



SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta-700 076

No. 6, September 1982

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SAMVIT

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III 4

Universal Prayers

शिवेन वचसा त्वा गिरिशाच्छ वदामसि ।

यया नः सर्वमिज्जयदयक्ष्म सुमता अस्त ॥

Oh Shiva, the Lord who stays in Kailas, we pray to Thee. May we attain Thee by propitiatory hymns. Make Thou this world of ours free from sickness. Make it benevolent.

Shukla Yajur Veda XVI.4.

असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।

मृत्योर्मा मृतं यमय ।

Lead me from the unreal to the Real. Lead me from darkness to Light. Lead me from death to Immortality.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.iii.28.

REFLECTIONS

From Knowledge to Enlightenment

SAMVIT IS the knowledge that leads to enlightenment. What is that knowledge? The Vedic Rishis spent their lives searching for an answer to this question. Their contemplations recorded in the Upanishads show that though they travelled by different paths, they reached the same conclusion, namely, among all sciences, the knowledge about the Absolute Self is the highest science as it leads to enlightenment.

The questions again are, what is the science of the Absolute Self? How does one gain it and from where does one start? Who is fit to communicate this knowledge, and who to acquire it? A story in the *Chandogya Upanishad* answers all these points.

Once Narada, a learned Rishi, approached Sanat Kumara, a knower of Brahman, and said :

‘O Revered Sir, teach me.’

‘Relate what you know. I will then teach you further.’

‘O Revered Sir, I have studied the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the fourth *Atharva Veda*, and the fifth Itihasa (legends) and Purana (ancient history), grammar, and the rules for the propitiation of the Manes. I have learnt the sciences of number, treasures, fortunetelling, divisions of time, logic, polity, etymology, phonetics, rituals, prosody, demonology, archery, astrology and snake-charming. I have also learnt fine arts such as making essences, dramatics, vocal and instrumental music, sculpture, architecture and so on. All this I know, O Venerable Teacher.’

How many branches of knowledge can an individual master in a lifetime? Narada, indeed, seems to be a learned man, for he has a great fund of knowledge. But what has he gained by this acquisition of knowledge? Has he got the peace and happiness that everyone desires? No, he has not. For he humbly tells the enlightened one :

‘I am a knower of the *mantras*, verbal texts, only, not a knower of the Self. I have heard from persons like you that he who is a knower of the Self, goes beyond sorrow. But I am in a state of grief.’

'It is true that up till now you have only the knowledge of words', replied Sanat Kumara.

Words remain mere words if they cannot convey the spirit behind them. The knowledge thus gained becomes informative, but not formative. The Rishis were aware of the world around them. They saw the world of their everyday experience, and they were seized with the desire to know it. Through observation, investigation and study they first learnt about the external world in all its aspects. Their attitude was one of worship and prayer, which led them to an understanding beyond the fund of knowledge they had garnered. Narada was a learned man, but Sanat Kumara was a man of inner perception, a yogi, who had communicated with the Truth behind the mysteries of the universe.

Narada had reached a stage when he understood that the vast fund of worldly knowledge that he had acquired was not in the least essential for the knowledge of the Real Self. This understanding made him a worthy pupil. He humbly asked the Teacher :

'Is there anything higher than Words?'

'Certainly.'

'Will the Revered One deign to tell me about it?'

'Yes. Speech is greater than Words.'

The Fourteen Steps

Sanat Kumara does not start his instruction by talking of something abstract. Reasoning 'from the known to the unknown' is the principle of education, and he follows it. How the study of words can make transcendental wisdom blossom forth is his subject matter, and he proceeds step by step. From the first step of verbal knowledge through thirteen more steps the pupil is led on. The second to seventh steps are on the mental level. They are Speech (*vak*), Mind (*mana*), Will (*samkalpa*), Reflection (*chitta*), Meditation (*dhyana*), and Understanding (*vijnana*).

Speech is the first manifestation of the power of words. It makes known what is right and wrong, what is true and false, what is good and bad. Higher than Speech is Mind, because what the mind thinks is uttered in speech. Mind encompasses both word and speech. Only when the mind desires, does one learn or act. Higher than the fluctuating mind is the Principle of Determination, the Will. It tells the mind

what is fit and what is not. Reflection relates the things of the past and future with the present. The power of thought is sharpened by reflection. When thought is concentrated, it becomes Meditation. It raises man from the ordinary level to greatness. Such a man gets the power of doing what he desires. Meditation leads to Understanding, that is, the point when theoretical knowledge changes into practical wisdom.

