatever might be the political and social name affixed to it, potentially divine. No other religion tells the lowliest and humblest in a more clear voice thus:

You are slaves of none; all freedom and power lies within you; you are higher than the highest in the world, because the real man in you is the almighty God Himself. Shake off this self-hypnotism and manifest the power and glory lying within you. Your bondage and misery will then be at an end. All strength and succour you want is within yourself. Therefore come forth and make your own future.

No other religion preaches self-confidence and self-respect more eloquently than the crowning doctrines of Hinduism; nowhere else can any one find teachings that give greater mental and moral relief than in the gospel of the inherent divinity of man found in the Upanishads. Cries of pretended helplessness, or threats of embracing a different religion, or seeking escape from realities through false logic cannot help us to raise our condition. One who shed tears for the lowly and the downtrodden thus admonished:

"We human beings are very slow to recognise our own weakness, our own faults, so long as we can lay the blame on somebody else. Men in general lay all the blame of life on their fellow men, or failing that on God, or they conjure up a ghost and say it is fate."

Let us believe and act in the faith that we are the makers of our own destiny. Those who suffer any kind of disabilities cannot ameliorate their condition merely by political power gained through motivated propagandism. They have to unfold patiently the power latent in them by assimilating the best in their own culture in order that they might be second to none in the pursuit of the aims of life. Either

by inviting Buddhist missionaries from over-seas or by denouncing Hinduism the backward people cannot improve their position. For the Buddhist nations are neither rich nor enthusiastic about their faith to come to India on evangelical missions; and the ordinary caste Hindu is not anxious to retain the would-be proselytes to a different faith in their own ancestral religion by running to their rescue; because the poor caste-Hindu is himself indifferent of the worth of his religion and callous towards all that happens around him, steeped as he is in penury and ignorance exactly as his depressed class brothers themselves are. Therefore the best way for all those Hindus who have a grievance against their own faith lies in taking the advantage of the freedom and education that are available for them in the new political setting, investigating into the Hindu religion and philosophy with faith and patience and assimilating the best in them without wasting time and energy in animadverting against the past sins of their co-religionists and thereby perpetuating social cleavage based on unreal complexes.

The Hindu culture belongs to every Hindu from the highest to the lowest rank, whatever claims sectarians might make. Many a historic monument of ancient India were raised through the manual labour of the ancestors of the depressed classes and scheduled castes. The achievements of higher castes in the ancient culture were made possible because they were fed, protected and kept in leisure by the common labourers. The Hindu civilization and culture belongs to every Indian by divine right. The depressed classes therefore have every right to consider it as their own and seek relief from it. The caste-Hindus today are repenting over their past mistakes

and are eager to share all that they have with their unfortunate brethren and the depressed classes too are fully aware that they all work for a common cause. It is therefore futile and pernicious to drive a wedge through the majority community of India and perpetuate an internal antagonism through harmful propaganda.

A: *There is a world's difference between a Hindu sannyasi and a Buddhist Bhikshu. The former is dead to the world while the latter has everything to do with the world.*

B: This is an exaggeration which cannot stand scrutiny. It is true that the Hindu sannyasi is asked to be dead to the world in order to be alive to God or the Reality behind the world so that he may serve it as God or God's creation. If it is accepted that 'ownership of property is one of the greatest obstacles in free thinking and free application of free thought,' renunciation of the world alone can be the natural outcome of it. In Hinduism, Sannyasa is advised only for those who have finished with worldly pleasures, or for those who do not find the need for it. Therefore a Hindu Sannyasi becomes apostate if he has *everything* to do with the world. Return to worldly life after once embracing Sannyasa is strictly censured in Hindu Sastras. Buddhist Bhikshus may revert to worldly life and re-enter monastery as they please. Apart from such differences the ideal monk whether he be a Hindu or a Buddhist is demanded to give up desires, control the senses, overcome passions, practise meditation, seek knowledge and propagate religion through word and example just for a morsel of food in return.

A. *That all religions are true is the worst lie heard of; what justification can there be for such a false slogan?*

B. "The greatest misfortune to befall the world would be if all mankind were to

recognise and accept but one religion, one universal form of worship, one standard of morality. This would be a death-blow to all religious and spiritual progress. Instead of trying to hasten this disastrous event by inducing persons, through good or evil methods, to conform to our own highest ideal of truth, we ought rather to endeavour to remove all obstacles which prevent men from developing in accordance with their own highest ideals, and thus make their attempt vain to establish one universal religion."

—Swami Vivekananda

The very fact that all the world religions have been thriving through many many centuries, and bringing solace to millions of people, is the direct proof that they are all true. If Buddhism alone is claimed to be true it would be like one man claiming that six fingers on his hand alone was the true intent of nature. If one religion alone were to be true and all others were untrue, we have a right to say that that religion is diseased. Students of comparative religion are fully aware that the core of all religions is the same. All religions are different expressions of the same truth; all march on or die out. Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any one religion in the world. Every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, he ought to be pitied from the bottom of our heart. What is needed is a fellow-feeling between the different types of religion, seeing that they all stand or fall together; a fellow-feeling which springs from mutual esteem and mutual respect.

The age for one religion alone claiming a monopoly for all truths, with the necessary consequence of religious feuds and holy wars, can no more have any appeal to civilized mankind. So long as nature and temperament of man differ,

there is need for a variety of religions. The greater the number of religions the more chance of a man getting it. In the hotel where are all sorts of food every one has a chance to get his appetite satisfied. Since we are so various in our natures the same method can scarcely be applied to any two of us in the same manner. The emotional man must have his religion; the intellectual scholar must also get a religion suited to him. A religion that does not satisfy active types of men will have little appeal. The mystic too wants a religion that will help him to reach his goal. So it is absurd to say that one particular religion will suit all. What we require is a comparative study of all the various religions and absorption of the best element found in other religions too, to one's own natural religion.

A: *Is Buddhism the only religion which the world can have? Can Buddhism alone save the Hindus?*

B: Those who take a pinhole view of religion cannot see anything beyond what is revealed to them within their tiny ken. All the great religions of the world have been actively alive for many centuries and saving generations after generations in all parts of the world. It is preposterous to say, therefore, that Buddhism alone has the merit to be recognised as the world religion. As for Hinduism there is no need of accepting Buddhism as an alternative religion, for there is nothing in Buddhism worthy of taking over to Hinduism, which is not already there. The tremendous message of rooting out selfishness given by Lord Buddha has already found a place in the heart of the Hindus, who worship him as God incarnate upon the earth. Buddha did not come to destroy. He was the logical development of the religion of the Hindus. The wonderful humanising power

of the Great Master must be accepted by the Hindus. This does not mean that they should exchange Hinduism for Buddhism; for assimilation does not mean the destruction of one's individuality.

