

No. 3

MARCH 1981

SAMVIT



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta-700 076

SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



CONTENTS

	Page
Universal Prayers	1
Reflections	2
Living Dharma	6
<i>K. Swaminathan</i>	
Indian Culture and Womanhood—I	12
<i>T. M. P. Mahadevan</i>	

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Dear Subscriber,

If your subscription ends with the March 1981 issue please remit Rs. 2.50 ONLY for the September 1981 issue. Due to the escalating costs of paper and printing the cost per copy is more than twice its present price. It is unavoidable, therefore, that the subscription rates be increased from 1982. The details of the new subscription rates will be published in the September 1981 issue.

Publisher

Samvit

SUBSCRIPTION RATE FOR SEPTEMBER 1981

Single issue Rs. 2.50

Rs. 8.00 Sri Lanka

Rs. 16.00 U.S.A. & other countries

			Page
A Visit to Shanti Ashrama	...	...	23
<i>Brahmacharini Bhavani</i>			
Jnani and Jnanavan	...	...	32
<i>G. M. Patil</i>			
The Great Republic of the Licchavis	...	...	35
<i>Pravrajika Amalaprana</i>			
Pilgrimage to Belur Math	...	...	40
<i>Indu Ramchandani</i>			
Sri Sarada Math & Ramakrishna Sarada Mission		...	45

Editorial & Publication Office
C-8A Hauz Khas
New Delhi-110 016

Rates inclusive of postage
 single issue Rs. 2.50
 two issues Rs. 5.00
 " Sri Lanka Rs. 16.00
 " U.S.A. & other countries
 Rs. 32.00



SAMVIT

म नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुज्जतु ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4

Universal Prayers

इन्द्रे क्रतुं न आ भर पिता पुत्रेभ्यो यथा ।
शिक्षा णो अस्मिन्पुरुहूतं यामनि जीवा ज्योतिरशीमहि ॥

O God! Give us wisdom as a father gives knowledge to his sons; guide us, Thou who art invoked by many, so that in this life-time we may attain Thy divine light.

Rig Veda VII. xxxii. 26.

ॐ

•

•

सर्वे तद् राजा वरुणो वि चष्टे यदन्तरा रोदसी यत् परस्तात् ।
संख्यातां अक्ष्य निमिषो जनानामक्षानिव श्वघ्नी निमिनोति क्षानि ॥

That which lies between heaven and earth and what is beyond them—all that the Lord God beholds! He has counted the twinkling of men's eyes. As the dice player weighs his dice, so He weighs the good and bad actions of men.

Attharva Veda IV xvi. 8.

REFLECTIONS

The Power That Is Ramakrishna

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA wrote in 1894 from America to his friends in India that his whole ambition in life was to set in motion machinery that would bring noble ideas to the door of everyone. His ambition was fulfilled when, three years later in Calcutta, he started the Ramakrishna Mission. Machinery cannot be set in motion without a force to move it; Swamiji's machinery could not have been set in motion if the power of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna, had not been put to work. Swamiji knew very well that Sri Ramakrishna was not only a person; he was a Power—a benevolent Power—which had manifested itself on earth to give peace and perfection to many. Swamiji himself was only instrumental in distributing that power efficiently and effectively for the good of many, for the happiness of many—बहुजन हिताय बहुजन सुखाय.

Behind that power manifested in Sri Ramakrishna was the unseen and inscrutable Power of the Divine who creates, maintains and destroys the world at will. That Divine Power, represented in Ramakrishna's case as the Divine Mother of the Universe, found in him a fit instrument to work out Her plans. She spoke through him and acted through him.

It was this Divine Power of the Mother which inspired Rani Rasmani to cancel her journey to Kashi to worship Mother Annapurna, and instead, have a temple built on the bank of the Ganga at Dakshineswar to worship Mother Kali.

It was the same Power that was impatient to be installed in the temple and accept worship. When the image of Mother Kali arrived the new temple was not complete and the image was left lying in its wooden box for a long time. One night Rani Rasmani dreamt that the image said to her, 'How long will you keep me confined in this way in a wooden box? I feel suffocated; install me as soon as possible.' Rani Rasmani felt that through her dream this same Power was influencing her and that she must immediately respond to the impatience expressed by the Divine Mother.

It was the same Power that inspired Ramkumar, Sri Ramakrishna's eldest brother, to straighten out the social and ritualistic intricacies, arising from the Rani's low social status, and start the worship of the Mother-Power. After the installation ceremony the desire to offer 'cooked food' to her chosen Ideal arose in the mind of the Rani. But because she was born in a Kaivarta (fisherman) family she had to face social restrictions. All pandits who were running Sanskrit schools were requested to suggest a way out of this difficulty. It was Ramkumar's prescription which ultimately helped her and he agreed to serve the goddess as her priest.

It was the same Power, again, which drew Ramakrishna to Her, for through him She would work wonders. This was the cause of Her impatience and hurry. He was to be Her instrument and through him She had to give anew to the world the spiritual idealism which was the dire need of the age.

Vedic Heritage

The vitality of India lies in its all-encompassing spiritual idealism. At times its spiritual ideals seem dynamic, and at other times torpid. But down the centuries, since Vedic times, they have never died. The Vedic Rishis experienced the spiritual oneness of all existence long before the people of other lands awakened to the knowledge of a Universal God. Rightly did Swami Vivekananda say in his lecture at Ramnad:

'The idea of God was nowhere else so fully developed as in this motherland of ours, for the same idea of God never existed anywhere else. Perhaps you are astonished at my assertion; but show me any idea of God from any other scripture equal to ours. They have only clan-Gods, the God of the Jews, the God of the Arabs, and of such and such a race, and their God is fighting the Gods of other races. But the idea of the beneficent, most merciful God, our father, our mother, our friend, the friend of our friends, the soul of our souls, is here and here alone.'

The Rishis declared that the whole earth, with its variety of races, languages and creeds, was one.* And, therefore, their spiritual treasure had to be shared with the whole world. To call the attention

* जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी यथोक्तम् । *Atharva Veda*, XII. i. 45.

of all the people, the Vedic Rishi said:

'Listen to me, O children of Immortality, even you who reside in divine spheres!'

The message had to reach foreigners' ears too:

'So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large,
To the Brahmana and the Kshatriya, to the Shudra and the Vaishya,
To my own people and to the foreigner.'

Who can be denied the knowledge of Truth? Who can be denied the knowledge of one God? God is one; He is common to all mankind. In the Vedas the worshipper says:

'O God! Thou art for ever the common Lord of all alike.'

And again,

'God who is Lord of our own land is also Lord of foreign lands.'

The Universal Man

In keeping with this Vedic universalism, there has come time and again to this land the विश्व मानुष, the Universal Man. The latest and most perfect incarnation of these universal men is Sri Ramakrishna. The Vedic spiritual idealism in which there is no esoteric teaching and no exclusiveness, is best expressed in his words:

'There are as many paths as there are faiths.'

'As every child looks upon the moon as his "uncle moon", similarly God belongs to everyone.'

'God exists. Because you do not see Him in the days of your ignorance, do not say that there is no God.'

These words give an answer to the scepticism that invades the minds of the people today. He did not like anything narrow or bigoted or fanatic. He emphasized only the subjective aspect of spiritual unfoldment and spoke of God-realization as the goal of

* शृण्वन्तु विश्वे धर्मतस्य पृथा सा ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्युः । *Rig Veda*, X. xiii. 1.

† यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि जनेभ्यः ।

बह्वराजन्याभ्यां शूद्राय चार्याय च स्वाय चारणाय ॥ *Yajur Veda*, XXVI. 2.

‡ यज्विद्धि शश्वताम् असीन्द्र साधारणस्त्वम् । *Rig Veda*, VIII. Lxvii. 7.

§ यः संदेश्यो बह्वो यो विदेश्यः । *Atharva Veda*, IV. xvi. 8.

human life. He was the same towards all beings. It did not matter whether the person approaching him was a simple peasant or a financier, a devoted housewife or a wise philosopher, a wandering monk or a die-hard businessman.

Ninety-four years ago the body of Ramakrishna passed away but the efficacy of the Power working through Ramakrishna is today felt as strongly as ever. The machinery of the Ramakrishna Order that Swamiji started is still moving smoothly, quietly and purposefully—as all good and great and wonderful things of God do. This was amply proved by the surging crowds of devotees and disciples, friends and admirers who went to Calcutta in December 1980 to attend the second Convention of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. Twelve thousand people collected as delegates, and representatives came from many foreign countries such as:

Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Fiji Islands, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and U.S.A.

About 120 organizations which are independent of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, but are working for the same ideals and purposes were represented. Persons of different religious faiths like Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism also participated.

All this shows that Sri Ramakrishna has awakened different kinds of people without moulding them into a standardized pattern. He has become a feeding power behind all sincere faiths and behind all earnest aspirants. He has become the Refuge of all, as the *Yajur Veda* succinctly says:

यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीडम् । XXXII 8.

'In Him the whole world has found one home, one place of rest, one nest.'

Living Dharma

K. SWAMINATHAN

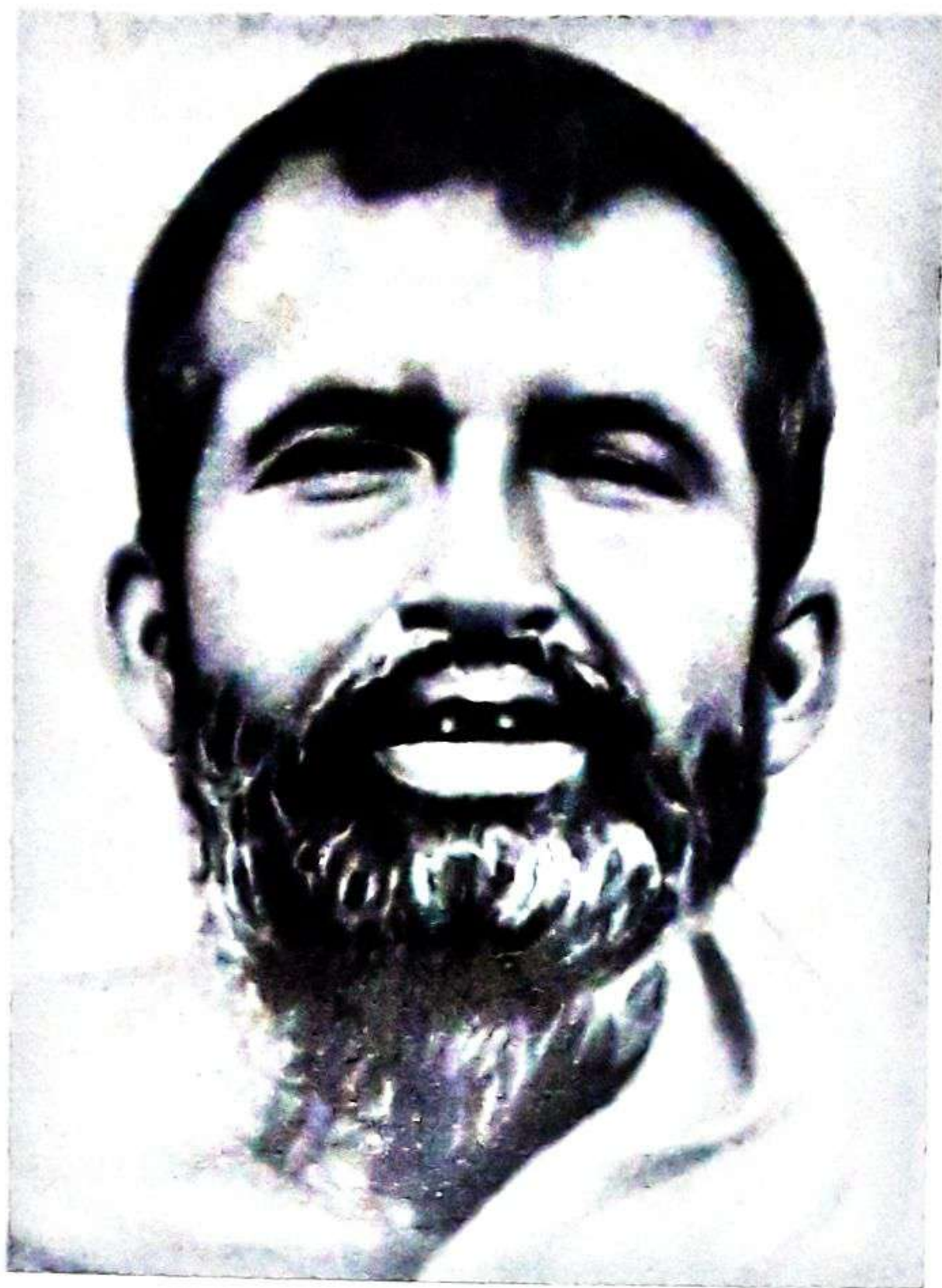
SANATANA DHARMA, the eternal dharma of India, is a way of life. It has been illumined by a long line of lamps lit by seers, saints and singers and kept steadily burning by the common people's loving hands. This power to illumine is the proper function of all truly spiritual traditions. Though lamps may vary in origin, size and shape, the light they radiate is one and the same. And this light is the light of pure awareness, which is bliss. Long before Blake said it, the spiritual seekers of India had 'put off Holiness and put on Intellect.' Maharshi Ramana questions everything, but asserts repeatedly the one truth the Upanishads taught: 'We are all awareness.' *Samvit*, then, is the most appropriate name for a periodical dealing with this ongoing dharma.