Till man understands this, he has only the knowledge of words. Understanding gives meaning to words and hence is creative. Creativeness gives man Power (*bala*) which is the eighth step in the ladder. This power is the intellect's reserve of strength and also its physical energy.

The uniqueness of the Upanishadic teaching is that at no stage does it overlook the requirements for the full growth or evolution of man. All the aspects of growth—physical, psychic and spiritual—are given equal importance. That is why perhaps the Rishi now changes the emphasis from the mental plane to the physical plane. 'A healthy mind in a healthy body', is a trite saying. Proper nutrition is supplied by food, hence the ninth to the twelfth steps are the *Maha-bhutas*, the gross elements that build up the physical body of man with all its sense-organs. Food (*anna*) gives nutrition to man and it is dependent on earth, the first basic gross-element. Water (*apa*) helps the food-crops; Fire (*tejas*) in the form of heat and lightning precedes rain, and Ether with Air (*akasha*) is the cause of fire.

From these grosser spheres of varied physical and mental activities, the teacher now leads the learner to the subtle psychic scale. Hence the thirteenth and fourteenth steps are Memory (*Smara*) and Desire or Aspiration (*Asha*). The sense-organs of knowledge (*jnana-indriyas*) are the instruments by which man cognizes the world, but would the sense-organs be efficient or active if Memory and Aspiration were not there? No, so the Rishi says :

'Without memory no one would hear, think or understand. Of a truth, through the nourishment of desire only, memory becomes active.'

The Difficult Ascent

Aspiration is the power behind the full development of all the other powers mentioned in the thirteen preceding steps. But even this is only a spoke in the wheel. Which is the nave that puts in motion

man's entire body-mind organism? The Rishi says:

'*Prana* surely is greater than aspiration. Just as the spokes of the wheel are fastened to the nave, so is all this fastened to *Prana*.'

Prana gives man animation and vitality. While *Prana* continues to move in the body, a man is called 'living'; when it goes, he is called 'dead'. It is the visible sign of life in man. That is why he mistakenly identifies himself with it saying, 'I am *Prana*'. Narada also experiences this, and becomes contented and quiet. The teacher, however, knows that so far he has covered only the indirect path of investigation; now he has to tread the direct path of realization. So, though Narada does not ask further questions, Sanat Kumara tells him about the higher values of life that will help him in his difficult spiritual ascent.

'You have to understand more. Truth is to be enquired into. When one knows the Truth, he speaks the truth; the ignorant does not speak the truth. When he has zeal to understand the Truth, he knows the Truth. He who is unwilling does not know the truth; the zealous alone knows the Truth.'

On a lower plane, man can take quick and long strides, but on the dizzy Himalayan heights, he has to take careful and slow steps. So has the spiritual aspirant to proceed slowly now in learning the final stages, not of development but, the unfoldment or liberation of the spirit imprisoned within. These values are Truth (*satya*), Zealous Understanding (*mati*), Faith (*shraddha*), Steadfastness (*nishtha*) and Action (*kriti*).

Truth is co-ordination between thought, word and deed. The zeal to understand is called *mati*. But how is it that the zeal to understand does not last long? In the beginning zeal waxes strong; but gradually it wanes. Why? Again, man knows the Truth, speaks the Truth, but does not act up to it. Why? The answer is that though the will is there, there is no volition. The teacher, therefore, offers two crutches to the limping zeal of man, Faith (*shraddha*) and Steadfastness (*nishtha*). There is a subtle difference between these two values. Shankara defines Faith as belief in the existence of Truth (शस्तिस्त्वबुद्धिः); and Steadfastness as service rendered with reverence to the enlightened Teacher, (बुद्ध्यास्तुत्यादित्वात्). The Upanishads lay much stress on the fact that the knowledge of the Self has to be transmitted through a

worthy teacher. Hence steadfast service to the teacher is considered an important step to the realization of the Absolute Truth.

Man's final act of fulfilment is in his Action (*kṛiti*). This principle of dynamic activity is the keystone of the Upanishadic teachings. What is learnt, has to be put into practice. To emphasize this, the Rishi tells the worthy pupil:

'When one acts, then alone does one become steadfast. Only by activities does one become steadfast.'