Centuries ago Buddhism died a natural death in India because it took away from the nation the idea of God to which the suffering heart of man clings so fondly. The corruption which decadent Buddhism brought on made India one degraded mass of superstitions. In spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of hair-splitting discussions about the *Atman*, Buddhism tumbled down into a hideous ruin and finally disappeared.

It was then that Sankara came and showed that the real essence of Buddhism and Vedanta are not very different. Some of the horrible customs such as *vamachara* inherited from corrupt Buddhism have still their hold over some people, even though Sankara reclaimed many from their fallen state. Ugliness of Hinduism was only stranded Buddhism with its hideous idols and licentious rites. It is only the Vedic religion, which considers ways and means and lays down rules for the four-fold attainment of man, comprising of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*, that can serve the different tastes of all people in India; and not Buddhism with its one coat for all—killing all desires and getting Nirvana.

While Hinduism is a whole symphony Buddhism is only a note in it. The philosophical background of Buddhism is too slender to hold its moral principles. So while the Hindus may wish to combine the heart of Buddha to the wonderful brain of Sankara, they have nothing to gain by dis inheriting Hinduism, which is deeply rooted in the nation to the bottom of the entire society, and going over to fashionable Buddhism manufactured to order out of its old debris.

VISISHTADVAITA*

By SRI P. N. SRINIVASACHARI

The term Visishtadvaita is not so simple as the terms Dvaita and Advaita and the English equivalents for it like 'Qualified Non-dualism' and 'Attributive Monism' and 'Pan-organismal Monism' are equally complex and confusing. It was an epoch-making day in the history of religion when Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda) steeped in Western materialism met the Paramahansa and asked him whether he had seen God. The Paramahansa said that he had a direct experience of God and that he could impart it to him. This event may be said to be the origin and meaning of the Math and the Mission. The teaching of the Paramahansa stressed the central truth that God is both personal and impersonal (Saguna and Nirguna) and that He can be realised by Jnana and Bhakti. This teaching throws a flood of light on Visishtadvaita as a philosophy of Religion and on the points of approach between Sankara and Ramanuja whose Jayanti today is celebrated by the Math.

Religion is the realization of God, and the experiences of the three seers Vamadeva, Prahlada and Nammalwar furnishes the key to the understanding of Visishtadvaita. Rishi Vamadeva realized the all pervasive nature of Brahman when he said "I am Manu, I am the Sun" and Prahlada was gifted with the same *Brahma-dristi* or God-consciousness as is clear from his utterance:—"All is from me, I am all, within me is all." Nammalwar's experience just before he attained *mukti* is true to type. His unitive consciousness was poeti-

cally described in a mystic way when he said that his separatist feeling was devoured by Divinity and that the bliss of union was ineffable and fecundative. The Upanishads in their outpourings of the integral experience of Brahman or *Paripurna Brahmanubhava* bring out His essential nature or *Svarupa* as *Satyam Jnanam* and *Anandam*. As the *Sadvidya* says He is the *Sat* without a second who is eternally self-realized and the *Vishnu Purana* explains *Sat* as the being of our being, *Tadbhavabhava*. *Sat* is the juice in the tree which pervades it and like salt dissolved in water, the Atman is dissolved in Brahman and is inseparable from It. Brahman is the supreme light '*Param Jyotis*' that illumines all lights and the *mukta* attains it as his true nature as the blindfolded man is free when his sight is restored and reaches his place. Another Upanishad defines Brahman as *Ananda-maya* and after attempting a calculus of pleasures concludes that the bliss of Brahman is ineffable and indefinable and the only definition is experience definition. *Ananda* is like honey the quintessence of all joys and the *mukta* revels in it. Reflection on Brahman expires in rapture. Like the river that merges into the sea, the *mukta* merges in the all-absorbing Absolute but absorption is not the annihilation of the self, ending in *sunya* or nothingness. The *mukta* sees Brahman in all beings and all beings in Brahman and his seeing, *darsana*, is not perception or conception but direct intuition. The Atman

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VISISHTADVAITA

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and Brahman are distinct in existence but they are non-dual in experience. This is Visishtadvaitic experience and the philosophy is deduced deductively from this experience and the two are inseparable.

The *mumukshu* or the seeker after Brahman has one supreme qualification namely intense longing to realize Him and becoming one with Him. The question of the origin of the universe of *Avidya* and *Karma* or error and evil is only of secondary interest to him. The Vedantins trace them to *maya*, *upadhis*, *parinama* or *Karma* but these are admitted to be insoluble problems. *Maya* in Sankara's Advaita is *anirvachaniya* or indescribable; the *upadhis* according to Bhaskara are somehow there in Brahman. *Parinama* according to Yadava and others is inherent in Brahman and is in the nature of things. *Karma* has no beginning though it is a moral defect of the jiva and the idea of causation is involved in a circle is cyclic. A patient suffering from a disease cares more for the cure than for the cause and the *mumukshu* suffering from the ills of samsara and *avidya* and *karma* longs for freedom from samsara and has no direct interest in cosmology and the casual analysis of the ills of life. No philosopher Eastern or Western has solved the mystery of life and it is ultimately not solved by reason but is dissolved, by realizing Brahman. By knowing Brahman or the absolute everything else is known but not vice versa. Narada in the Upanishad was not satisfied with his specialisation in all sciences and arts and he sought his teacher Sanatkumara to initiate him into the knowledge of Brahman. Vyasa, the author of the eighteen Puranas was satisfied only when he portrayed the full incarnation of God as the moulder or redeemer of souls. Arjuna

was terrified by the Cosmic form of the Lord but was drawn by his *Svarupa* as saving Light and Love.

The philosophy of Visishtadvaita as of Vedanta in general deals with the nature of Brahman and his relation with the Atman or the Jiva. Visishtadvaita as the adjectival theory of the absolute stresses the internal relation between the two as substance and its inseparable attribute, mode or *aparthaksiddha viseshana* as in the example of light and its luminosity. Brahman is the substance or *Sat* that exists in itself and by itself as the absolute and the attribute inheres in it as its inseparable attribute or mode. The two can be distinguished but not divided and the jiva is a *visesha* or *prakara* of Brahman and it is inseparable from It. This view is adequate as far as it goes but it does not go far enough as the logical view of religion does not fully express its spiritual value. Brahman is not the logical highest but the intuitional highest and therefore the term *Sariraka Sastra* or 'Pan-organismal monism' may be said to be more comprehensive than the term 'Visishtadvaita'. *Sarira* or the body is sustained and directed by the soul or *Sariri* and exists for its satisfaction. The soul is likewise sustained and directed by Brahman and it exists for His satisfaction and therefore it may be called His *sarira*. The term organic relation or *Sarira-sariri* elicits the intimacy between the jiva and Brahman more than the term internal relation but it is only a biological view and it does not reveal spiritual unity. Visishtadvaita is sometimes called theism or even theistic monism, as it explains the ultimate spiritual relation between the creator and the created or the *sariri* as *Seshi* or *Swami* and extols the need for the institution of *prapatti* or absolute

* Based on a lecture delivered on Sankara-Ramanuja Jayanti celebrations at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4.

self-surrender to the feet of the Lord Narayana as the only view of Sri Vaishnava religion and the way of salvation.