Dharma versus Humanism

Thoughtful writers like Professor D. S. Sarma and Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan have declared that Hinduism is constantly renewing itself and that its latest renaissance is marked by the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Maharshi Ramana. Authors on Islam like Cantwell Smith, and good Christians like C. F. Andrews and Swami Abhishiktananda are convinced that in India, where most people are godfearing and broad-minded, all religions will find their natural home and a congenial climate for healthy growth. Indeed, the historian Toynbee prophesied on the morrow of her Independence that 'India the conquered would conquer her conquerors by the strength of her spirituality.' But then Dr. N. V. Banerjee, in his book *Buddhism and Marxism*, writes off poor old Hinduism, Christianity and Islam as 'theistic' religions and therefore outdated. 'The future, if any, of mankind rests on humanism, since God has been declared by the advanced countries as well and truly 'dead'.

In his book, *Hinduism, Essence and Consequence*, Arun Shourie elaborately lays bare all the absurdities and inconsistencies in Hindu

Professor K. Swaminathan is the chief editor of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* and is a well-known writer in English and Tamil. He has also translated many books, among them, Vinobha Bhave's *Talks on the Gita* and C. R. Rajagopalachari's *Ramayana*.



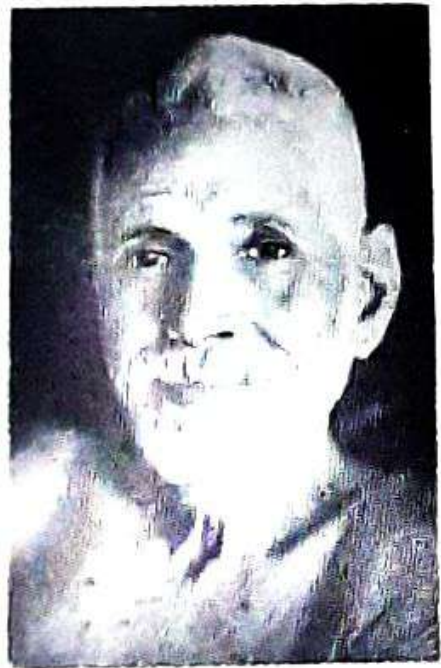
Sri Ramakrishna



Mahatma Gandhi



Sri Aurobindo



Sri Ramana Maharshi

***Courtesy : Sri Ramana Kendra
New Delhi***

metaphysics, but finds some goodness in Gandhiji, who strove for 'human emancipation as an end in itself', whereas Ramakrishna and Ramana were 'concerned only with individual salvation'. For Gandhiji, we are told, 'the means to self-realization is no longer an oppressively inward directed effort. . . . For him the empirical world and its relationships are the *dharma kshetra*. Men have to be released from the man-made social world in which they are trapped.'

A true scientist knows the value of the root of a tree obsessively clinging to the dark interior of the earth, but a hard-headed contractor calculates only the amount of fuel in a tree. Even so, it is indeed strange that Dr. Shourie should have completely ignored Swami Vivekananda and his dynamic social philosophy.

Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao, in his book on Vivekananda, expounds at length Swamiji's Vedantic socialism and describes in moving terms the patriot-monk's prolonged meditation at Kanya Kumari in 1892. This 'meditation' (commemorated in stone in the Rock Memorial) was a precursor of the young Venkataraman's (Maharshi Ramana's) meditation on death in July 1896 and of Sri Aurobindo's vision of Narayana in the Alipore jail a few years later.

As Swamiji dramatically described India's ancient glory and her later degradation, 'with the *elite* sucking the blood of the masses', he discovered the new spiritual *sadhana* of service to God in the poor (*daridra narayana seva*). To the ancient injunctions, 'मातृदेवो भव, पितृदेवो भव' (serve your mother as God, serve your father as God), he now added 'दरिद्रदेवो भव, मूर्खदेवो भव', (serve the poor as God, serve the fool as God). In the poor and ignorant people of India he saw and revered Narayana and by serving them he would worship Him. The consecrated images in the temples were symbols, but the poor were living manifestations of the Lord.

Sri Aurobindo in his celebrated Uttarpara speech (1909) had this to say of Sanatana Dharma and of its complements, patriotism and humanism:

'Sanatana Dharma is life itself. It has not so much to be believed as to be lived . . . I realize in the mind, I realize in the heart, I realize in the body, the truths of the Hindu religion. I do not ask for *mukti*. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation. The freedom of India is for the freedom of the world, for the service of the world.'

Jai Hind and *Jai Jagat* can never come into conflict.

All Hindus believe that religion is being and becoming, that it is Self-realization through self-actualization. Most Indians, Muslims and Christians, no less than Hindus, see to it that their personal and family life is governed by dharma. What is new and important, what has been taught to all Indians by Vivekananda, Gandhiji and Sri Aurobindo, what has been the burden of Swami Ranganathananda's speeches and writings since 1947, is the inescapable truth that in the process of 'becoming' and the practice of dharma, the *dharma-kshetra*, the arena of action, lies in the public sphere no less than in private life. In defining one's *svadharma* and in identifying *svakiya* or *svajana* (one's own people), for whose material and moral welfare one is responsible, it is the religious obligation of every Indian citizen to act on the basis, 'I am an Indian. Every Indian is my brother.'

When it comes to orthopraxy (right conduct) and the demands of good citizenship, Muslims and Christians can and should bring in something specially valuable for the creation of a better future for India and the world. This too Vivekananda had in mind when he commended Islam's 'practical advaita' in terms of equality and brotherhood in the workaday world. He wanted India to present to the world a fusion of 'Vedanta brain and Islam body'. Swamiji dreamed of a time when the Indian elite would enjoy advaita metaphysics and ensure social cohesion. And should not Hindus take natural pride in their mother religion as the Muslims do in theirs? Gandhiji for his part prescribes Christian charity, the mixture formulated in the Sermon on the Mount, as the sovereign remedy for all human ills, if only it is taken 'unadulterated and as a whole' by all of us, not only by those who profess Christianity.

Hindus in the present age have something to learn from the communist dharma also. To the hungry, God appears in the form of food. Bread is essential, though it is not enough, for human living. In India, the struggle is not between the rich and the poor, but between the politics of brotherhood and the politics of *asuric* power. The campaign against economic disparities and social injustices can be used either for damaging and destroying or for preserving and promoting our spiritual being. The common dharma of all our religions is to accept and strengthen our humanity while questioning and changing systems and institutions. Social and political arrangements can be changed through the active play of empathy and

fellow-feeling. Envy, fear and hatred are as needless as they are destructive. *Vishvasa* (mutual trust) is the very *shvasa* (life-breath) of the body politic. Let us boldly exteriorize, hold at arm's length, and manipulate and then cheerfully, by common consent, alter and remold, things, instruments, and constructions like laws and customs.

'Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before.'

Alfred Tennyson

Upasana (reverence) and *vijnana* (knowledge) are both necessary for linking karma and *jnana*, for awareness to govern action and action to purify awareness.

Social and Spiritual Freedom

Vivekananda and Gandhiji had full faith in India's future, as they knew that Religion in all its manifestations was alive and active in the hearts of her people. To cultivate self-restraint and voluntary poverty would not only help abolish the squalor of the masses, but would cure the elite of spiritual blindness. Instead of deploring, we should welcome and utilize the variety of religious traditions flourishing in our land. These do differ in doctrine, rituals and outer garb, but they agree on the norms of human behaviour (*dharma*) and on the infinite importance of liberation, freedom (*moksha*) for every human being. While statesmen like Gokhale, Gandhiji and Rajaji strove to 'spiritualize' public life, our vote-hungry 'misleaders' have almost succeeded in 'politicizing' our religions. Does any religion need State power to protect it in India? Are not all religions bound to mobilize our inexhaustible spiritual and moral resources and so guide and govern temporal power in order to build a better India for the sake of a better world? Should we practise our religions and so keep the politicians straight or should we look to politicians to keep our religions safe?

Dr. B. Kuppaswamy in his *Dharma and Society* makes the eminently sensible suggestion that the Directive Principles enshrined in our Constitution (*Ambedkar Smriti*) should be accepted by all Indians as our *yuga-dharma* (religion of the age). We in India still cherish goodness and freedom and acknowledge saints and poets as better

legislators than Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies. If dharma is interiorized law, cheerfully obeyed by normal people, the only workable law is exteriorized dharma with teeth in it for the erring few.

It is not labels or numbers, but the light of love and the love of light that keeps a religion alive. The lover of God loves his neighbour as himself and all his work is service. Hinduism is a living dharma because contemporaries like Gandhiji and Maharshi Ramana embody it in its fullness, and because the masses still cling to it. It lives in its metaphysics, morals and myths. It lives in the Hindus' congenital incapacity for sustained hatred. Every Hindu knows that the doctrine of 'an eye for an eye' will only make the whole world blind. Gandhiji brings in the minimum necessary *rajas* to transform *tamas* into *sattva*. Maharshi Ramana tries to effect every change by the pure light of awareness.

Gandhiji asserts that today self-realization is impossible without vice of and identification with the poorest. The Maharshi's identification with the poorest was total and most touching. Gandhiji represents *satya*, applied religion, Ramana represents *sat*, pure religion. Gandhiji claims that all human beings are eligible here and now for *moksha*. Ramana asserts that *moksha* is already *siddha*, one's real nature, and that dharma only removes a veil and enables us to discover what we always are. Egoless living giving the utmost freedom to others and taking the utmost responsibility on oneself, is the enjoyment and exercise of *moksha* here and now. This dharma which leads to or springs from freedom does not demand organization; it calls only for a new orientation, a turning of the mind inward to the Self and outward as the love that binds all beings and also moves the sun and the other stars.