Enlightenment

It is only through action that all the potential powers of man become dynamic; the doors of all the great powers of the intellect and the perceptions of the heart open—and the first ray of enlightenment breaks through. This leads to rejoicing, Felicity (*sukha*). But this happiness is limited, finite, petty, when 'I' predominates. It is the inclusion of 'all' into that 'I', that real unlimited joy is experienced. That is *Bhuman*. Explaining this, Sanat Kumara tells Narada:

'That which is infinite is alone happiness. There is no happiness in anything finite. The Infinite alone is happiness. But one must understand the Infinite.'

Shankara defines *Bhuman* as 'greatness without limit' (निरतिशयबहुः), the glorious and joyous consciousness of being. It is beyond all attributes and characteristics of worldly existence, it cannot be cognized by the mind. Ordinarily, in the principle of cognition the three elements are the knower and the object of knowing which are related to knowledge. But this division does not exist in the *Bhuman*. So Narada naturally asks :

'Where does the *Bhuman* reside?'

In other words, in what is that infinite joy established? The teacher clinches the issue by an answer which is equally enigmatic.

'It resides in its own glory. Or not even in its own glory.'

Every step needs a higher support, which forms its basis. Narada's question is therefore relevant. *Bhuman* does not need any extraneous support. It rests in its own glory. Or, to take a higher view, if *Bhuman*, which is Infinite, needs a support, there would result the logical fallacy of *ad infinitum*. *Bhuman* is self-supporting. Its glory

also is only the manifestation of its existence. Therefore it has no support. Enlightenment does not need anything to light it. Thus *Bhūman* or the Infinite is *A-dvāita* and does not need a second. To put it in Sanat Kumara's words:

'In which one sees nothing else, one hears nothing else, one understands nothing else. It is the same as the *Atman*. He, therefore, who knows the *Atman* confronts not death, nor disease, nor does he meet with pain and suffering.'

This is the knowledge of the Absolute Self—the path beyond darkness in other words, *Samvit*, the knowledge that leads to enlightenment.

Lila the Cosmic Play

DEVI MENON

'INTO THIS world and why not knowing . . .
Nor whither like water willy nilly flowing . . .
Nor whence '

So Khayam wrote and this is true today as it was when the world was created. Throughout the history of mankind, from the advent of man on this earth right up to this atomic age, the thinking man has cogitated on this almost insoluble problem as to the why and wherefore of his being, the reason for his becoming and the necessity for his dying. Why, why, why? Why was I born? Why do I live? Why should I die? These are the three 'whys' which have tantalized the brain of all mankind in all ages. Cogitate as he might, even his fertile imagination has failed to give a truly satisfying answer. Puniest of creatures, yet man has overcome the rigours of nature and clung on to life even though creatures far superior to him in size and strength have been completely wiped off the face of the earth. In the race for survival, brains have proved to be far superior to brawn. Dissatisfied with the earth which he thinks he has already conquered and subdued, man is stretching forth his tentacles to forage in space . . . and for what? For a means of livelihood perhaps, for he is fast overrunning his space

on earth, or perhaps to locate untapped sources of energy. But more than that it is to satisfy his unlimited curiosity. Like the proverbial cat, he has an infinite capacity for imbibing knowledge, and an unquenchable thirst for adventure. And the why and wherefore of his own existence having eluded him, he wants at least to find out the why and wherefore of cosmic existence. What makes this mighty machine tick? What are those planets made of, who lives on them?—the questions are numerous. So, even at the risk of his own life, he sets out to explore outer space, unknown seas and unscalable mountains. But what about the uncharted sea of his own existence which he has so far failed to discover? Try as he might he cannot find the answer. All philosophies and religions bring out their own pet theories, but most of them fail to convince.

Advaita Vedanta—the way of life, the goal of life—gives us Brahman, the immutable, the eternal, the ineffable One without a second. What reason does he have to manifest? How did the non-dual become dual? The Samkhya philosophy postulates Purusha and Prakriti, the dual cause of creation—Purusha the inactive. Prakriti the active; Purusha the pure conscious being, and Prakriti the energy; Purusha doing nothing, but reflecting the action of Prakriti and its processes. Again why should he reflect? From where comes the intelligent will and necessity for creation? The philosophy of Advaita is the most appealing to the intelligence, but it also balks at asking why the Unmanifest should manifest. And therefore it gives the Mayavada or theory of cosmic illusion. Only He exists; everything else is illusion. Once we grasp the magician, the magic melts away. Once we see the rope, the snake glides away into the nothingness from which it came. One reality, two realities, many realities : the answers are numerous. No wonder Buddha disdained to give any theory about this. Why worry our heads about these things? he asked. One thing we know, we are sure of, and that is, we are here now and we are suffering. Let us therefore try to find a loop-hole and get out of this into the life immortal. After a vain search of a whole lifetime most of us also come to the same conclusion.