In the fourth chapter of *Sribhashya* which sums up the Upanishads and the tenth decade of Nammalwar's *Tiruvaymozhi* which is the autobiography of the soul's ascent to the absolute or Brahman the terms 'Para' 'Avibhaga' and the All self are used and they stress the nature of Visishtadvaita as 'Unionism' and unitive experience. Brahman is not the soul or the self, but the absolute and everything, term and thought, every chit and achit connotes Him as its absolute meaning and value. They may have their own denotation but Brahman is their final connotation as He is the self of all beings or Sarvatma or Vasudeva but the terms connotation 'samanadhikaranya' used in this context are logical and grammatical and not spiritual or mystical in their intent and content. The term 'Purnaism' or 'Bhumaism' is more significant than the previous terms as it brings out the integral nature of Brahman and the unitive experience of Avibhagatwa. Brahman is both the Supreme Sat or Existence and the home of the eternal values of truth, goodness and beauty. Brahman is the God-head who is the Truth of the True, *-Satyasya satyam-* and is the ethically perfect without any taint. Logically He is the light of lights *-Jyothisam Jyothis-* and is the intuitional Highest as by knowing Him everything is known. He is the Beauty of beauties aesthetically as *Bhuvana Sundara* and *Madana Mohana* (cosmic and mystic Beauty) Whatever is separate or *anya* is trivial and has no value but whatever is *Ananya* or is inseparable is *Bhuma* or infinite. In this way, Brahman is defined as Life of our Life, Light of Lights and Inner Love

absolute and He Brahmanises all atmans or infinitises them. The perfect alone makes for perfection and the deity deifies the jiva by making it godly.

Every end implies a means or sadhana and the *mumukshu* who seeks *mukti* follows the threefold ways of karma, jnana and bhakti, which are inter-related and continuous. Karma Yoga consists in the self shedding its selfishness or *ahankara* and *mama-kara*. They have to be rooted out by *nishkamakarma* or doing one's duty without any inner inclination or kama or caring for external consequences. By such renunciation (*Vairagya*) self-realization or *atma-jnana* is effected. The Atman is known as eternal and self-effulgent and such *atma-jnana* leads to *Brahma-Jnana* and Bhakti. Brahman is the all-self or Vasudeva and it is only by knowing Him and becoming one with Him that *mukti* is attained. Work, wisdom and worship are ultimately one. Brahman is himself the means and the end of all karma as He is Himself the subject of knowledge and the object and as He alone satisfies the craving of the *mumukshu*. With his instinct for the Infinite or '*perava*' as the Alwar calls it, the Jiva pines and pants for reunion with Brahman and since the longing is infinite, the Infinite alone can satisfy it. Just as a man immersed in water or scorched by flames, longs for life, the *mumukshu* longs for *mukti*. He hungers for the Absolute and his hunger is satisfied.

Visishtadvaita as *Avibhagaism* or mystic unionism expounds the union of Brahman and the jiva as a descent of the Absolute and the ascent of the finite self. As Brahman is beyond Prakriti with its categories of space, time and causality and the jiva obscured by avidya, limited by karma

and soiled by kama, He is really transcendental as the Eternal, self-effulgent and Blissful one. But He as Inner love desires the *Brahmanisation* of the jiva and therefore descends into the finite without losing His Infinity. He enters into the finite as its inner self and thus becomes the Immanent or the *Antaryamin*. He is in the finite but is not the finite and he seeks to mould it into His likeness or nature. The process is complete when He incarnates into history becomes a permanent incarnation in *Archa* and becomes easily accessible even to the lowest species in order that each jiva may be transmuted and divinised. The soul-hunger of Vasudeva for the mahatma that hungers for Him is more intense than the God-hunger of the soul. The soul ascends by the path of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti and soars Godward on the wings of *Bhakti-rupapanna-jnana* or 'Mathi-nalam' or illumined Love. The Atman is finite as an entity but its essence is infinite and the two Atmans meet at long last and are one-d for ever. Like the Upanishadic birds on the same tree the bird below—namely jiva, is tired of the sweets and bitters of the divided life and soars above and the bird above—the serene and shining

Self—seeks the bird below and two are united. 'Every worldling has thus a divine destiny and destination' as Nammalwar says. The mukta with his *Brahma-dristi* sees the same Brahman in all beings and all beings in Brahman and is not satisfied till all jivas shed their separate and separatist feeling and become one with Brahman in *Sarva-mukti*.

Visishtadvaita is thus understood as the view and way of mystic yearning for union with Brahman and its consummation. The terms 'Visishtadvaita', 'Sariraka Sastra', 'pan-organismal monism', 'theistic monism' are not so comprehensive as the terms 'purnaism' and 'mystic unionism'. This view has affinities with Advaita understood as the disappearance of the dualistic outlook. There is not much common ground between Pure Advaita as *Vivartavada* and the degrees of reality and Vaishnavism with its theistic tendency. But there is reapproachment in the views of Advaita or non-dualistic experience as the absence of the dualistic or separatistic outlook. When Brahman is realised He reveals His own nature, and then all problems are solved or dissolved in direct experience.

"As long as you are a person, your Absolute must imply a 'relative', your Nitya (the Changeless), must imply a Lila (change), your Substance must imply qualities, your Impersonal must imply a 'personal being', your One must imply 'many'. As long you are in the plane relativity, you must admit both 'butter' and 'buttermilk',—you must admit both Personal God and the universe. To explain the analogy, the original milk is Brahman realized in Samadhi, the 'butter' the Impersonal-personal God, and the 'buttermilk' the universe made of the twenty-four categories."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

HARDWAR KUMBHA MELA

By SWAMI AVINASHANANDA

India has several unique features. Not the least important of these, are the Puranas, that is to say, the popular sacred or religious lore. There are as many as eighteen Puranas and another equal number of Upa-Puranas or subsidiary ones. Besides these, there are innumerable stories, folklores and oral tradition, all teaching some aspect of religion. It is difficult to dive deep in the ocean and bring out all the

" Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear "

which poet Gray in his popular Elegy, has beautifully described. It is much more difficult to separate the chaff from the grain buried in this immense mass of literature.