While Maharshi prescribes the '*ko-aham*', 'who am I?' quest for unveiling the secret of all religions, whose sole aim is the ego's death and the enjoyment of freedom, the Mahatma offers a talisman for identifying the one next practical step:

'Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will *he* gain anything by it? Will it restore *him* to a control over his own life and

destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.'

Invoke Narayana in His most demanding manifestation and instantly obey His call to service. *Jnana* and karma reinforce each other. *Paramartha*, the highest Truth, broods over *vyavahara*, worldly affairs.

The word 'humanism' is ambiguous, for it begs the question, 'What is man?' To be truly human is to be heroic, and to be heroic is to be divine. Sri Rama is Man perfected and therefore God. Surrender to Sri Rama is the humble acceptance of a courageous role. Every human being is not only a servant and friend, but also a manifestation, of God. When Gandhiji spoke of *Rama-rajya*, he meant only the reign of humanism in its most exalted form. In verses 26 and 27 of the *Supplement to the Forty Verses*, Sri Ramana, quoting Vasishtha's advice to Sri Rama, makes it clear that heroic, self-transcending action is both the cause and the consequence of *moksha*, the essential human condition. When Jesus says, 'I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you', he is not pointing to some remote future possibility; he is describing a present, though neglected, reality.

The advaitic position is as clear as sunlight. The sole reality is the Self, the Being-Awareness-Bliss, which is immanent in every human being. *Moksha* is not an achievement but the discovery of an ever-present reality. The eternal is prior to the ephemeral. The transcendental is not the repudiation, but the fulfillment, of the empirical. Relative knowledge and temporary enjoyment are included in the Infinite. 'If the doors of perception were cleansed', Blake says, 'everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite'. All that dharma does is to cleanse the doors of perception. Children and sages, like grown-up people in deep sleep or their heroic self-forgetful moods, enjoy *mukti*. We are free and no one and nothing, except our own timid minds, can enslave us. We are free to choose fear, finitude, selfishness and conflict. We are equally free to choose courage, infinitude, brotherhood and peace.

Indian Culture and Womanhood—I

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

THE TERM 'Indian culture' stands for the noble way of life followed in this land of Bharat through the ages. The aim of this way of life is to gain spiritual or inward peace. The cause for the absence of external peace is the lack of inward peace. If peace is to prevail in the world, it should first be established in the minds and hearts of people. What serve as barriers to inward peace are the passions, such as lust and anger. The way to remove them is to seek and acquire the virtues which are the qualities of the Self. We must rid our minds of anti-culture and develop cultural values.

Culture and Anti-culture

Culture and anti-culture are referred to in the *Bhagavad Gita* as the heritage of the gods and the heritage of the demons, respectively. In the sixteenth chapter, entitled the 'Yoga of Distinction between the Divine Heritage and the Demoniactal' (*Daiva-Asura-Sampad-Vibhaga-Yoga*), a description is given of the noble qualities of those born of the divine heritage, and of the evil qualities of those belonging to the demoniactal heritage. The following are the divine qualities:

1. fearlessness (*abhaya*);
2. purity of mind, i.e., engaging in empirical matters without duping others, deceiving them or uttering falsehood and so on (*sattva-samshuddhi*);
3. remaining firm in the path of knowledge (*jnana-yoga-vyavasthiti*);
4. distributing food and the like, according to ability (*dana*);
5. sense-control (*dama*);
6. performing sacrifices (*yajna*);
7. studying one's own scriptures (*svadhyaya*);
8. austerity (*tapa*);
9. rectitude (*arjava*);
10. non-violence, refraining from injuring living beings (*ahimsa*);
11. truth (*satya*);
12. absence of anger (*akrodha*);
13. renunciation (*tyaga*);
14. peace i.e., mental calm (*shanti*);
15. absence of calumny (*apaishuna*);
16. compassion towards all beings (*daya-bhuteshu*);
17. not coveting others' property (*aloluptva*);
18. softness (*mardava*);
19. modesty (*hri*);
20. absence of fickleness (*achapala*);
21. energy (*teja*);

Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Madras, is one of the most well-known writers on Indian Philosophy. Among his published works are *Gaudapada, A Study in Early Advaita*, *The Philosophy of Advaita*, *Ten Saints of India* and others.

22. forgiveness (*kshama*); 23. fortitude (*dhriti*); 24. cleanliness (*shaucha*); 25. absence of hatred (*adroha*); 26. freedom from pride (*natimanita*). These twenty-six noble qualities constitute the nature of those born of the divine heritage.* They also constitute the characteristics of culture.

Anti-culture is contrary to culture, and it therefore consists of evil qualities. These evil qualities, which are seen in those belonging to the heritage of the demons, are: 1. ostentation (*dambha*); 2. arrogance (*darpa*); 3. self-conceit (*abhimana*); 4. anger (*krodha*); 5. insolence (*parushya*); 6. ignorance *ajnana*.† These constitute the nature of those born of the demoniac heritage which is anti-culture.

After describing the two contrasted natures, Lord Krishna indicates briefly their respective effects. The divine heritage leads to *moksha* (release) and the demoniac heritage strengthens bondage.‡ Although we are born as human beings, many of us live like demons. If we aim at gaining release then we should get rid of the demoniac qualities and cultivate the divine virtues.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Prajapati instructs his three types of progeny by uttering the sound of the thunder-cloud, *da-da-da*, and he shows the way to cultivate the spiritual qualities. The three types of progeny are: the gods, human beings, and demons. When the gods went to Prajapati and asked for instruction, he uttered the sound 'da'. The gods understood by this the command: 'Cultivate self-restraint'. The gods are notorious for their lack of restraint, and therefore Prajapati told them to acquire restraint (*damyata*). Next, his instruction to the human beings was in the form of the same sound 'da'. The human beings understood by this: 'Give away in charity' (*datta*). The natural tendency among human beings is to be miserly, and therefore Prajapati asked them to be charitable, to give away according to their ability. When the demons asked Prajapati for instruction his response was the same sound of the

* अथ सत्त्वसङ्गुद्विजनियोगव्यवस्थितिः । दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥ 1.

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुम् । दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥ 2.

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता । भवन्ति सम्पदं देवीमभिजातस्य भारत ॥ 3.

† दम्भो दर्पोऽभिमानश्च क्रोधः पाशव्यमेव च । अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम् ॥ 4.

‡ देवी सम्पद्धिमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता । 5.

thundercloud, 'da'. The demons understood by this: 'Show compassion' (*dayadhvam*). This is because the demons are by nature violent and cruel. Leaving aside this nature they should gain the virtue of compassion. We can hear, even now, the message of Prajapati in the sound of the thunder-cloud, *da-da-da—damyata, datta, dayadhvam*.*

Here a question arises, does the injunction for human beings relate only to charity? Are not the other two injunctions meant also for them? The answer to this question is given by Adi Shankara in his commentary.

There are no gods or demons apart from human beings. Those human beings who are without self-control but have other excellences are the gods. Those among the human beings who are human are endowed with miserliness. The demons among human beings are those who are given to violence and have cruel minds. Therefore as human beings have all three defects, namely, lack of self-control, miserliness and violence, they are themselves the gods, the human beings and the demons. All three commands are for human beings. 'Have self-control, give, do not be cruel.'†

Women and Cultural Values

We have so far seen what cultural values we should gain, now we shall see what relation there is between these cultural values and womanhood. For women there are certain common features, and certain special qualities. Among the common features are: attaining what is required and preserving what has been attained (*yoga-kshema*). Yoga is attaining what has not been attained, *kshema* is preserving what has been attained. These features may be observed among men also; but they are essentially womanly qualities. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* there is a pertinent episode. Sage Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi was the elder and Katyayani was the younger. After leading the life of a householder for a considerable time, Yajnavalkya, who was the family preceptor of king Janaka, wished to take *vidvad-sannyasa*, (renouncing the world after gaining

* दाम्यत दत्त दयध्वमिति । V. ii. 3.

† न देवा असुरा वा अग्नये केचन विद्यन्ते मनुष्येभ्यः; मनुष्याणामेव अदान्ता ये अन्यैरुत्तमैर्गुणैः सम्पन्नाः ते देवाः, लोभप्रधाना मनुष्याः, तथा हिंसापराः क्रूरा असुराः, त एव मनुष्या अदान्तत्वाद्विदोषत्रयमपेक्ष्य देवादिशब्दभाजो भवन्ति, इतरांश्च गुणान् सत्त्वरजस्तमांस्यपेक्ष्य अतो मनुष्यैरेव शिक्षितव्यमेतत् त्रयमिति, तदपेक्षयैव प्रजापतिना उपदिष्टत्वात् ।

knowledge). Before leaving home he called his two wives together and told them that he wanted to divide his properties between them. Katyayani remained quiet but Maitreyi asked Yajnavalkya, 'If this entire earth filled with wealth were to be mine would I attain immortality?' The sage replied, 'That is not possible, for one cannot even desire to gain immortality through wealth.' *

Then Yajnavalkya imparted to Maitreyi instruction in Self-knowledge. In this context the Upanishad says that Maitreyi was a *brahmavadini* (one who seeks the knowledge of Brahman) and that Katyayani at that time had only a woman's wit.† The meaning is that Katyayani was intent on gathering the things required for running a household, which is a feature special to womanhood. Maitreyi, on the other hand, giving up this feature, had acquired the attitude of renunciation and was eager to gain the knowledge of Brahman.

What are the special qualities of women? In the tenth chapter (*Vibhuti-yoga*) of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna about his splendour telling him in which individual things or beings he (Sri Krishna) should be meditated upon. He stays in the hearts of all beings. He alone is the beginning, middle and end of all things. The Lord's splendour can be seen in the best of each group. For instance he says, 'Among the gods I am Indra; among the mountains I am the Himalayas; among the rivers, the Ganga; among the months, *Marga-shirsha*; among the animals, the lion; among the Pandavas, Arjuna; among the Vrishnis, Vasudeva.' To the question, 'Who am I among women?', he answers, 'fame, auspiciousness, speech, memory, intelligence, fortitude and endurance'.‡ In his commentary on this verse, Sri Shankara says that people think that they have achieved what they want to if they are related to these virtues even a little.§ What is worthy of note here is that Sri Krishna does not choose an excellent woman and say, 'I am she among women', but he mentions these seven excellences of womanhood which he identifies with them.**

* अमृतस्य तु नास्ति विप्तेन इति ॥ IV. v. 3.

† मैत्रेयी ब्रह्मवादिनी बभूव स्त्रीप्रसूय तर्हि कात्यायनी ॥ IV. .v l.

‡ कीर्तिः श्रीर्वाक्च नारीणां स्मृतिर्बोधा वृत्तिः क्षमा ॥ X. 34.

§ यासां आभासमात्रसंबन्धेन अपि लोकः कृतार्थमात्मानं मन्यते ॥

** This article is based on Acharya Ratna K. Rangaswami A. Aiyangar Commemoration Day Address delivered in Tamil on 30.11.76 at Lady Sivaswami Ayyer Girls' High School, Madras.