The Divine and His Manifestations

But once the head has given up the question in disgust, the heart takes over and tries its own pet theories as to why the Lord manifests

Himself. That is why the Puranas which are the outpourings of the devotees' hearts give us the sweetest and one of the most credible of the theories to answer, 'Why this manifestation?' It is His *lila*, they say. His play—the cosmic play. The Lord Vishnu lying on the serpent Shesha, with Lakshmi, his consort at his feet, with waves of milk lapping around him, extolled by countless sages, ever immersed in bliss, was bored, to say the very least. He was just tired of this blissful existence and decided to incarnate himself to enjoy his creation. This is the story of the *avatares* of the Lord. But what of the manifestations of all *jivas*? Why do they come?

For this we have to go to the *Gita* which gives a clearer picture and synthesis of both the Samkhya-Yoga and the Vedanta and gives us the theory of the three Purushas, the Kshara, the perishable, the Akshara, the Imperishable and the Uttama, the Super-excellent Entity. The Akshara Purusha is the Brahman of the Vedanta, the eternal, immutable, One without a second, ever calm, never changing, perfect. The Kshara is the Purusha which is involved in Prakriti; it is mobile, mutable in nature, ever changing. The Purusha here is the multiplicity of the divine Being. It is the Purusha-multiple, not apart from but in, Prakriti. Akshara, the immobile, the immutable is the silent and active self. It is the unity of the divine Being, witness of nature but not involved in its movement. It is the inactive Purusha free from Prakriti and her works. The Uttama is the Lord, the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Self who possesses both the immutable unity and the mobile multiplicity. It is by large mobility and action of His nature, His energy, His will and power, that He manifests Himself in the world and by a greater stillness and immobility of His being that He is aloof from it. Yet He is, as Purushottama, above both the aloofness from Prakriti and the attachment to Prakriti. The idea of the Purushottama though continually implied in the Upanishads, is brought out by the *Gita* and has exercised a powerful influence on the later development of Indian religious consciousness. It is the foundation of the highest Bhakti Yoga which claims to exceed the rigid definitions of monistic philosophy. It is the backbone of the philosophy of the devotional Puranas. But where the *Gita* differs from the doctrine of dualism (*dvaita*) of the devotional lies in the fact that it affirms, like the Advaita doctrine, that the *jivatman*, the individual self and the Paramatman, the

Supreme Self, are one. The Lord, by His nature, becomes the *jiva* (मयैवांशो जीवभूतः). In other words, multiplicity is part of the spiritual nature of the One. 'The individual soul is myself,' declares the Lord to Arjuna, 'in creation it is a partial manifestation (*mamaiva-amsha*) and it possesses all my powers.' He is a witness, a giver of sanctions, the upholder, the knower, and the Lord. It descends into lower Prakriti and thinks itself bound by action. It can also draw back and know itself as the passive Purusha, free from all action. It can rise above the three *gunas* and be liberated from the bondage of action, yet possess and enjoy all actions. And, finally, by adoration of the Purushottama and union with Him it can enjoy wholly its divine stature. This is the Uttama *rahasyam*, the highest mystery, which the Lord Krishna tells his friend, devotee and cousin on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

It Is All A Play

But what about the 'why' of it all? Why does the *nitya mukta*, the ever liberated one, become *baddha*, bound? It has to be a conscious, voluntary act or else he would be less than what he is. Then why does he consciously allow himself to be bound? The sweetest and most appealing explanation appears to come from the Puranas, which are the outpourings of the human heart, melting with love for the Purushottama, its source and goal. It is His *lila* they say—the cosmic play. The very simplicity of the explanation lends it both authenticity and charm. He is the director, producer and actor in the cosmic drama. But so long as the actor knows it is only a play, his acting will be poor and there will be no enjoyment from it. The best performances are by those who have totally forgotten their true identity and have completely immersed their private personalities in the personality of the character they are portraying. So also in the cosmic drama. The Kshara Purusha has to forget his true nature and allow himself to be caught in the web of Maya if he is to completely and satisfyingly enact the different roles he is called upon to play. He is the king on the throne, he is the beggar on the streets, he is the murderer about to be hung and he is the murdered lying in the grave, and he is also the judge pronouncing judgement. He is the only enjoyer or experiencer of every experience, whether good, bad or indifferent.