In our country, variety is the order of nature. Even in such a simple matter as the New Year's Day there is no uniformity. The Tamils have it on one day, the Andhras and the Karnatakas on another, the Gujaratis have it on some other day, and so on. If, even in a simple matter like this, it is not possible to have any uniformity, how can we expect in a religious and traditional matter like the Kumbh Mela any definite idea about its origin or development? Even the name of modern Hardwar has passed through several stages of evolution. In the *Mahabharata* and other books, we find it mentioned, as Gangadwar the Gateway of Ganga. In other books it is described as Kapilasthan or the abode of Sage Kapila. In some others it is referred, to as Maya. Perhaps the modern name Hardwar has a recent origin. It is both

Haridwar and Haradwar. As some people think, these two names might have become current due to the pilgrimage route to Kedarnath and Badrinath. Whatever be the origin, Haridwar or Haradwar is the most familiar, and the former names are more or less forgotten.

Hardwar is a small municipality, and it is important only because of its religious associations. One important suburb of Hardwar is Kankhal. This name is to be found in very early scriptures. Readers of the Puranas are familiar with the episode of Daksha's sacrifice. Daksha is one of the Prajapatis or the progenitor of the human race. His daughter, Dakshayani, got the Lord Mahadeva or Siva as her Lord and husband after a long penance. Daksha did not like the ways of Siva and performed a big sacrifice without inviting Lord Mahadeva or his own daughter, Dakshayani. But, not heeding the remonstrances of her Lord, Dakshayani went, uninvited of course, to her father's sacrifice, and, unable to bear the abuses which Daksha showered upon the head of her lord and husband, she immolated herself in the sacrificial fire. Mahadeva created out of his anger Veerabhadra, who destroyed both the sacrifice and the sacrificer, Daksha. This is one of the earliest religious episodes associated with sacred place.

It is a well-known Puranic fact that Bhagiratha, after long penance, brought Ganga to the earth from Mahadeva's matted locks where Ganga resided. As one tradition has it, Hardwar is the place where Ganga first descended on

earth. This may be due probably to the fact that it is just at Hardwar that Ganga begins to flow on level ground. Another tradition says that a king by name Sweta, long, long ago, made severe penances, and Brahma the Creator, being pleased with his austerities, gave him an opportunity to ask for any boons he liked. King Sweta asked for a boon that all the sacred rivers should be present at Hardwar and that whoever bathed in them should be freed from all sins and get the blessings of gods and goddesses both here and hereafter. Brahma granted the boon and also declared that that spot would henceforth be known as 'Brahma Kund' or the Pool of Brahma. And to this day this portion of Ganga in Hardwar is called Brahma Kund, and is considered to be the most sacred spot in Hardwar.

Kumbh Mela is a festival or religious gathering, which is held once in twelve years in each of the following places in rotation at an interval of three years—Hardwar, Allahabad, Nasik, Ujjain. This Mela is called Kumbh because Jupiter enters Kumbha, one of the twelve zodiacal signs, and when the Sun enters Mesha, the first of these signs the auspicious hour occurs! This Mela took place this year on 13th April, at Hardwar. In Allahabad and other places Jupiter occupies other signs and hence these festivals could occur only at different months or seasons.

Of these four festivals, Hardwar and Allahabad attract millions of people. This year it is estimated that nearly two millions of people assembled at Hardwar. This Kumbh-yoga is evidently an astronomical or semi-astrological phenomenon. But the popular tradition traces the origin of these Melas in quite a different way. All Puranas are unanimous that in very early times the

Gods and Titans, the Devas and the Asuras, churned the Milk ocean and several auspicious things appeared. One of these was a pot containing nectar or ambrosia, and to possess this pot of nectar, a terrible war ensued between the two groups, the Devas and the Asuras. It is said that this pot of nectar was kept concealed in the four places where these festivals are held.

Whatever be the basis for this Puranic story, it is quite probable that the origin must be traced to some other natural phenomenon. There are certain reasons which lend support to the view that the great Sankaracharya is responsible for the immense popularity of these Melas. For one thing, it is only the followers of the great Acharya who play the most important role on these occasions. It is the Sanyasins of the Order founded after Sankaracharya that have the exclusive privilege of taking the first dip in the sacred spot on the most auspicious occasion. Not only have they this privilege but the entire centre of attraction is the long procession of thousands of monks of all forms and creeds, some naked, some half-naked, and all clad in the ochre-coloured robe, owing allegiance to the greatest exponent of Vedanta, Sri Sankaracharya. There are followers of other Acharyas and schools of thought who are also included in this procession, but they seem to have been allowed or accepted at a later stage. The great Sankaracharya has not only established Dharma on a firm basis through his innumerable and most learned writings, namely Commentaries on the Scriptural Trinity, *Prasthanatraya*, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita. These are however, accessible only to the learned few. But, in order to popularise Vedanta or the Sanatana Dharma, Sankara organized these

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festivals or Melas at these four places as the original Grand Council of all followers of Vedanta. Owing to his fame and prestige and the remarkable services he rendered not only to his country but to the entire world, these Melas which are intended mainly for the monks of his Order attract, millions of pious Hindus and without any distinction of caste or creed, high or low. Throughout the day, unmindful of the heat and dust, for nearly six long miles, these crowds sit patiently to watch the various processions of the monks pass by them, and only after these various groups have had their dip in the Brahma Kund, would they ever think of having their own bath. This is most remarkable phenomenon, that, without any notice or advertisement millions of people gather and pay the most respectful and devout homage, not to any individual founder or world-teacher or any mighty personage, but to the Eternal Dharma and to the most sacred Order of Monks. The only cry which one could hear from these millions is this:

Sanatana Dharma ki Jai! (Glory unto the Eternal Dharma)

Sadhu Sant ki Jai!! (Victory unto the sacred Order of Monks)

In all other religious festivals, a particular deity or image, of some one aspect of the gods and goddesses plays a most important role or is the centre of attraction. Decorated images are taken out in procession

and all devotees offer their homage to these forms. But in these Melas, no prominent form of any god or goddess could be seen in evidence, and all the respects or offerings which in other places are made to the gods are rendered to the monks. This evidently is due to the fact that the great Sankaracharya and his immediate followers should have organized these Grand Assemblies, and their main objective should have been to popularise to the vast millions of people the important aspects of the glorious Eternal Dharma of this land.