Conversations that Inspire

*UTTANAPADA HAD two wives, Suruchi and Suniti. Of them Suruchi, mother of Uttama, was beloved of her husband, but not Suniti whose son was Dhruva. One day, as the king was fondling Uttama on his lap, five-year-old Dhruva approached him, desirous of climbing on to it. Haughty and jealous Suruchi said to Dhruva:**

Suruchi: Child, though you are the king's son, you do not deserve to sit on his lap as you are not born of me. If you aspire to the royal throne, practise austerities and propitiate God, and pray that you may be worthy to be born as my child in your next life.

Smitten by the offensive words of his step-mother, Dhruva ran to his mother. Suniti took him in her arms and said to him:

Suniti: O dear child, do not harbour evil thoughts in your mind about her. Through the law of karma, her deeds will return to her again. Remember only the one great truth she told you. God, my son, is our only refuge and comfort. Take refuge in Him who is sought by the yogis who desire liberation. Propitiate Him with whole-hearted devotion. I doubt that you will find anyone else but the 'lotus-eyed' one who can remove your misery.

Dhruva wandered out of his house in search of a true teacher who would show him the path to God. He met Rishi Narada.

Dhruva: Sir, show me the path to God.

Narada: My child, you are very young. A child of your age should be engaged in playing with toys. Why should rebuke or regard disturb you at this age? The path of yogis is hard to follow. They struggle on, forsaking all the pleasures of life for many, many years, and even for many lives, before they find Him. So why not give up this vain search? Return home and live a good life. Take delight in association with great men. Be sympathetic to the less meritorious and friendly with your equals. Follow this simple teaching and afflictions will never overcome you. Then, when old age comes, devote yourself to meditation.

* *Srimad Bhagavata Purana*, IV. 8.

Dhruva: This path of pacification is prescribed for those who are tossed by happiness and misery. I, however, desire the highest attainment, the realization of the supreme goal of life. I wish to find God. Pray teach me that sacred path that has been traversed by many before me.

Narada: The path indicated by your mother is for your highest good. With a concentrated mind devote yourself to the worship of God. I am now initiating you into the path of yoga. Purification of the body and the senses is essential. Go to the banks of the Yamuna and bathe there three times a day. Then enter Madhuvana, the retreat on its bank, where the presence of God is most manifest. Place your seat there and practise *pranayama*, control of the breath, in its three parts, exhalation, inhalation and retention. This would give you control over your senses, and the mind would be free from restlessness and fit for the practice of meditation. Then practise *japa*, the repetition of God's name. Your Chosen Ideal is Vishnu, Vasudeva. Therefore repeat this sacred *mantra*, '*Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*'. Repeat this *mantra* mentally and offer worship and prayer to the Lord. You will feel his loving presence, his protection and his guidance. See Vasudeva within your own heart, see him everywhere and in all beings. Steadfastly devote yourself to the worship of God and you will know the Truth in this life.

After months of austerity Dhruva was able to have the vision of God within his heart. At the end of six months, Vishnu came to him in Madhuvana. The form that Dhruva had seen in his heart now stood in dazzling light before him. He could not speak, but fell at his feet. Vishnu then graciously touched his cheeks with his conch and Dhruva, from the fullness of his joy, burst into this song of praise.

Dhruva:

O Supreme Spirit, Thou hast revived my speech and other organs.

Thou art the refuge of all;

Thou art One, but through *maya* hast created the world.

Thou dost deliver us from the round of birth and death.

Thou art the infinite Brahman, unchangeable, unequalled, without beginning and without end,

Thy form is bliss;
 Thou art the supreme goal;
 I surrender myself to Thee.

Vasudeva: I know your heart, my child. You had the desire to be a king. Know that you will rule your father's kingdom for many years. After your allotted time of life on earth, you will go to that place in heaven called the celestial sphere, which is my Abode. It is above the *Saptarshi* (the Great Bear) where the gods, the ring of planets, and stars, circle round and round, ever singing my praises and glory. You will be the centre of that sphere. You will never return to this mortal world again and hence you will be known as Dhruva, the pole star.

Prapatti or the Doctrine of Self-surrender

K.D. BHARADWAJ

MAN, UNABLE to find real happiness in the affairs of mundane life, tries to free himself from them. He learns from the teachings of saints and the scriptures that real happiness can be had only in the kingdom of God (*Brahma-Loka*). Thus enlightened, he feels the urge to retire from worldly life and to give up all desire for worldly pleasure; he sheds even his allegiance to previously cherished creeds. He realizes that he had gone astray in the past and now he hastens to take to the path that can lead him to his Saviour. He comes to assume a new outlook and a new attitude—the attitude of surrender—which seeks the protection of God from the misery of the world. In fact, this attitude consists in complete resignation to the will God. Once a man possesses this attitude, he is assured of a glorious future. One who has completely resigned himself to God wins His compassion and attains emancipation from all evils.

The doctrine of *prapatti* or *sharanagati* is as old as the Vedas. Even the sages of the *Rig Veda* invoked the gods for help. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (VI.18) is also explicit on this point:

Dr. K. D. Bharadwaj, a Sanskrit scholar, has written about thirty books in Sanskrit, Hindi and English, including *The Philosophy of Ramanuja*, *The Para-Tattva-Sutram* and *Shrivatsa Bhashya*, which is a *bhashya* on the *Brahma-Sutras* in Hindi.

'He who, in the beginning, created Brahma and furnished him with the Vedas, to that Deity, Illuminer of the intellect, I surrender myself with a desire for salvation.'

In the *Gita*, Sri Krishna said,

'Those who resort to Me as their refuge cross this *maya* which is hard for others to ford.'

It is interesting to trace the origin of the word *sharanagati*. It is peculiar to the Pancharatra literature and was in common use in the hands of the Vaishnava *acharyas*. Although the words *sharanagati* and *prapatti* do not occur in the earlier Upanishads, nor in the *Gita*, they may be traced in the following expressions in these texts:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| (a) I take refuge | शरणं प्रपद्ये |
| (b) They surrender to Me | मां प्रपद्यन्ते |
| (c) Surrender yourself | शरणं गच्छ |
| (d) Take refuge | शरणं ब्रज* |

The *Gita* precept, surrender yourself (शरणं गच्छ), however, seems to be the foundation of the idea conveyed by the word '*sharanagati*'. The objection might of course be raised that what could properly be derived from that precept is 'going to take refuge' (*sharana-gaccha*), and not 'coming to take refuge' (*sharana-agaccha*), because the verb occurring in the phrase is 'go' (गच्छ) and not 'come' (आगच्छ), which is involved in *sharanagati*. But the real point is that the act of resignation, viewed from the standpoint of the individual who resigns, would be '*sharana-gati*', whereas it would be '*sharana-agati*' when viewed from the standpoint of God, to whom the individual resigns himself. This standpoint is obviously higher and hence *sharana-agati* is more significant than *sharana-gati*.

The word *sharana*, shelter, has three meanings: first, it denotes the place where a person becomes free from all suffering; second, it refers to the very act of seeking refuge; third, it implies the person in whom refuge is sought. *Sharanagati* obviously does not consist in the physical act of going to a certain place. It is an attitude which enables the individual soul to discover that God is the ultimate end of realization and that the means to that realization also lies through

* (a) *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, VI. 18.
(c) *ibid.*, XVIII. 62.

(b) *Gita* IV. 11, VII. 14.
(d) *ibid.*, XVIII. 66.

God. Hence Ramanuja recognizes a *vidya*, a science and an art, relating to *sharanagati*, which he calls *sharanagati-vidya*. This *vidya*, according to him, deals with the means of realizing God. It is believed that *prapatti*, which is generally used as a synonym for *sharanagati*, is a form of *bhakti*. It consists in the surrender of the individual to God, which is also the condition of devotion or *bhakti*. This point Ramanuja made clear in his commentary on verse 15 of the seventh chapter of the *Gita*.

Bhakti, as ordinarily understood, comprises many details such as listening to the scriptures, reading devotional texts, erection of temples, formal worship of images, pilgrimages, and all such things involve expenditure of money, perseverance and concentration of mind on the part of the devotee. Obviously, then, not many people can be so privileged as to resort to *bhakti*. But that may not matter. For those who cannot have *bhakti* within easy reach are free to assume the attitude of *prapatti* and throw themselves on the mercy of God by self-surrender. Thus the distinction is removed between God-realization as the end and as the means. Man, in his helplessness, may renounce all and seek refuge in God. He may express his attitude at this stage in these words: 'This ocean of transmigration is hard to cross. I am destitute, helpless and afraid. Save me, O Ocean of Mercy, by Your grace. I have committed thousands of wrongs and have fallen into the depths of this fearful world. I am helpless and have chosen You as my refuge. Accept me only through Your grace.' Indeed, no worldly tie can bind one who is thus infused with craving for supreme bliss. Father and mother, wife and son, brother and friend, food and jewellery, house and property have no importance to one who surrenders himself to God. This sentiment is very well brought out by Vibhishana, who spoke to Rama thus:

'I have forsaken Lanka, deserted my friends and abandoned my wealth. In you lies my kingdom, life and happiness. You give shelter to those who seek it and I have come to take refuge in You.'

The doctrine of self-surrender is the essence of the teachings of the *Gita* and the scriptures in general. It is, therefore, as they hold, worthy of serious attention and deserves to be practised. Lord

Krishna, who in both the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata* is regarded as the Supreme, declares this doctrine to be characterized by the greatest inwardness of mind. Those who are sinful find it impossible to eradicate their many and various sins, the destruction of which is the condition precedent for the adoption of the path of *bhakti*. In view of this the despairing soul welcomes the divine assurance that whosoever takes refuge in God is purged of all sins. Such a soul realizes that the service of God is the sum of all knowledge.

The Accessories of Prapatti

The *Ahimbudhnya Samhita* has enumerated the following six accessories of *prapatti*:

1. *Determination to live in conformity with God's wishes.* It is the attitude of the devotee to remain attuned to the will of God. He is fully convinced that his good lies in God's decree. Hence he rests content with the circumstances in which he is placed in the belief that God wills him to be in that situation.

2. *Non-resistance.* The true devotee never rebels against, nor even resents, a divine decree. He regards the scriptures as of divine origin and can never think of violating scriptural injunctions.

3. *Firm belief in divine guardianship.* The devotee firmly believes that God is the Supreme Saviour of all, at all places and at all times.

4. *The choice of God as the Saviour.* The true devotee does not rest content merely with the belief that God is his Saviour, but goes further in ceremonially choosing God as his Saviour in the same manner as the bride chooses her bridegroom.

5. *The feeling of absolute dependence and destitution.* With a feeling of complete dependence on God, the devotee relinquishes the idea of his independence and cherishes the faith that everything concerning him and even his own self is dependent upon God. God alone is the devotee's precious possession. He owns nothing else.

6. *Self-resignation.* Whatever a devotee can call his own—his own self not excepted—he surrenders to the Deity. Yamunacharya said, 'Whatever this "I" may be amongst the various parts and aspects of the body, and whatever quality it may possess, I offer that "I" at your feet, O Lord.'

According to the Vadagalais,* resignation to God is one among several ways of realizing the highest end. Only those who are incapable of adopting any other means should resort to it. A resigned soul should continue to perform duties, because that is a way of pleasing God. The six accessories outlined above are preparations for *prapatti*. If a person of resignation (*prapanna*) deviates from the prescribed routine of duties, atonement for him consists in repeating the act of *prapatti* as often as he has deviated.