The little boy pretends to be a car, a bus, a tiger in the forest and then begs his father to come and play with him. The father bends his

creaking joints and laboriously pretends to be an elephant so that his little son can climb on his back and become the *mahout*, the driver. To the father the whole thing is just a big joke. He knows all the time that he is so and so, the manager of a large firm and so on, and therefore he never enjoys the game fully, but to his little son, the drawing room has been converted into a forest in his imagination. He himself is an intrepid hunter going to shoot big game and his father, his trusted elephant, ready to do his slightest bidding. So we find the child enjoys the game fully, cries bitterly when his toy tiger gets broken, laughs hugely when the robber is caught—all because he has thoroughly identified himself with the character he is playing. Similarly the Kshara Purusha, in order to enjoy the different facets of his own vast creation, forgets his true nature and is caught in the web of the Maya of his own nature or Prakriti.

The Finale

This goes on until at last the *jiva*, after having revolved in the cosmic cycle for once at least, begins to think of the source from which it has come and to which it must one day return. The child grows up and realizes that he is really the only son of his father and that he need not cry when his toy gets broken, he has the wherewithal to go and buy a hundred such toys if necessary. The beggar realizes that he is truly the king who has been suffering unnecessarily all the time. And then the cosmic drama is ended, the actor goes to his home, which is in no other place but in himself. The curtain comes down and the actor remains in the blissful, enraptured consciousness of Himself as Sat-Chit and Ananda. This is the cosmic play, the Lord's *lila*—inexplicable, tantalizing, divine.

*'At the Beginning, I, the Omniscient One,
I am! The moving and the un-moving.
All this Creation comes into being
By the unfoldment of My power supreme.
I play with My own Maya, My Power Divine.*

Swami Vivekananda

Meditation on Death

PRAVRAJIKA VIVEKAPRANA

THE UNIVERSAL man, 'Narayana' and his *alter ego*, the individual man, 'Nara' are identical. Nara multiplies, reflected in millions of individual egos. The separation, the division, is only apparent. Nara leaves Narayana, the ocean of Universal Consciousness that is Bliss, and puts on the garb of limitation. He becomes a point of consciousness and rises to the surface of the ocean as a bubble, shining with light. He looks outward and not inward. He rides on the waves, happy when raised high to the crest and woebegone when sunk to the depth, at last to be shaken out of the security of his home—the bubble. Then a great fear arises. Death has come to the man. He asks a teacher, 'O enlightened one, O teacher of teachers, what constitutes the most important duty of a man faced with imminent death? O great one! Tell me what such a person should hear about, repeat, do, remember and worship. Also tell me what he should not do in these respects.'*

What does a man do when death chooses him? Why! He chooses death! Is there anyone who has not been favoured by death? Then why this hesitation? Stand up and welcome it as any respected guest should be honoured.

King Parikshita had been informed that as a result of his insulting a venerable sage, he had been cursed by the furious son of the Rishi that Death would visit him within a week's time. What a challenge! The curse is irrevocable. A Brahmin of great *tapas*, austerity, has spoken, his words cannot become untrue. The king renounces his kingdom and retires to the bank of the Holy Ganga and sits musing. To him come all the learned ones and he asks them to teach him a method with the help of which he can easily go beyond. One amongst them says that दान, charity, is the means, but the king has already given up his all. Another says no, यज्ञ, a sacrifice, should be performed. The

* अतः पृच्छामि संसिद्धिं योगिनां परमं गुह्यम् । पुरुषस्येह यत् कार्यं श्रियमाणस्य सर्वथा ॥
यच्छ्रोतव्यमथो जप्यं यत् कर्तव्यं नृभिः प्रभो । स्मर्तव्यं भजनीयं वा ब्रूहि यद् वा विपर्ययम् ॥

Srimad Bhagavata Purana. I.19.37,38.

third says तपस्, austerity, should do the trick. The fourth suggests that योग, yoga should be taken recourse to. But where is the time? So the king is perplexed.

Suddenly a shining form, a sage, a young man, approaches the scene and all stand up to welcome him; for here is Shukabrahma, the son of Vyasa. Who does not know Shuka who entered the world with the knowledge of Brahman!