Swami Vivekananda used to declare that in India religion is the keynote or the genius of the race and so long as this vital core is sound there was no danger for the destiny of these people. Perhaps nowhere else can one find ample proof and testimony to this saying of the Swamiji than in the Kumbh Melas. It is not possible even by all the resources which the Government of a country can command to collect periodically such a vast gathering of millions of people, but here we have a glorious instance of untold vast crowds of people gathering as if by magic, and this magic could be nothing else than religion. Let us hope in these days of science with innumerable means open to us, the sacred duty of the education of millions of people in the most vital and fundamental aspects of life, could easily be accomplished.

"I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve the Hindu society, and that this state of society exists not on account of religion but because that religion has not been applied to society as it should have been..... National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces."

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SRI ALLAMA PRABHU

By P. SAMA RAO

"I am not mind, intellect, thought or ego:

Not hearing, taste, smelling or sight;

Not ether, or earth, fire or air;

I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss,—

I am Siva, I am Siva!"

—Sri Sankara's Nirvana Shatakam

Sri Allama Prabhu is easily the supreme and the most sublime among the Veerasaiva Vachanakaras and saints. There is in him a happy blend of romance and philosophy, of ethics and spirituality, of social instinct and rigorous asceticism, of love of earth and experience of heaven, aye, of all the opposites and the contradictions.

Little is known of his human personality except that he was very handsome. But from what we could gauge from Chamarasa's *Prabhulinga Lile*, *Prabhulinga Purana*, and Harihara's *Prabhulinga Ragale*, he is shrouded in a romance of the most ethereal type. He is human only to the extent he is historical like Lord Krishna who went about illuminating his believers. Sri Allama was the chief source of light to even the pillars of Veerasaivism, namely, Basaveswara, Siddharama, Chennabasaveswara and the like. Their lives are to some extent interwoven with his. He looms up tangibly only when he is on the way to and spends his time at the Sivanubhava Mandapa. Like the midday sun he is too dazzling, and inscrutable, even to them, what with his mystical ways and supreme wisdom. His utterances are fewer, more cryptic, and less elucidative than theirs. There is not in them the same transparency that we find in Basaveswara's.

The Veerasaivas regard Sri Allama

Prabhu as an incarnation of Lord Siva in His yogic aspect. This is no hyperbole, for, he illustrates love and romance in their highest spiritual sense and instances in his own conduct how earth and heaven could mean one and the same if only the walls of distinction set up by the ego crumble down, and the human self left freely to itself unhampered by illusion would gaze unsatiated at the Supreme Spirit in the process of becoming quite itself.

Chamarasa's account humanizes him a good deal without detracting from his essence. In a way Chamarasa weds *Nada* to *Rupa* (Sound with Form) in poetizing the musical tie between the heroine Mayadevi and the hero Allama. Music is always divine and helpful to spiritual progress, because it is potent to capture the Brahman beyond its manifestations of sound and form. While striving to stir up emotions it quiets them too to a bevelled poise, a condition necessary to the attainment of bliss, a synonym rather of an identity with the Godhead.

Scrapping the salient features of Sri Allama's life from the above texts, we find him in real flesh and blood only when he takes upon himself the mission of enlightening the world. His nonage is however clouded in mystery and myth. Lord Siva and his spouse Parvati resolve to test

each other's eminence by taking human shapes in a romantic world of sensuousness and song. On a dewlit morn engoldened with the roscate rays of the sun peeping out of Mount Meru, and duly enthroned, they discuss the possibilities of highest spiritual attainment in the human world, cribbed and cabined as it is with manifold dualities. The Lord throws the gauntlet to Devi that mere physical charms are not enough, however cloying they be, to win the Godhead. She accepts the challenge, and incarnates herself as Mayadevi (as daughter to King Mamakara and Queen Mohinidevi of Beluvala with its capital at Banavasi) with all her physical and intellectual charms, while the Lord, as Sri Allama composed of His yogic nature. As Mayadevi is worshipping Sri Mukteswara at His temple at Banavasi with song and dance Sri Allama comes there and accompanies her on his mridanga so cleverly that she is wonderstruck and is charmed by him. With royal consent he is appointed her tutor for dance, and in order she may get full benefit from him is allowed to reside in the palace itself. Ever since she met him she takes to him so fondly; she develops a craze for physical union with him, which he does not desire. The cleverness of her maids Sakale and Madhumani, and her own cloying charms, turn out futile. Meanwhile the wagging tongues carry the scandal to the king's ears, and just when some action was being contemplated against him, he banishes himself into the wilds, and thereafter, on his own enlightening mission to the world. Frustrated she taunts him saying "I never thought that the dispeller of deceit and ignorance could be fickle-minded himself." Allama replies that they were in her alone, and that unless and until the feeling of separateness and

distinction contained in 'I' and 'Thou' is wiped out, and form is effaced from memory, one continues far from divinity, although divinity dwells in one's own heart. He tells her unequivocally that the craze for physical union is a grossness that has to be shed before an union with God is achieved. In his own words,

" 'You' and 'I' are but terms of transient life; 'Yours' is ignorance and 'Mine' is an illusion; 'The Bliss that results from a perfect knowledge Of no distinction,' tween 'You' and 'I', Is consecration upto Thee, O Lord! "

and so Mayadevi cannot be deemed to have consecrated herself to the Lord. Hence she failed to attain Him. On the otherhand Akka Mahadevi, who was formed of the ethereal essence of Devi, and to whom 'You' and 'I' meant the same attained the Lord easily.

If poetry means a plunge into the depth of things to discover the one Truth that manifests itself variously, and also consists of a living in the Absolute without losing contact with its sensuous aspect, we have lots of highest poetry in the life and utterances of Sri Allama. He was prominently a mystic understandable to only his like order. His intention to raise the spiritual aspirant to his own level has no priggishness about it, but is ingrained with what he felt was his own natural duty to his fellow-men. His attachment to Basaveswara, Siddharama and Chenna Basaveswara is a devout consecration unto the Lord. The only one who resembled him most was Akka Mahadevi; and so she needed not so much instruction from him as the others. She only wanted a small assurance from him that her beloved Mallikarjuna lay embedded in and awaiting her at Sri Parvata (Sri Saila).

(to be continued.)