According to the Tengelais,† however, *prapatti* is the only way leading to God. They go further in holding that it is God Himself who is spoken of as a way leading to Him. The way of *prapatti* is meant for all; it does not matter whether they are capable or incapable of following other paths. For a person who has already resigned himself to God there is no need to please God by performing actions. God's pleasure is spontaneous. It does not depend upon man's actions. One may, however, perform actions only to set an example to others. According to the Tengelais the six limbs of *prapatti* are not its conditions precedent but are its effects. They believe that *prapatti* is to be performed all at once. It need not be repeated even by one who deviates from the prescribed routine of duties.

Now, surrender on the part of the individual soul presupposes divine grace. If an individual does not have divine grace it is impossible for him to have self-surrender. The Sanskrit words for grace are *prasada*, *kripa* and *daya*, which have been used by saints and philosophers and in the scriptures. The *Gita* and the Upanishads use *prasada* in the sense of God's grace. Literally, *prasada* means pleasure, which in the case of a king or God is grace. But it is now commonly used to denote the object granted by a priest to those who approach a deity in a temple with a worshipful attitude. *Prasada* primarily means grace and it is in this sense that Ramanuja understands

* The Vadagalai was the Northern School of Vishishtadvaita, founded by Vedanta Deshika or Venkatanatha (13th century), one of the greatest successors of Ramanuja. Vedanta Deshika had great faith in and respect for the Sanskrit tradition, which means the tradition contained in the Upanishads, *Brahma-Sutras* and *Gita*.

† The Tengelai was the Southern School of Vishishtadvaita of which the chief representative was Pillai Lokacharya (13th century), who regarded the Tamil Prabandham as canonical and was indifferent to the Sanskrit tradition.

the word when he states in his commentary to the *Gita*: 'Through God's grace one overcomes all worldly obstacles and reaches Him.' The *Katha Upanishad* says that a person devoid of any desires realizes God through His grace, and the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* also reiterates the same point. The *prasada* of the *Gita* and the Upanishads is the *poshana*, 'nourishment', of the *Bhagavata*. Since divine grace (*anugraha*) nourishes the spiritual life of the devotee, it is called *poshana*. *Pushti* is another etymological form of the same word. It is the title of one of the ten principal topics of the *Bhagavata*. Acharya Vallabha lays the greatest stress on God's mercy' hence his interpretation of Vedanta is called the 'path of grace' or *Pushti Marga*. It may be added that the *prasada* of the *Gita* and the *poshana* of the *Bhagavata* seem to have been originally the *sumati* of the *Rig Veda*, which was cherished by those who were devoted to divine service.

A Visit to Shanti Ashrama

BRAHMACHARINI BHAVANI

IT WAS a hot summer day in August, 1976. Our pick-up truck had just made its way along the narrow, circuitous roads up and over the Coastal Mountain Range some thirty miles southeast of San Jose, and we were now descending into the vast, isolated expanse of land below known as the San Antone Valley. The terrain of this valley is a study in contrasts: rolling hills thickly covered with chaparral and manzanita taper out into flat, wide areas blanketed with wild grasses and dotted here and there with a few oaks and pines. After driving through the valley another fifteen miles or so, we finally reached our destination—the Shanti Ashrama.

Upon stepping out of the truck, I was immediately struck by what I saw. The Shanti Ashrama I had heard so much about, the place sanctified by the living presence of two direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, looked like a scene from an old Nevada ghost town. The few wooden sheds left standing were rotting with age as if they had been simply abandoned and left to wither away under the force of the elements. There were four buildings on the property: two tiny

Brahmacharini Bhavani is a member of the Sarada Convent in Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A.

cabins, a larger structure called the Meditation Cabin, and a large old barn off to the side. As is customary, we entered the Meditation Cabin first. The empty room was thick with dust, cobwebs and tiny creatures of all varieties. And yet, even after seventy-six years, there was still an intense atmosphere of spirituality that was almost tangible. One could almost feel the presence of Swami Turiyananda himself sitting in his usual spot under the window.

Seventy-six years earlier, in August of 1900, Swami Turiyananda had arrived here with twelve devoted students. They had travelled south from San Francisco to San Jose by train, and had climbed Mt. Hamilton in a four-horse stagecoach. For the twenty-two mile journey down into the valley and on to Shanti Ashrama, they had to leave behind most of their luggage and supplies in order to squeeze themselves into a small two-seated spring wagon, the only available means of transportation. Two of the ladies rode on horseback, while one of the men accompanied them on his bicycle.

After a long, arduous journey through this barren, dusty wilderness where the temperature would often soar above 110° in the summer, they finally arrived at the Ashrama only to find greater hardships awaiting them. The nearest source of water was six miles away and water had to be carried back in barrels. The only available food they had was a little brown sugar and rice which they boiled and ate as their first meal at the Ashrama. Deciding where to sleep was the next problem, since at that time there were only two buildings on the property—a small cabin and a shed. A nearby haystack, however, offered the solution and after meditating around a campfire, it was decided that several of the elderly ladies would sleep in the buildings. The rest, including Swami Turiyananda, would make the haystack their bed. But even when the question was settled, no one could sleep. Lying on a bed of hay under the stars, soothed by a gentle breeze and surrounded by the pervading quietness interrupted only by the sound of the Swami's voice as he talked far into the night, the devotees soon forgot all the difficulties and hardships they had endured. They were about to embark on a new journey which would change their lives completely.

Most of those present knew Swami Vivekananda and many had been intimately associated with him. Swamiji had stirred them to their depths and had lifted them up out of their mundane existence,

and now it was Swami Turiyananda who would direct and train their minds, and show them how to apply practically Swamiji's lofty teachings. Swami Vivekananda's parting words to the California devotees were, 'I have only talked, but I shall send you one of my brethren who will show you how to live what I have taught'.

A Contrast of Personalities

The personalities of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda were, so to speak, polar opposites. Swamiji once said of himself, 'I am the expression of Kshatriya power'. Vivekananda was forceful, dynamic, outspoken and unconventional. Turiyananda, on the other hand, was the embodiment of Brahmanical qualities—quiet, gentle, meditative and orthodox. His only desire was to live the life of a wandering monk in India. Thus, when Swami Vivekananda first approached his brother disciple to come to America, Turiyananda flatly refused. It was only after Swamiji begged him to come, embraced him and wept like a child, that Turiyananda finally consented out of his tremendous love for his elder brother. But even then he still had misgivings about public lecturing, the thought of which was very distasteful to him. Aware of this, Swamiji asked him, 'Can you lecture as I have done?' Surprised, Turiyananda replied, 'Of course not, Swamiji. What are you saying!' 'Well then, don't trouble yourself about lecturing', Swamiji reassured him. 'You just live the life. Be an example to them. Let them see how men of renunciation live.'

In 1899, Swami Vivekananda left India for his second visit to the West, taking Turiyananda with him to assist Swami Abhedananda in New York. Upon arriving in America, Swami Turiyananda addressed the Western devotees with characteristic humility. 'I am your servant', he told them. 'I have come all the way from India to serve you and I will do my best.' Swami Vivekananda left his two *guru-bhais* in New York while he went on to California. There he received a telegram from a New York member who wished to present him with a gift of property—one hundred and sixty acres of land in the San Antone Valley—for the purpose of establishing an Ashrama where dedicated students could go and lead a purely contemplative life. Swamiji wired acceptance and, after returning to New York, urged a reluctant Swami Turiyananda to go to California, saying, 'It is the

will of the Divine Mother that you should take charge of the work there.' Turiyananda was amused at this statement and said, 'Rather say it is *your* will. Certainly you have not heard the Mother communicate Her will to you in this matter!' Gravely Swamiji replied, 'Yes, Brother. If your nerves become very fine then you will be able to hear Mother's words directly.' The words of Swami Vivekananda, spoken with such depth and fervour, convinced Turiyananda of his divine mission and he agreed to go and establish the Shanti Ashrama.

The initial hardships encountered at the Ashrama were soon tackled and eased by the enthusiastic students as their tents and luggage began to arrive from Mt. Hamilton along with a variety of supplies from San Francisco. Tents were put up, a nearby spring was tapped for water and building began on the Meditation Cabin. Gradually their lives fell into a daily routine of meditation, classes and manual work. The women cooked, baked, laundered and washed dishes while the men did the heavier work of chopping wood, hauling water, planting gardens and building cabins. The Swami actively participated in everything and watched over each person like a loving, concerned mother for her children—guiding, encouraging and inspiring them.

Living the Life

The wonder of it all was that twelve men and women of entirely different backgrounds, ages and personalities were able to live and work together in the absence of rules or definite guidelines. Thinking about this, one student asked Swami Turiyananda how this was possible. He replied, 'It is because I rule by love. You are all tied to me by the bond of love. How else is it possible? Don't you see how I trust everyone and I leave everyone free? I can do that because I know that you all love me. There is no hitch anywhere, all goes on smoothly. But remember, it is all Mother's doing. I have nothing to do with it. She has given us that mutual love, that Her work may flourish. As long as we remain true to Her, there is no fear that anything will go wrong. But the moment we forget Her, there will be great danger. Therefore I always ask you to think of Mother.' And this he did constantly, in various ways that were often astounding in their subtlety.

No matter what the topic of conversation was, the Swami would

spiritualize it and often a mundane, ordinary action or occurrence would be infused with the Lord. For instance, one of the girls was taking notes in class and the Swami noticed that the point of her pencil was jagged and unsymmetrical. He took it from her and sharpened the pencil with a knife until it had a perfectly smooth point. Returning it to her he said, 'Make every act an act of worship. Whatever you do, do as an offering to the Mother and do it as perfectly as you can.' In another instance, a bird chirping outside during breakfast prompted him to say, 'Hear, the bird is saying, "*tui, tui*"—Bengali for 'Thou, Thou'.

Often he would come upon a group engaged in idle talk and would ask them the topic of their conversation. If the subject was not a spiritual one, he would chide them for wasting their time in meaningless chatter. Referring to the natural tendency to gossip about the faults of others, he would say, 'We are like dogs in glass houses barking at our own reflections'.

But it was the Swami's continual chanting that was the best reminder of the presence of God. He would chant, '*Om, Om, Hari Om*' for hours at a time, while walking, sitting, alone or in public. Even while carrying on a conversation, he would often chant in between talking and while listening to the reply to his questions. Interestingly enough, this chant took two forms. One was in a minor key, soft and melodious. It was this chant that he used as the group gathered for meditation. He continued it softly until they were all settled and their restless minds subdued. After a time, their meditation was brought to a close by the same gentle, ethereal chant.

The other form his chant took was in a major key, lively and rhythmic. Every morning they would wake up to this 'military chant' and they could hear it ring out during the day as they went about their chores, replenished by the contagious energy and zeal it created.

Someone once asked Turiyananda what his chant meant and he replied, 'It is lashing the waves of the mind into submission'. Indeed, whenever they were within earshot of the Swami, his chanting would draw their minds back to the Lord no matter where they were or what they were doing. It happened more than once that when several of them were engaged in idle conversation, the Swami would slowly approach them, and as his chanting became more and more audible, the students were forced to remember their goal.

Swami Turiyananda was a man of uncompromising renunciation and discrimination. To quote Swami Vivekananda, 'Whenever I think of the wonderful renunciation of Hari, about his steadiness of intellect and forbearance, I get a new access of strength'. Turiyananda once said of himself, 'When I sit down for meditation, I lock the entrances to my mind, and after that nothing external can reach there. When I unlock them, then only can the mind cognize things outside.' Such self-control is barely imaginable to us, but it gives an idea of how the Swami was able to bear the intense physical pain that confronted him in his later years. The many years spent in practising austerities had taken a heavy toll of his body, and he suffered from diabetes, carbuncles and other physical ailments. But his self-control in the midst of all this was so great that he was even able to undergo surgery without an anesthetic. He would merely disassociate himself from his body. He used to say, 'Let pain and body look to themselves but you, my mind, rest in the contemplation of God.' During this period of his life when pain was his constant companion, he once remarked that the bliss he experienced in the presence of Sri Ramakrishna more than compensated for all the pain he had suffered in his entire life. Such living faith in God coupled with extraordinary strength and fortitude enabled him to bear enormous amounts of pain and suffering.