The king welcomes him and asks, 'What should I do when death is imminent?' Shuka smiles and says, 'When death draws near one should cast off all fear of death.'*

Death is like going home. From the *little* to the *great*. Expand, leave this little point of consciousness, the body, and travel. Bring in all that is known, and beyond. Bring in the oceans, the sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies; go on and on till the whole universe is within you. Think of the millions of beings on earth, taking birth, laughing, crying, dying, all moving along with this globe on its journey round the sun. Think of the sun with its family of planets being whirled across limitless space by the galaxy of stars.

All pettiness, all fear, all limitations drop away and consciousness stands in wonder, mute, still, vibrating to the music of the spheres.

In the midst of the whirling ocean of light and energy, think of the Supreme Man lying on the coils of a thousand-headed serpent. All around is tumult. In the centre of attention is Supreme Serenity, the eye of the typhoon, utter calm, absolute peace. The centre of consciousness is a form full of beauty, Narayana, smiling a welcome. Enter and be at peace—शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

* अन्तकाले तु पुण्यः प्रापते गतसाध्यतः । छिन्द्यादसङ्गसंश्लेषं स्पृहां वेदोऽनु वे च तम् ॥

ibid., II.1.15.

Who dares misery love,

And hug the form of Death,

Dance is Destruction's dance,

To him the Mother comes.

Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda : Hope of America—II

GARGI

IF I have rightly understood Vivekananda's teachings to the West, their centre lay in his teaching of the Self—the *atman*. His reiterated definition of man as not body or mind but pure, infinite Spirit rang through his lectures like a gong—sometimes as a steady background note, sometimes—more often—as dominant thunder. One cannot but feel that this was the crux of his message, for it was precisely in the western world's almost obdurate failure to grasp the true nature of man that it had persistently failed in its reach for ultimate Truth. Western thought has always had this curious quirk. Except for occasional explorative flights, all its mainstream traditions—Hellenic, Judaic, and Christian—have persisted in seeking some ultimate meaning and purpose in the outside world—the finite world.

'Man, know thyself' has, to be sure, always been a dictum of western philosophy, but the investigation into the nature of man has consistently fallen short of his inmost depths. The Church has silenced those of its contemplative mystics who have touched the glowing centre of their own being and found it to be God; science has scoffed at any possibility of ultimate knowledge or a knowledge of absolute reality, and western philosophy has either been vague and poetic on the subject of transcendental knowledge or, following science, has discarded it as meaningless. It remained for Swami Vivekananda to place Self-knowledge (with a capital S) on a rational, scientific and empirical or experiential basis, congenial to western tradition. He explained from many angles and with closely reasoned argument the logical necessity of the unchanging Self; he discussed in detail the methods to be employed in its discovery, and, because the West automatically asked the question 'What *Good* is it?' he pointed out its utility. With prophetic urgency he insisted that western man experience for himself the indescribable wonder of his own Being. This done, all else—utility and all—would follow.

Gargi (Marie Louise Burke) has been for years closely associated with the Vedanta Society of Northern California, U. S. A. She is well known for her voluminous books, *Swami Vivekananda in America*, *New Discoveries* and *Swami Vivekananda—His Second Visit to the West*, *New Discoveries*. The first part of this article was published in *Samvit* No. 5, March, 1982.

In regard to the cultural impact of this teaching—and it is with western culture as a whole, rather than with the individual, that we are presently concerned—it is bomblike in its effect. It has, for instance, reopened and given a new turn to the great cultural highway of religion, which has been so heavily barricaded by science and secularization. As defined by Swami Vivekananda, religion in its essence is the realization and manifestation of man's own divinity. The supreme Being, which all religions seek, is the God within. He is one's Self. Viewed thus, there is no possibility of religious faith declining; there is no question of *faith* at all. There is only certainty from start to finish. Rationally, one can deny the existence of an extracosmic Creator God; one can also deny the necessity for a God immanent in nature; one can deny even Brahman—for what is to prove, short of transcendental experience, that phenomena, changing and ephemeral, are not all that exist? But one cannot deny one's own awareness; there is no possibility of such denial; indeed, this undeniable fact of self-consciousness is the only certainty in this relentlessly questioning modern age. Nothing can militate against it. And this initial certainty, pushed deeper and deeper, culminates in the supreme certainty: 'I am He. I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute.'

'Stand on your Self', Swamiji said. 'You are the veritable Gods of the universe; nay, there are not two—there is but One. It is a mistake to say, "you and I"; say "I".'