LIFE OF SRI RAMANUJA

By SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

Translated from original Bengali

(continued from the previous issue)

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

AMONG HIS OWN PEOPLE AGAIN

Intoxicated with the love of God, Ramanuja began to circumambulate again and again the well, marked by the Sal tree, and perhaps in the hope that Sri and Her Consort might again make his eyes and mind blessed with the vision in the form of the Fowler Couple, he began to cast his glances hither and thither. About an hour had passed after the dawn. One or two women with water pots on their flanks were coming from the city towards this well for its limpid water. Kanchipura is just a mile away from this place. There being forests on the east, north and west the place was lonely. So with open heart Ramanuja sang in full-throated ease the endless glories of the Lord of his heart and was relishing it to the full. He began to adore Him with the hymn of Kunti:

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय देवकीनन्दनाय च ।
नन्दोपकुमाराय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥
नमः पङ्कजनाभाय नमः पङ्कजमालिने ।
नमः पङ्कजनेत्राय नमस्ते पङ्कजाकुञ्जये ॥

"Again and again do I salute Krishna, Vasudeva, Who is the son of Devaki and the darling of Nanda and Who is Govinda. I salute the One of lotus navel; I salute the One wearing the lotus garland; I salute the lotus-eyed One; I salute the One of lotus-feet."

Like Kunti, he prayed at the lotus feet of the Lord with the following words:

विपदः सन्तु नः शश्वत् तत् तत् जगद्गुरो ।
भक्ततो दर्शनं यत् स्यात् अपुनर्भवदर्शनम् ॥
जन्मैश्वर्यश्रुतश्रीभिरिष्टमानमदःपुमात् ।
नैवाहृत्यभिधातुं वै त्वामाकिञ्चनगोचरम् ॥

नमोऽकिञ्चनवित्ताय निवृत्तगुणवृत्तये ।

आत्मारामाय शान्ताय कैवल्यपतये नमः ॥

"O Thou the world teacher, may distress always befall us, for it is during times of distress alone Thy vision, which makes another birth impossible, is made possible. Those, who, by birth in high dynasties or possession of wealth, beauty or erudition, think themselves to be immensely glorious, have no right to take Thy name, for it is Thy indigent devotees who see you face to face. O Lord, Thou art the only treasure of the devotees, who have nothing whatsoever in this world to call their own. Thou being beyond *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*, art ever in supreme communion with Thy Self. There being no urge of desire in Thee, Thou art all quiet; Thou art the giver of deliverance to all the Jivas; I adore Thee."

When the blessed Ramanuja lost in love was experiencing himself as an embodiment of the sattvic characteristics such as tears, perspiration, tremor etc., then, three house-wives appeared on the side of the well with jars on their flanks. At the sight of them he checked his emotions and proceeded towards Kanchi.

Kantimati sorely sad at the separation from her son was weeping. She could not at first believe her eyes when just at that time she all on a sudden found her son standing before her. All her doubts were dispelled only when Ramanuja prostrated himself at her feet and with bent head addressed her in nectar-like sweetness: "Here I am come mother. All is well with you, I hope?" After blessing him and finding him seated she enquired, "My dear child, how is it that you are returning so soon and alone? Where's Govinda? I am

told it takes six months to come back after ablutions in the Ganges. Are you coming back from the way itself?" When Ramanuja had narrated all from beginning to end, she was greatly astounded to hear of the evil designs of Yadavaprakasa; yet she was beside herself with joy remembering the grace of the Lord and viewing the face of her son. Soon she went to the kitchen to prepare offerings to the Lord Narayana. But so great was her joy that she did not know what to cook or what to do. As she went near the hearth she discovered that there was no firewood left. Since two or three days the stock was over. Ramanuja was not at home. Since his going the young daughter-in-law also was living in her paternal home. So for whom was she to cook? She would pass her days taking some fruits or roots offered to God. So she totally forgot about procuring firewood. Especially today her mind grew very restless for Ramanuja and so she was sitting in one corner and shedding tears. Nothing of the household did she remember. She should now herself go to the shop to purchase firewood, for the maidservant was not yet come; she would not give any trouble to her son who had just returned after a long travel—when she was musing thus, there appeared by the other door of the house her younger sister Diptimati accompanied by the daughter-in-law, and after prostrating at her feet enquired, "Dear sister, is it not all well with you? The maidservant went to inform us that you had forsaken food and sleep and were simply weeping day and night for your son. So we came to see you. Why do you worry? There is Lord Narayana. He will protect the boys. Many are the persons who are coming back after ablutions in the Ganges. Be at peace! Until Ramanuja and Govinda come back I will be here itself at your place. I have brought our daughter-in-law too with me. After purchasing firewood from the shop,

the maidservant"—before she could finish, Ramanuja came and prostrated at the feet of his mother's sister. Diptimati was beside herself with joy to suddenly find her nephew before her. She lifted Ramanuja up from the ground with her hands and blessed, "Be of eternal life, my darling," and then on enquiry came to understand everything about Govinda. Kantimati's joy was at its zenith to receive her sister and the daughter-in-law. At this unexpected return of her beloved, the shy bride out of great joy fell at his feet and washed them in her tears. It seemed as if the Acharya's house was transformed into a heaven for the time being.

In the meantime, after the maidservant had brought ghee, sugar, rice, greens, salt, and firewood, the two sisters cooked a variety of offerings for Lord Narayana. As Ramanuja came out at the door after making the offerings to Lord Narayana, he found Sri Kanchipurna waiting for seeing him. He had heard of Ramanuja's return from some people and so came to see him. Just as the sea, gladdened with joy, at the sight of the full moon, receives with innumerable arms of high waves, the rays of the moon, so did Kanchipurna, his body marked with great joy at the sight of Ramanuja who was about to prostrate before him, held him in his arms and by indicating his own Sudra-hood forbade him to do an act contrary to the customs of the people. Then Ramanuja told him, "Great one, I am very fortunate to have your *darsan*; today do kindly take meals with us. Every thing is ready". Sri Kanchipurna agreed.

After the passing away of his father, Ramanuja's home never knew such delight. Diptimati was a little distressed, for Govinda was away; yet, she loved Ramanuja as her own son and her faith in the Lord's grace was unbroken; so she did not get upset in the least on the other hand she enjoyed the day most.

(to be continued)

THE BLESSED ONE

By DHRUVA

The full moon in the month of Vaisakha heralds happy tidings of delight to innumerable hearts; for it was on that day about two millenniums and a half ago the Deity deigned to live among the mortals to rid them of their sufferings and proclaim the Divine Law; again it was on the self same day in the 35th year of His descent that he became Buddha, the enlightened; and again it was on the full moon day of Vaisakha in his 80th year on earth that he chose to enter Nirvana. Thus the day is truly a thrice blessed day.