Self-control and Self-surrender

Turiyananda was a *jnani* in the truest sense of the word. But, like all great *jnanis*, his heart was soft, tender and all-embracing. He possessed a remarkable blend of self-control and self-surrender. At the Shanti Ashrama, 'Mother' was constantly on his lips; he lived, moved and breathed in the Divine Mother. Over and over he would tell his students, 'Good, bad or indifferent, you all belong to Her. Happy or unhappy, whether you realize it or not, you *are* Mother's children.' The Swami, referring to this period when he lived in one of his most intense spiritual moods said, 'I could palpably see how Mother was directing every single footfall of mine.' He would tell his students, 'Mother tells me to do this' or 'Mother wants me to tell you that.'

The self-surrender of Turiyananda to the Divine Mother must have been awe-inspiring to witness. The degree to which his self-surrender manifested itself is illustrated in the following incident.

Once during the latter part of his life, he had an eye ailment that needed treatment. By mistake, nitric acid was poured into his eyes instead of the proper remedy. When the mistake was discovered, he merely remarked, 'It is the will of the Mother'. Fortunately his eyes were saved.

An incident at the Shanti Ashrama demonstrates how the Divine Mother takes care of those who surrender to Her completely. During meditation at the Ashrama, a poisonous beetle crawled up and bit the Swami on the hand. He flicked it off without even opening his eyes and continued to meditate. Later on, when his hand and arm began to swell, the devotees feared that the poison would spread further. Their anxiety was heightened by the fact that the nearest doctor was fifty miles away. Turiyananda remained calm and untroubled while the others wondered what to do. During their dilemma, a man arrived from New York, having walked the last fifty miles on foot. He had heard of the Ashrama and was anxious to begin living the contemplative life. It was soon discovered that he was a doctor, and shortly after his arrival he treated and saved the Swami's hand.

Swami Turiyananda's heart was so open and full of compassion that he welcomed everyone to the Ashrama. He was just like a mother to all. On one occasion a rather strange young man appeared with a desire to learn psychic powers. He would not help with any of the chores, preferring to spend all his time alone in his tent practising bizarre exercises. The Swami did not interfere with him at all. He felt that if the Divine Mother did not want him there, She would take him away. During a class, this young man asked the Swami, 'What would happen if I fall?' Apparently he was referring to falling from the spiritual heights he assumed he had reached. Swami Turiyananda answered him tenderly, 'If you fall, you will fall into the lap of the Mother. You will get up again and try again'. The young man left the Ashrama shortly after.

Naturally, in the presence of Swami Turiyananda, the Ashrama vibrated with spiritual intensity. The spiritual atmosphere created by him was so powerful that even strangers noticed it. Once a newspaper reporter came to the Ashrama to investigate the stories that were circulating about this strange little band of people who were living together in the primitive wilderness and practising 'weird heathen rituals'. The reporter arrived in the evening to find the Swami

meditating with the devotees around a campfire. He approached the circle and sat down quietly, closing his eyes. He joined them the second night also. Then a strange feeling came over him. He wrote, 'For a time I was conscious of nothing but . . . the busy tap of a wood-pecker, the sharp bark of a coyote, the gentle sighing of the cool wind, the delicate, poignant aroma of the smoking incense and the melodious intoning of the Sanskrit scriptures. But in a while, with the unusual physical quietude, perhaps the regular conscious breathing, the varied poetry of the scene and something else—atmosphere or what you will—I become conscious of an unusual harmony within myself, as if I were an instrument in absolute tune with some eternal harmony, a sense of unusual well-being and tranquility, which I have no words to express intelligibly.'

Departure and After

The one-and-a-half years spent at the Shanti Ashrama in intense teaching and training were a tremendous mental strain on Swami Turiyananda and they told upon his health. He began to yearn for a reunion with his beloved Swami Vivekananda, who was in India at the time. The students, hoping that the long sea voyage would restore him to health so that he could return to them stronger than ever, bought him a ticket and the sailing date was arranged.

Then the Swami had a vision of the Divine Mother who urged him to remain. She assured him that if he did so, the Ashrama would grow and flourish. But he refused saying, 'Let me go to Swamiji first.' The Mother gazed at him gravely and departed. Turiyananda was troubled by this vision and later said to a disciple, 'I have done wrong, but it cannot be helped now'.

He set sail in June 1902, arriving in India on 14 July—ten days after the passing away of Swami Vivekananda. The news was such a shock to him that he lost all interest in the work and retired into solitude. He spent the next eight years of his life wandering here and there, practising meditation and spiritual austerities. He then returned to live in the monasteries of the Order until he passed away in 1922.

Swami Turiyananda had left the Shanti Ashrama in the hands of a beloved student, who was later known as Gurudas Maharaj. For several years he lived there alone, except for occasional visitors.

Swami Trigunatita, Turiyananda's successor in San Francisco and also a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, held annual retreats at the Ashrama. After Trigunatita's death in 1915, however, the Shanti Ashrama was frequented less and less and the buildings began to deteriorate from lack of use and neglect. Now it is no longer an Ashrama but a place of pilgrimage.

To see the Ashrama in the condition in which it is today can be depressing and disheartening. We may ask ourselves, 'Why did the Lord allow this sacred spot to become a ghost town?' But looking at it from a different, more positive standpoint, the old, dilapidated buildings, still charged with spiritual atmosphere, recall to mind the Shanti Ashrama of Swami Turiyananda's days. Using our imagination, we can almost reconstruct how it must have been then—living, breathing, moving in the presence of such a man of God. During those one-and-a-half years, he was in our Western culture and surrounded by Westerners like ourselves. We can identify with them in our mind's eye and this in itself brings us closer to Swami Turiyananda and makes him more alive. Thinking of the Ashrama as it was in those days makes it easier for us to lift Turiyananda off his high celestial pedestal and into our hearts. He becomes no longer the unfamiliar, remote direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, but a loving friend whose words and actions are a constant source of inspiration.

There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who, having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever.

Vivekachudamani 37.

Jnani and Jnanavan

G. M. PATIL

DISCUSSING HIS worshippers, Sri Krishna divides them into the following four categories: (i) those overtaken by suffering, (भारतं), (ii) those who strive to gain knowledge, (जिज्ञासु), (iii) those who desire wealth, (वर्षार्थी), and (iv) those who are wise, (ज्ञानी).^{*} The last of these categories, the *jnani*, is the highest, as the Lord is exceedingly dear to him and he is exceedingly dear to the Lord.[†]

They are all noble, no doubt, but the *jnani* is considered by the Lord as His own self.[‡] Yet in the next verse the Lord states that the possessor of knowledge reaches Him after many births.[§] This statement has caused confusion in the minds of many students of the *Bhagavad Gita* and an unequivocal explanation is not easily available. If the *jnani*, the wise man, is the Lord Himself why should he require many births to realize that the whole universe is Vasudeva, Himself, or more to the point, that whatever exists is his own self as He is the Lord? Let us go deeper into this question.

These four types of devotees can be initially divided into two broad groups: (i) those who seek something and aspire to achieve some gain as a reward for, or in exchange for, their devotion; and (ii) those who expect nothing and yet selflessly worship the Lord. Such devotees are extremely rare. The first of these two groups may be divided into three categories. First, there are the sufferers (भारतं), those who expect the removal of their suffering, who wish for freedom from the calamities by which they are distressed and harassed, and who are eager to be released from affliction. This can be described as a negative approach for these devotees do not aspire for some positive gain but only desire to be freed from suffering. Second, there are the seekers of knowledge (जिज्ञासु). Such a seeker is more

* चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन । भारतो जिज्ञासुर्वर्षार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ *Bhagavad-Gita*, VII. 16.

† प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽयमहं स च मम प्रियः । *ibid.*, VII. 17.

‡ ज्ञानी त्वामैव मे मतम् । *ibid.*, VII. 18.

§ बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते । *ibid.*, VII. 19.

sober. He neither prays for the removal of distress nor desires any positive gain. He simply hankers after knowledge. He wishes to acquire the knowledge of God, but not the realization of God. He wants to know whether a God really exists. If He exists, where is He? What is He like and when and how can He be approached? Such queries haunt his heart. He is just a seeker of knowledge, yet he expects something for his devotion. Third, there are those who desire wealth or some positive benefit, such as worldly prosperity (वर्धनी). Compared with the sufferer (प्राण), his is a positive approach. He has no particular want; he is not suffering from adversity, but like the man of demonic (प्राकृत) aptitude described in the sixteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, he runs after the fulfillment of his worldly desires and aspirations, which are rarely satisfied (दुष्पूरेण, B.G. III. 39). While these three types of devotees worship God to gain some benefit, those in the fourth category, the wise men, do not seek the fulfillment of any desire and so theirs is a distinctive category.

But why is it said that the *jnani* requires many births to reach God? The logical explanation is that the first three types of devotees do not stand on the same level as the fourth, the wise. The seekers are those who in their present birth are worshipping God for the first time and for the instantaneous fulfillment of their temporary or momentary material wants. This approach of theirs is on the mundane level, while the *jnani* has reached this stage after performing penance and austerities for many births and stands on a spiritual level. He has been an ardent devotee birth after birth and this time again he appears as a devotee on the same level as other worshippers. Outwardly, on the physical level, he is just a devotee, but inwardly on the mental and spiritual levels, he is on an extraordinarily high level, for now he has realized that the whole universe is Vasudeva Himself and that he is no other than Him. Such a noble person is, however, rarely found, (स महारत्ना सुदुर्लभः, B. G. VII.19). All the distinctive marks of a *jnani* previously mentioned, that he is exceedingly dear to the Lord and the Lord is exceedingly dear to him, that he is the Lord Himself, and that he has realized everything as Vasudeva, apply to him when, after many births, he has ripened into a mature *jnani*. The descriptions in the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*, like: 'He sees his self abiding in all things . . .' (सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं etc., B. G. VI.29), 'Who abides in every created thing . . .' सर्वभूतस्थितं वो मां etc., B. G. VI.31), 'Who sees

Me everywhere . . .’ (यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र, B. G. VI.30), ‘He who sees all beings in the very Self . . .’ (यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि etc., *Isha Upanishad*, 6), refer only to him.