It was a bold religion. It cut through in one uncompromising fearless stroke all the paraphernalia of religious externals; all the superstitions, the rituals, the dogmas.

Vivekananda was not sorry to see the God of a crude dualism collapse under the fire of science. Let him go. 'When we have nobody to grope towards, no devil to lay our blame upon, no Personal God to carry our burdens, when we are alone responsible, then we shall rise to our highest and best. I am responsible for my fate, I am the bringer of good unto myself, I am the bringer of evil. I am the Pure and Blessed One. We must reject all thoughts that assert the contrary.'

The religion that will develop on this basis of Self-knowledge as Swamiji taught it, will be in itself strong and will inevitably give strength and energy to every aspect of human endeavour. There is no room in it for weakness or for despair. At every turn it calls to the best in man; it *demand*s the best of him and puts no limit on that best.

'There is no help for man', Swamiji thundered in San Francisco in a lecture that seemed in a sense to be the very culmination of his western teachings. 'There is no help for man. None ever was, none is, and none will be. Why should there be? Are you not men and women? Are the Lords of the earth to be helped by others? Are you not ashamed? You will be helped when you are reduced to dust. But you are spirit. Pull yourself out of difficulties by yourself! Save yourself by yourself! There is none to help you—never was. To think that there is, is sweet delusion. It comes to no good'.

This was the kind of language Americans liked to hear and could respond to. The emphasis that Swamiji placed on man as the controller of his own destiny was in perfect accord with the American temperament. No true American has ever really, in his heart of hearts, had any other notion than that he was master of his fate. He makes his fortune—in every sense of the word. He relies upon himself, he fights his own battles, he carves out his own destiny. 'Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!' became a joyous American battle cry in the Second World War precisely because the nation recognized in it its own free, self-reliant spirit. It was this spirit to which Vivekananda wanted to give real depth and permanence.

Yes, Americans could understand what Swamiji was saying. Above all, the power of his prophethood awakened a profound response. His words were far more than words; they did not bounce off the polished surface of the mind, leaving no dent. They penetrated deep down. Even if one did not at first agree with them, even if one resisted them, something within oneself nonetheless responded; something awoke that would thenceforth start pushing its way up and up to the surface. In Swamiji, the soul heard, as it were, its own voice calling to itself. Deep called unto Deep; and this is the very genesis of religion.

The Deification of the World

This kind of religion, this affirmation of one's inmost Self as the one supreme Being—whether it be followed by *bhaktas* or *jnanins* or *karma-yogins* or *raja-yogins*, or by the aspirant who combines all paths—this kind of religion can stand up victorious through all time, though the whole universe cavil against it and call it false. There is no need for despair; he who seeks *Being*, he who seeks Reality, he

who seeks Truth, has only to seek within. Here indeed is the true reconciliation of science and religion. That the limited mind can never know infinite truth is axiomatic to Advaita Vedanta. But man is *not* the limited mind; he is the Truth Itself. The light of consciousness behind the mind and the light of existence behind the stars is the same light—and That thou art! Here physics, pushed to its furthest limits, merges into metaphysics. The unity science seeks in the outside universe is the same that the mystic seeks in meditation; it is oneness of Sat-Chit-Ananda. But *realize* it, Swamiji cried. That is the goal of all science, all religion, all culture: realize the Truth; talk and symbols will never satisfy the soul.

It goes almost without saying that when man shifts the centre of his attention from his finite, powerless, and ultimately insignificant body and mind to the all-powerful Spirit, which contains within Itself all significance and all value, then the lack of faith in himself or the sense of insecurity that bedevils him becomes an absurdity. 'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man', Swamiji said in an American lecture, 'the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist'. With this conviction of his own innate divinity, how can man lack faith in his own essential goodness? Of what can he be afraid? Where can he fall? There is only joy in the struggle to become what he already is.

Further, if he himself is divine, all others are equally the same infinite and adorable Being. With this conviction, his every action becomes service, and that service is worship. Material goods and facilities at once take a subordinate place in the society of men. They become the offerings in a vast *pūja*; a great and endlessly varied festival is going on, in which every man, woman and child is being worshipped—that is all.