Suddhodana was the ruling prince of a principality in Nepal some hundred miles north of Benares. Maya, his wife, died seven days after the birth of her first-born. Learned Brahmins predicted a supremely spiritual life or the rulership of the world for the innocent babe. It was christened Siddhartha. Suddhodana was anxious that his darling son should one day replace him on the *gadi*. He arranged sweet and beautiful atmosphere for the young prince to live in. As he came of age, he was married to Yasodhara. Under divine decree it looks, Siddhartha was made to view disease, decrepitude and death during a pleasure drive through the streets of his realm.

The true nature of life in the world and things fleshy flashed in his mind. He brooded over the deep problems of life. Many a sleepless night he spent in resolving the riddle of life. A mighty resolve took hold of him and he fared forth into the open. Severing asunder the bewitching pull of his beloved's charming looks and the divine smile of his infant son he became a wanderer on earth in search of a panacea for the ills of man. When the Spirit calleth the affections of the flesh fleeth.

Long and arduous were his wanderings. He took lessons from wise men. Years

of severe penance followed. His physical frame got shattered and that caused mental exhaustion. Tortures and torments failed to give him the peace that passeth comprehension. He moved on. Reaching Gaya, he took his seat under the Bodhi tree and vowed to himself:

"Let the body wither away here on this seat, the skin, bone and flesh may dry up. Hence shall I not swerve until and unless I attain enlightenment."

And he was vouchsafed the vision of the Verity. He saw through the ugly naked life. It was all misery and suffering. Desire, he understood was the cause thereof. He conquered Mara and discovered the remedy for life's ills. Renunciation of desire led one to the cessation of misery.

He advised a severe analysis of life and experience and instituted systematic method of practical discipline, to root out misery and attain Nirvana. He sought no grace of any deity for spiritual enlightenment. He did not encourage vain disputations about the nature of the ultimate Reality. His concern was in imparting a practical method wherewith one would be enabled to experience the truths he had realized.

Buddha, the fairest flower of Indian culture expounded the inexplicableness of the ultimate Reality by his sublime silence. Lesser minds have interpreted his silence, which has scriptural sanction, as the sole method of exposition about the Self, to mean the non-existence of any ultimate reality and declare that his path was a dark nothingness. They scarcely realize the incongruity involved in a denial of the supreme Witness. Nor is the Indian climate congenial for such a godless doctrine.

Buddha preached his gospel for full fortyfive years, and set the wheel of

Dharma rolling. He invited one and all to his shade and encouraged all to live the life of renunciation. After eighty summers admonishing his disciples by precept and example to nurse the sick, to live and preach the gospel, and reminding them of the fleeting nature of life and exhorting them to preserve in their spiritual struggle, this supreme light of the scriptural azure entered final Nirvana.

Two centuries later came the rule of Asoka, a very remarkable emperor for all time. He embraced the path of the Tathagata. The imperial patronage helped the religion of the recluse become a world religion. The loving sermons of the Buddha effected a world conquest which has no parallel in history and today vast areas on the face of the globe are inhabited by people who profess the religion bearing the name of Buddha.

It is a strange fact of history that the message of the Great master had to be grafted on to the land of his nativity from

afar after a lapse of centuries. It suffered almost a total eclipse from the Indian firmament due to a variety of reasons. The followers of the Enlightened one, unable to grasp the true significance of his superbly spiritual silence denied God, soul and the Vedas. The Hindu may not mind an attack on his God; he may very well get on without one. But you question the reality of his Self at your own peril. The Veda is his second self; nay his self he holds, because the Veda says so. Discard his Veda and you are done up.

Hinduism absorbed all the best and constructive portions from the teachings of the Buddhists and banished from its holy land the unholy doctrinaires of non-self and irreligion.

Buddha was a child of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He lived a Hindu and died a Hindu with his Soul intact in the Aryan fold. And the Hindu hails him as the perfect enfleshment of his supreme Godhead Vishnu.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

HINDU-MUSLIM CULTURAL ACCORD.
BY DR. SYED MAHMUD. VORA & CO.,
PUBLISHERS LTD., BOMBAY. 2. PRICE
RS. 2/8.

The book contains a number of articles contributed by Dr. Syed Mahmud to the 'Statesman.' He deals with the advent of Mussalmans in India, the Hindu-Muslim contacts, their deep rooted affinities and the causes for the separation fostered by various vested interests and paths to reconciliation and Unity. In India the Muslims have followed not the customs of Arabia and Turkistan as of India. In dress, ornaments, traditions of social intercourse and daily routine of life they have adopted Indian ways and manners. The manner of observing religious fasts and festivals, language, literature, science, philosophy and art—in all these spheres the Muslims are more akin to their Hindu brethren than to their co-religionists outside India.

The Muslims are not today speaking Arabic, Persian or Turkish but they speak the dialect of the region where they reside and there is no difference between them and the Hindus in their forms of speech. The Muslims have also taken considerable part in the development of the Indian arts and literature.

The author's main thesis is that religion has never been a barrier to unity of People. Throughout the Middle Ages the Mussalmans took enormous interest in the religious literature of the Hindus and they translated into Persian and then in Urdu almost all their important texts like the Vedas, Itihasas and Puranas. The reformed sects founded by Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Chaitanya and a host of others were successful attempts to spread among the masses of this country a religion which combined the best features of Hinduism and Islam. The few outbursts of bigotry during a history of one thousand years are confined to the reigns of a handful of rulers and even their

persecutions had mixed motives and affected only certain classes of people. From the book we are made to realise that we cannot find in the history of the Hindu Muslim relations in the Middle Ages any justification for the present day jealousies and suspicions.

What then has brought about the revival of communal culture and the consequent bickerings? The break up of the socio-political integration achieved by the Moghul Empire, the advent of the British in India and their policy 'to divide and rule' and the efforts of the Christian missionaries have been responsible for the growth of separate communal consciousness, says the author.

The author sincerely but strangely believes and tries to prove also that the nineteenth century Revivalism has fostered separatism in India. Any impartial reader of the history of Indian culture will surely differ from the author on this point. It is regrettable that the author should fail to take note of all the aspects of the Renaissance of Indian culture (which he terms as the Nineteenth Century Revivalism) and therefore hold it responsible for much of the Hindu Muslim discord found to day. The author contradicts himself when he says elsewhere in the book that the Hindus and Muslims should be true to their religion and religious observances. In this connection he makes out that the revivalism of which Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Dayananda Saraswathi and Ramakrishna Paramahansa were the pioneers "led to a hankering for the revival of the entire structure of life—social, economic, political and cultural as it was lived in those ages when men seemed so pious, so righteous, so God-fearing." This is rather untenable in the face of facts and a right reading of our country's social and cultural history.