An Alternative Explanation

Here is a humble venture to offer an alternative explanation to this intriguing question. Perhaps it can be accepted as a possible or at least a plausible one. It rests on making a distinction between a *jnani* and a person who is *jnanavan* (a person who possesses knowledge). This differentiation is based on everyday experience. We come across many profound scholars or erudite academicians who have a mastery over the Vedantic texts: the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads. They are proficient in their studies and are highly honoured for their laudable and scholarly lectures and expositions, and learned writings. They are sometimes worshipfully respected also. But the twenty distinguishing characteristics of a *jnani* which are enumerated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (XII.7-11) are absolutely wanting in them. On the contrary, instead of being free from vanity (अमानित्वम्), they are puffed up with vanity; instead of being without hypocrisy (अदम्भित्वम्), they are hypocrites; instead of being indifferent to worldly enjoyment (वैराग्यम्); they are full of lust and have a close attachment to their families and possessions. No doubt they carry heavy loads of knowledge on their shoulders, but they have not tasted even a particle of it. Their knowledge is profound, but wisdom has still not dawned on them. By their elucidating, instructive, informative and inspiring sermons and expositions they can captivate the hearts of their audience. They have enough knowledge of spiritual texts, but their spiritual experience is nil; they are far away from it. Thus they can offer a lucid exposition of ‘All this is Vasudeva’ (वासुदेवः सर्वमिति), but whether it is a possibility or just a theory, they can never confidently say because they have never experienced it. Such people are *jnanavans*, intelligent possessors of knowledge, but not *jnanis* who have digested and assimilated the knowledge in their lives. Such a *jnanavan* may, after many births, through the grace of the Lord or some great teacher, become enlightened, become a *jnani*. The lamp is available, ghee has been poured into it, the wick has been trimmed; only the kindling of the flame is awaited. No sooner is it done than the lamp starts shedding light and is capable of

enkindling other lamps. The *jnanavan* thus becomes a *jnani* after many births, having realized God.

If *jnani* and *jnanavan* indicate the same individual, the first explanation would be applicable: if the two words have different connotations, the second explanation would identify them in the course of time.

The Great Republic of the Licchavis

PRAVRAJIKA AMALAPRANA

WELL KNOWN for their republican system of government in the sixth century B.C., the Licchavis were a great people in eastern India with their capital at Vaishali (modern Besarh). At the time of Buddha the Licchavis had firmly established their power and even rivalled the power of Magadha, the main political centre in northern India at that time. The founder of Jainism, Mahavira, was born in a suburb of Vaishali. Buddha also visited Vaishali very often. In Jaina and Buddhist literature the Licchavis are frequently mentioned. We know more about their origin, country and system of government than any other republican people of that period.

Many historians have sought to prove that the Licchavis, the most powerful constituent of the Vrijian confederacy, were of foreign origin but early Indian tradition is unanimous in representing the Licchavis as Kshatriyas and they are closely linked with the Indo-Aryans. 'Throughout Pali literature, the Licchavis are called by the *gotra*-names of the Brahmanas, indicating the close connection between the two.'¹ We read in the *Maha-Parinibban-Sutta*:

'And the Licchavis of Vasali sent a messenger to the Mallas, saying: "The Exalted One was a Kshatriya and so are we. We are worthy to receive a portion of the relics of the Exalted One."' ²

Manu, the great Hindu law-giver, also supports this view, saying that the Licchavis were 'Rajanyas' or Kshatriyas. Hemachandra Roychowdhuri is also of the opinion that:

'The obvious conclusion seems to be that the Licchavis were

Pravrajika Amalaprana is the Principal of the Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, a college run by the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in Calcutta.

indigenous Kshatriyas who were degraded to the position of *Vratya* when they neglected Brahmanic rites and showed a predilection for heretical doctrines.³

And according to J. P. Sharma:

'The most probable origin of the Licchavis, as we envisage it, is that they were an Aryan tribe or a branch of one, originally called by a different name. During the Brahmana period when the Kuru-Panchala area became too congested and when kings became more autocratic, there was a considerable migration to the east. . . . The Licchavis broke away from their kinsfolk and moved eastwards to find a better home.'⁴

The territory of the Licchavis was indeed very wide. In the north it most probably extended as far as Nepal. Cunningham says that they occupied 'the southwest corner of the country of the Vrijis and to the westward of the Gandaka river and north of the Ganges.'⁵ According to the combined testimony of the Buddhist and Jaina works the Licchavis were a vigorous, manly and heroic race and also highly prosperous. At the same time, they possessed a strong religious and devotional bent of mind. Both Jainism and Buddhism found many followers among them.

Administrative System

The special contribution of the Licchavis towards Indian civilization was their system of administration. They formed what is constitutionally called a *sangha* or a *gana*. Defining the *gana*, J. P. Sharma remarks,

'This was a form of Government in which neither a single ruler, nor even a few, but a considerable portion of the population was vested with the final power and the ultimate authority of the state.'⁶

Several different theses have been formulated in answer to the question as to who formed this republican government at Vaishali. Sharma quotes the preamble to the *Ekapanna Jataka* which states that:

'In that city (Vesali) there were always 7,707 kings (*rajas*) to govern the kingdom, and a like number of viceroys (*uparajas*), generals (*senapatis*) and treasurers (*bhandagarikas*).'⁷

The Buddhist religious books also speak of such *ganas*. Kautilya, too,

has indicated in his *Artha-Shastra* the real nature of the Licchavis, form of government. He speaks of the *sanghas* or corporations of the Licchavis and of the other clans. He observes that all these *sanghas*, by virtue of their being united in such corporations, were unconquerable.

'Professor Altekār's view that "the Licchavis had a council of nine, though the membership of their assembly numbered 7,707," is fair judgement', according to Sharma, who also observes:

'It seems obvious from the evidence of contemporary Athens that that 7,707 was the number of the Licchavi Khattiyas, all calling themselves *rajas*, who formed the General Assembly.'⁸

This General Assembly met once a year to discuss important and grave public business. But normally a much smaller body assembled to attend to the administrative work; for this they met in the *santhagara*.

'It was a common feature of the republics at the time of the Buddha to have a meeting place like a mote-hall in their capital cities and also in other large towns of the republics. As the Athenian *ecclesia* met at the *onyx* and the Roman Senate in the *curia*, so the Licchavian *gana* met in the *santhagara*. It was not only a political centre, but like the Vedic *sabha*, also the place where religious and social functions of the republic took place.'⁹

In the General Assembly, which consisted of 7,707 *rajas*, the President or the head of the State was elected for a period of time. The President was assisted by a council of eight (excluding the *raja*), and together they wielded supreme power in the republic in the name of the Assembly. This small council of nine functioned much like an Athenian *boule* and the Roman magistracy. They made the plans and policies of the Licchavian republic as the General Assembly was too large a corporation to administer the republic. The agenda for the Annual General Assembly, the consecration of the *uparajas* and other important functions, the arrangements for filling vacant posts and ranks caused by accident or death, were all made by this committee. They were required, in all important matters, to have the approval of the Assembly of 7,707. 'On small matters the chiefs consult; on larger questions, the community.'

*The Age of Imperial Unity*¹⁰ mentions the following general

principles of the Licchavian republican constitution:

1. Definite rules were laid down regarding the method of moving resolutions in the Assembly. Generally the proposal was repeated thrice, and if no objections were raised it was taken as passed. In case of objection the sense of the Assembly was determined by the votes of the majority. Definite rules were laid down for the counting of votes and there was a special officer for the purpose. Voting by ballot was in use.
2. Complicated questions were referred to committees.
3. Definite rules were laid down about quorum, votes of absentees, subsequent legislation of acts done by an illegally constituted assembly, and such cases.

All these reveal how modern and up-to-date was the Licchavian republican constitution which existed in India during the sixth century B.C.

The Power of the Licchavi Republic

Though there was no place for women in the Licchavi Assembly, women did play an important part in society and influenced men in all spheres of activity, including the political. We hear the names of many great women among the Licchavis. According to the *Nirayavatī Sutra*, Cellana, the daughter of Cetaka, a king of the Licchavis, commanded great influence. Her sister, Kshatriyani Trishala, was the mother of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism. Kumara Devi, the wife of Chandragupta I, and the mother of Samudragupta was also a Licchavi princess. In fact, women in Licchavi society generally commanded great respect and influence.

The strength and power of the Licchavis was in their unity and integrity. As long as they possessed these, they were invulnerable and no outside enemy could destroy their power. Lord Buddha gave eloquent expression to his views about them, as recorded in the *Maha-Parinibban-Sutta*:

‘So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians hold these full and frequent public assemblies, meet together in concord and carry out their undertakings in concord . . . and act in accordance with the ancient institutions of Vajjians . . . so long as they honour and esteem and revere and support the Vajjian elders and hold it a point of duty to hearken to their words . . . so long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline

but prosper.'¹¹

Ajatashatru, the great king of Magadha, was a bitter enemy of the Licchavis. By means of conspiracies he managed to destroy their inner unity, and later he easily conquered them. Very little is known of the subsequent history of the Licchavis. However, though Ajatashatru defeated them and forced them to accept his sovereignty, it seems they somehow maintained their independence intact, for Kautilya speaks of them two centuries later as living under the *sangha* form of government, and even advises Chandragupta Maurya to seek help from these *sanghas*.

Again, we hear about the Licchavis at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., when Chandragupta I, founder of the Gupta Empire, married Kumara Devi, a Licchavi princess. To commemorate this occasion a golden coin was issued, bearing the inscription, *Licchaviayah*. With this evidence is combined the significant fact that the great Samudragupta, the son of Chandragupta I, in his Allahabad pillar inscription, takes pride in describing himself as a 'Licchavi *dauhitra*'. These facts justify the view that probably in about the fourth century A.D., when the Guptas rose to their highest power, the Licchavis also possessed considerable political power in north-east India and probably helped the development of the glory and power of the Gupta Empire.

References

1. J. P. Sharma, *Republics In Ancient India, c. 1500-500 B.C.*, (Leyden 1968), Chapter IV.
2. As quoted by J. P. Sharma, *op. cit.*
3. *Political History of Ancient India* (Calcutta 1953), 122-3.
4. J. P. Sharma, *op. cit.*
5. *ibid.*
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid.*
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*
10. (Bombay 1968), 333.
11. *ibid.*

Pilgrimage to Belur Math

INDU RAMCHANDANI

IT WAS a historical pilgrimage as 10,000 people from various parts of the world converged on Calcutta and made their way to Belur Math. Each one of us was keyed up to a very high pitch of anticipation and excitement, as we were delegates to the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention, held from the 23rd to 29th December 1980.

On the banks of the holy Ganga and on the vast lawns of the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was erected a mammoth, very artistically designed, *pandal*. Saffron, brown and white were the colours used and at the head of a colossal dias were huge portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. These life-like pictures created the fascinating vision of their omnipresence.

There was no caste or creed, no rich or poor. We were all brothers and sisters, the children of our beloved father, Sri Ramakrishna. Deliberations were conducted in English but such was the fervour and enthusiasm, that many old ladies who could not understand the English language had wanted to be delegates, just to be able to mingle with 'the children of Sri Ramakrishna'. Over 1,500 volunteers, hundreds of organizers and months of planning were the pillars of this fantastic infrastructure.

Every morning and afternoon all of us sat facing the dias and listened in rapt attention to many fine orators. All the sessions were further sanctified by the presence of revered President Maharaj Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji. It was always a poignant moment when this frail and slight person alighted from the car and ascended the dias. The impact of his personality was electrifying. On either side of President Maharaj were seated many revered Swamis, the members of the executive committee of the Convention, and esteemed speakers. Facing the dias, on one side, sat the revered *sannyasinis* and *brahmacharinis* of Sri Sarada Math and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. Among them sat revered President Mataji Pravrajika Mokshapranaji.

Each session was a unique experience. The depth of philosophy and yet the simplicity and sincerity of the speeches delivered swept

Indu Ramchandani is an editor at Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, Delhi.

each listening heart to the highest peak of attention. I therefore want to share with all of you some excerpts of the speeches of the many learned men and women.