We regret to say that in this chapter the author has evinced a great lack of understanding of the spirit of basic Hindu culture. And this, we are afraid, will surely spoil much of the good effect, the book otherwise could have produced.

The situation though full of difficulties should not be absolutely hopeless. The History of India has too long been the sport of imperialist-minded European historians and their slavish Indian imitators. There is urgent need for an independent school of history, which will rightly interpret our past and thereby promote cultural understanding. If only a Hindu is a true Hindu and a Muslim, a true Muslim, there is little to quarrel about and there is a good deal to give and take.

The book may be tasted but should not be swallowed.

K. S. N.

MALAYALAM

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MALAYALAM COMMENTARY BY SAHITYA-
KUSALAN PANDIT P. GOPALAN NAIR
(RADHA. MANDIRAM PUTHIYARA POST,
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The volume under review is a Malayalam commentary with word by word meaning in prose order and a detailed interpretation of the purport of the verses in simple prose.

The author follows the Bhashya of Sri Sankaracharya and the Teeka of Swami Sankarananda in his commentary.

The simple and lucid manner in which the author explains the verses avoiding much of lengthy philosophical discussions will give an easy access to the inner recess of the Gita to the Malayalam reading public. The summary given in the beginning of each chapter is very useful to readers. The detailed index of the topics for all the verses are helpful for reference. The author explains the verses on Jnanayoga in the light of the *siddhanta paksha* of Advaita Vedanta. He never loses sight of the importance of Karmayoga for the attainment of knowledge. In the commentary, of verses 39 chapter II, 2, 3 of chapter VI etc., the author definitely says that one should do karma without attachment and hope of result until one attains Jnana. But when he says one should give up all karmas in order to attain 'Jnana' in the beginning of the Chapter II it should mean only *kamya karmas*—works done with motive and attachment. The explanation of verses 49, 50, 51 and Chapters II, would be more appropriate if he could explain them in the light of Karmayoga rather than of Jnanayoga because it is prominent and direct. The explanation of the chapter on Bhakti and the verses that deal with Bhakti will appeal to the devotees.

The learned introduction by Sri P. Seshadri Ayyar is also an attraction of the book.

Some of the printing mistakes which crept in have been rectified by an errata given at the end of the book. There are a few more to be added to them, and some incorrect anvayas (prose order) somehow occurring in some places can be corrected in the second edition.

The book is neatly printed and the get up is excellent.

Sri P. Gopalan Nair by placing the Gita with his scholarly exposition before the Malayalam reading public has rendered a great service and it will be appreciated and welcomed by the ever increasing devotees of the Gita.

B. G.

NEWS AND REPORTS

BUDDHA JAYANTI

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH, MADRAS 4

The birthday of Bhagavan Buddha Deva was celebrated at the Math on the evening of Sunday, May 7, 1950. The function commenced at 6 p.m., with a prayer by Sri N. Subrahmanya Iyer and a few preliminary words by Swami Kailashananda who said that the birthdays of the saints were celebrated in the Math, in a humble way and in a simple spirit of devotion so that the participants may be spiritually benefitted and not in a spirit of academic discussion and criticism.

Swami Paramatmananda who spoke in Tamil, said that the Lord Buddha was a light that belonged not only to India but to the whole world. In that light was a combination of the light of knowledge, the light of love and the light of character. Tracing Buddha's life briefly, the speaker said that the Purnima day in the month of Vaisakha was a thrice blessed day in his case since it was the day of his birth, the day of his getting illumination and again the day of his attaining Nirvana. In him are found knowledge and love in equal measure. His greatness lay in the fact that his renunciation and discovery of the path of Dharma were for alleviating the sorrows of his fellow beings rather than his own. He advocated the middle path. The noble truths he discovered are briefly that life is misery; the cause of misery is desire or *kama*; the elimination of desire will remove misery; and to eliminate desire one should walk along the eight fold path of Dharma. He did not believe in sacrifices and said that unless one strives hard one cannot attain *moksha*. On questions about God, he kept silent and so he was misunderstood later as one who was a non-believer in God. But he maintained that no purpose was served by one's debating on God and His nature but the right method was to sincerely

strive for the annihilation of desire. The speaker concluded by saying that Buddha is more a Great Principle than a great personality. Instead of calling him a Prophet, it would be more appropriate to call him a great Doctor who sought to cure the disease of existence afflicting mankind.

Next, Mr. N. Subrahmanya Iyer addressed the gathering in English and said that had Gautama being born as a prince only lived and died as ruler of the small kingdom of his father, it would have been a great loss to the world. Tracing his life in brief the speaker said that after Buddha attained illumination, he continued his ministrations till his eightieth year, preaching his gospel to all and uplifting all to a higher level of existence. His teachings were, mainly to cease from all sins, to get virtue and to cleanse one's heart. For, the root cause of suffering in life is *kama* and cessation of *kama* is possible only after elimination of ignorance, the cause of *kama*. Saying that there is a belief that Buddha is an enemy of Hinduism, though he is considered to be an Avatara, the speaker observed that a right understanding of his life would lead any one to think that he came not to destroy but to fulfil. He was in the direct line of the Upanishadic-seers and we should take note of the fact that he was not teaching anything new but what he taught was the same as had been taught in the Upanishads. He never put forth any claim for himself. He wanted that he might be a light to those who sought it and a help to the helpless. He wanted to be born again and again only in order that he might take on himself the task of the removal of the sufferings of others. Thus he was one of the greatest soul-powers that ever manifested in the world. The speaker concluded his speech saying that Buddha's gospel was complementary and not contradictory to the teachings of Vedanta.

The meeting came to a close after thanks-giving by Swami Kailashananda.

"He who recognizes the existence of suffering, its cause, its remedy, and its cessation has fathomed the four noble truths. He will walk in the right path.

"Right views will be the torch to light his way. Right aspiration will be his guide. Right speech will be his dwelling place on the road. His gait will be straight, for it is right behaviour. His refreshments will be the right way of earning his livelihood. Right efforts will be his steps: right thoughts his breath; and right contemplation will give him the peace that follows in his footprints."

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THE VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY

Volume XV

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ILLUSTRATION:—Siesta After Harvest by Ramkinkar: Frontispiece.

One volume of the Journal is issued every year in the following quarterly instalments: May-July, August-October, November-January and February-April.

Annual subscription rates are: In India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon Rs. 8/-: Foreign—14 shillings inclusive of postage. A single copy costs Rs. 2/8/- (foreign 4 s.) inclusive of postage. Subscribers who desire that their copies should be sent by registered post, should send Re. 1/- extra per year, to cover the extra postage.

The subscription is payable strictly *in advance* for the subscription year which commences from May and ends in April of the following year.

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