23.12.80

In his inaugural address, President Maharaj brought home the unfortunate but true aspect of the modern day situation:

'In every society we find that conditions are very low from the standpoint of morals and ethics. . . . For an honest and upright man it has become increasingly difficult to live in such an environment. . . . We often hear that our decadence is because of religion, but Swami Vivekananda says quite the opposite. He says our decadence is because of our not following religion in its true sense. According to Sri Ramakrishna, religion means realization or direct experience of the ultimate Truth.'

President Maharaj put great emphasis on Sri Ramakrishna's teaching, 'serve *jiva* as Shiva'—the selfless service of mankind.

In his welcome address, Swami Hiranmayananda, the President of the Convention Committee, said 'Renunciation, non-violence and self-sacrifice are the only ways to follow. . . . Do not attack other religions, and accept no attack on yours.'

The evening session on the first day covered the topic, **The Ramakrishna Movement**. It was described as the dynamic force which had been put into action for the improvement and uplift of humanity, especially the exploited and downtrodden. The manifold aims included vigorous efforts to propagate the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji throughout the world, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many.

Pravrajika Shraddhaprana, the Assistant Secretary of Sri Sarada Math, spoke on the place and role of Sri Sarada Math in the Ramakrishna movement.

24.12.80

The Sangha: In the eighteenth century 'reason' was a prisoner of dogma. Gradually it found a fuller and freer expression—and in the nineteenth century this freedom to reason became so intense that the very existence of God was questioned. At this dismal time came a glowing power in the form of Sri Ramakrishna. An 'avatar' for the

good of humanity. Many aspirants came to him, one by one, and it was these aspirants who formed the *Sangha*, the Order. For the householders in the *Sangha*, Swamiji had emphasized the importance of ethical, moral and principled behaviour. 'Recognize divinity in every living being', he said.

The same evening the important topic of **Practical Vedanta** was discussed. The mighty vision of the Upanishads is that man is essentially divine. Swami Ranganathananda, one of the leading exponents of Vedanta and among the finest orators in India today, reiterated that Swami Vivekananda aspired to bring this vision to all. The need of the Age, said Swami Ranganathananda, is to realize what religion is. Religion is not rituals and dogma, it is not static piety, it is dynamic spirituality. We must grow spiritually in our lives and actions. Spiritual growth transcends the ego and goes beyond. Religion is not a partial affair. Spiritual growth must be aspired for at every moment. Practical Vedanta means inner and outward emancipation of man. Meditation and renunciation must go hand in hand with action. Once again, of paramount importance is the selfless service of mankind.

25.12.80

On Christmas Day, in an open session at the Netaji Stadium in Calcutta, **The Message of Sri Ramakrishna** was brought to an enthralled audience of over 15,000 people. Dr. Karan Singh, one of the many respected speakers, cautioned:

'While on the one hand, science can wipe out disease, illiteracy, poverty and hunger, on the other hand the same power can annihilate the entire race. There is strife, anger and animosity prevalent in the human heart today. Knowledge grows, but within the man, wisdom languishes.'

The message of Sri Ramakrishna to entire humanity has three aspects—the divinity of man, the concept that the service of man is the service of God; the unity of religion, the Truth is One.

Sister Gargi,* as she spoke of the message of Sri Ramakrishna,

* Marie Louise Burke, author of two substantial volumes : *Swami Vivekananda in America, New Discoveries* and *Swami Vivekananda, His Second Visit to the West, New Discoveries*.

warned that science and technology can be disastrous in the hands of the man who sees everything outwardly. This 'ordinary' and 'outward' man gives way to anger. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came to destroy this 'ordinary' man and give birth to the 'true spiritual man'.

26.12.80

The Swamis and delegates discussed the **Activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in India** in the morning session.

A thought-provoking session on **Inter-religious Understanding** was held in the evening at the Netaji Stadium. Sri Ramakrishna, who had actually walked the paths of different religions, has been the greatest exponent of inter-religious understanding. All religions speak the same language but in different ways. The Hindu emphasizes the essential divinity of man; the Christian says Jesus condemns hypocrites and parasites and offers his love and compassion to people who, by the norms of society, are considered 'bad'; Allah is the Lord of the poor, says Islam; the ultimate goal is divine union, says Mahavira, the teacher of Jainism; the Buddha says, 'Awaken from the world of dreams which cause pain and face the Truth; every Jew carries his religion within him. He strongly believes that corporate responsibility is the need of every community; the unity of mankind and the universality of man is the message of the Sikh gurus; the prophet Zoroaster says real happiness is found through the happiness of others. In his presidential address, Swami Lokeswarananda summed up by saying:

'Religion has a few principles in its core—sincerity, piety, honesty, service, humility and truth. There is basically one religion, but it has many interpretations. Acceptance and not mere tolerance, is the essence of inter-religious understanding.'

27.12.80.

In the morning some of the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order spoke on **Our Work Outside India**.

In the evening were discussed the **Problems Before the Ramakrishna Organization**. The Sangha, which has developed considerably in the last eighty-three years of its existence, has had to face opposition, indifference and even bitter criticism at various stages of its emergence and development. But to balance these

adverse factors there has been tremendous support and admiration from friends in all corners of the world. The spirit behind each gesture of the Organization is service and love for the Master. The motto is to achieve the complete emancipation of man from hunger, misery, illiteracy and frustration. The major problems are shortage of funds and manpower. The great need of services for the upliftment of our people demands many helping hands. All devotees and admirers, friends and supporters of the Order must come forward and help, in any little way.

29.12.80.

The Role of Devotees and Friends: Many speakers stressed that we should be strong in character and religious fervour. Practise in life the doctrines of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. A true devotee must have his or her mind fixed on God all the time. Everything else will just come naturally for one who devotes his or her life to the love of the Master. Swami Prabhananda said that the ideals before the devotee are: devotion to the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna, service to God in man—*Nara-Narayana*, loyalty to the *Sangha* and self-realization. The life-style of devotees should be pure and full of sacrifice and service. 'Most of us behave as if our spiritual activity ends with initiation. Actually that is the beginning!', reminded a devotee.

In the valedictory addresses, the speakers put into words the feelings that were in each heart. Swami Vandanananda said:

'Let us hold on to the experience of the Convention. It must instill in each heart the feeling that we are a wave of an Ocean (the *Sangha*). The change for the better must show on the face, in the actions, in day to day life. Carry no notions of limitations and yet do not be arrogant.'

Swami Smaranananda asserted, 'Swamiji said we should devote our lives to liberation and renunciation of self. The message of the Master needs to be actualized.'

President Maharaj, in the final session, reminded us that:

'It is incumbent on all of us to spread the knowledge of this great ideal, the Message. . . . In our society there are various failings which have to be rectified if we are to be a great nation again. Untouchability and the dowry system must be wiped out. Homes

need to be found for orphans. Women can play a significant role in this sphere. The country faces many social and hygienic problems. We must work towards the solution of all these.'

Thus ended a phenomenal, unforgettable and sacred experience. As each one of us left Belur Math and fanned out in different directions, we carried in our hearts the sanctity of a seven-day sojourn with Reality. As we stepped back again into the 'unreal', the life around us, there was in each heart a silent prayer, 'May this be the beginning of a sincere effort to be a better human being'.

SRI SARADA MATH & RAMAKRISHNA SARADA MISSION

SRI SARADA MANDIRAM

1927-1981

SRI SARADA MANDIRAM, situated at the foot of the Vilangan Hill in the suburbs of the town of Trichur in Kerala, is the largest institution under Sri Sarada Math. Started in 1927 by Swami Tyagiswarananda of the Ramakrishna Order as a tiny hostel for Harijan girls it was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur in 1929 as a wing of the local Ramakrishna Ashrama. Girls dedicated to a life of service and renunciation joined the institution as teachers and a monastic section began to grow. Various activities were conducted by the Ashrama which gradually developed and in June 1968 the Ramakrishna Math authorities handed over the institution to Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta. The different departments are housed in their own buildings which are spread over an area of fifteen acres.

The following is a brief account of the activities of the different departments:

Sri Sarada Mandiram. The small Harijan girls' hostel, started first in a rented house, soon began to attract educated girls fired with a zeal for service and a sense of sacrifice and renunciation inspired by the ideals and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Slowly a band of dedicated girls joined the Ashrama as the future *sannyasinis* of the Ramakrishna Order.

Sri Sarada Girls' High School: The local Ramakrishna Ashrama ran a school which had a girls' section also. In 1962 the girls' section (classes V to X) was separated and transferred to a new building in

the Sarada Mandiram compound. It has at present 1,339 pupils on the rolls.

Balika Gurukulam: The hostel for the school girls which provides a life of discipline based on devotion to God, service to man and intellectual development, at present houses 135 girls.

Nursery School: Started in 1957 the nursery school has a daily attendance of 55 children. It is well equipped with apparatus for the children's development in study and play.

Sanskrit Education: The girls and teachers of the school are given coaching in Sanskrit in an effort to prepare them for higher Sanskrit studies.

Charkha Class: Started in April 1979 to provide job opportunities for local girls, the Charkha class now trains nearly 30 girls to spin on New Model spinning wheels under the guidance of the Kerala State Khadi Association.

Typewriting Class: A typewriting class for the girls coming from the neighbouring village has been started recently. At present there are only 6 typewriters for the students to practise. More machines are needed to prepare the girls for the Lower and Higher Typewriting Examinations both in English and Malayalam.

Agriculture and Dairy Farming: The institution has its own agricultural section which cultivates paddy, coconut, cashew, tapioca, plantain and grazing grass and a vegetable garden. The dairy provides all the milk necessary for the Ashrama as well as the hostel.

Besides the Headquarters at Dakshineswar, Calcutta, the other Centres of the Math and Mission are the following:

Math Branches

Tamil Nadu

Sri Sarada Math, at 7, Raghaviah Road, Madras-600 017, was started in 1965.

Maharashtra

Sri Sarada Math, at 114, Parvati Vithalwadi Road, Pune-411 030, was started in 1975.

Karnataka

Sri Sarada Math, at 37, IVth Main Road, Malleswaram, Bangalore -560 003, was started in 1975.

Retreat Centres

The Math has two Retreat Centres, one in Varanasi and the other in Haridwar.

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission***West Bengal***

The Headquarters at Dakshineswar runs a homoeopathic dispensary, a free school for girls over sixteen, a library and reading room, and a free school (up to class IV) for poor children.

Sister Nivedita Girls School, at 5, Nivedita Lane, Calcutta-700 003, was started in 1902 by Sister Nivedita (Magaret E. Noble). It was handed over by the Ramakrishna Mission to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in 1963.

Matribhavan, a maternity hospital at 7A, Sree Mohan Lane, Calcutta-700 026, was started by the Ramakrishna Mission in 1950. It was handed over to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in 1961.

The Ashrama, at P.22, C. I. T. Road, Entally, Calcutta-700 014, was opened in 1956 as a branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission. It was handed over to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in 1961.

Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, at 33, Nayapatty Road, Dum Dum, Calcutta-700 055, a partly residential Arts College for girls, was started in 1961.

Shiksha Mandir, at 134, Baruipara Lane, Calcutta-700 035 was started in 1962. It conducts a School-Mothers' Training Centre with Pre-Basic and Junior Basic Schools.

Delhi

The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, at C-8A, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-110 016, was started in 1970. It carries on educational, cultural and spiritual activities among women and children.

Arunachal Pradesh

The Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, at P.O. Khonsa Tirap District -786 630, was started in 1973. It runs a High School for tribal as well as local girls. All the tribal girls are accommodated in hostels attached to the School. It carries on other cultural and charitable activities also among tribal women and children.