This deification of the world and the service of man as God Himself is a vitally important aspect of the new religion and philosophy that Vivekananda taught in the West. He read the signs of the future. 'The time has actually come', he said in 1896, 'when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching to all corners of the earth; by merely physical means we have come into touch with the whole world.' This was years before the invention of radio and television, and years before the affairs of the world became so intricately interwoven that a

single act of violence in one part of the world could trigger a catastrophic explosion somewhere else. Today there is no such thing as an isolated act. Each person must act in a way such as to help every other person; otherwise we shall blast one another out of existence. But this spirit of co-operation among all peoples of the world, a genuine, obstacle-defying concern for one's fellow man and a desire to serve him—however cantankerous he may appear—can arise from Advaita Vedanta and from that alone. For it is only in the divine depths of his own being that man is one with other men. It is only there that love can transcend all differences, all jealousies, hatreds, and pettinesses and become reverence. Indeed it is only in Advaita that truly moral action finds its *raison d'être*. 'Here, in Advaita alone is morality explained,' Swamiji often said. 'The others teach it, but cannot give you a reason.'

Even a little of this Advaita-based recognition of man as God would go far. 'If one-millionth part of the men and women who live in this world', Swamiji said in New York, 'simply sit down and for a few minutes say, "You are all God, O ye men and O ye animals and living beings, you are all the manifestations of the one living Deity!" the whole world will be changed in half an hour. Instead of throwing tremendous bomb-shells of hatred into every corner, instead of projecting currents of jealousy and evil thought, in every country people will think that it is all He.'

And here, actually, is the bedrock foundation not only of morality, but of the great American ideals of freedom and equality. It is only on the divine oneness lying at the heart of all life that those ideals can stand unshaken, and it is only from that depth that they can receive unending vitality. They have no real meaning in the relative world. The finite man is neither free from other finite men nor at one with them. The real man is eternally so.

The Challenge of this Age

But Swami Vivekananda gave his message to America in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It was after this that the American situation deteriorated. So how is it possible to say that his voice was heard and his power telling? It is quite possible. First of all, the immediate effect of his teachings was very great. Crowds went to his lectures, the lives of hundreds, indeed thousands, of people were changed by

hearing him—or just by seeing him. But his immediate success was not by any means the full measure of his influence. His words, as I have mentioned earlier, went deep, deep down into the collective consciousness of the nation. I myself do not understand how these things happen; it is enough to know that Swamiji himself often said he had planted a live seed in America and that it was bound sooner or later to fructify. And today that seed is, I believe, fructifying. Within the last twenty years or so—coincidentally, since around Swami Vivekananda's birth centenary in 1963—the whole nation has been undergoing a revolutionary change in its cultural outlook. People everywhere are demanding a religion of profound personal experience; they have got wind of that possibility. They are not ashamed—as once they were—to openly seek something deeply real. There is, granted, much that is probably ephemeral and bogus in the assorted religious movements of today; but I believe that there is also a genuine and vital spiritual search going on and that it will spread and deepen. I believe, moreover, that it will do so while there is still time.

As of today, there is, I believe, still time. There is as yet no insurmountable obstacle to the solution of our problems. There has been no paralyzing world-wide catastrophe as yet. Man is still master of his fate: the despoliation of his environment is not yet complete or irreversible; the world's population has not yet increased to unmanageable proportions; the weapons of total destruction are not yet in the sole control of some madman; the earth's present sources of energy are not yet totally depleted, nor is the possibility of replacing them with different and better sources at all remote. Various other forerunners of doomsday have not yet reached a point of no return, and man has not yet become an incurable lunatic. In other words, mankind still has time and ability to save all that it has built over so many thousands of years. But I do not think that we have *much* time. The point has arrived where man must become a *true* man, or die. We have come, as I said in the beginning, to the critical time of 'either-or'.

Swami Vivekananda wanted man to be spiritually free for his own sake; he cared for the individual; but he cared also for the whole world. Thus in bold, flaming words he gave the teaching that would give meaning and power to his every other teaching and that would spell *both* liberation for the individual and regeneration for the world. Be a man, be free; be strong! Only spiritually free and strong men and

women, taking their stand on the Self—the *atman*—can truly deify the world, can truly revere it and work in it tirelessly, without desire or fear, motivated by love alone. And only such men and women can meet the unprecedentedly terrible challenge of this age. That, I think, was one of the most urgent things Swami Vivekananda was saying to the World.

And when a prophet of his stature speaks with such urgency to a society, as he said to an American friend, 'is bound to veer round perhaps centuries after one is dead and gone.' Perhaps centuries ago—but I do not really think that Swami Vivekananda's words will take long a time to bear their fully ripened fruit.

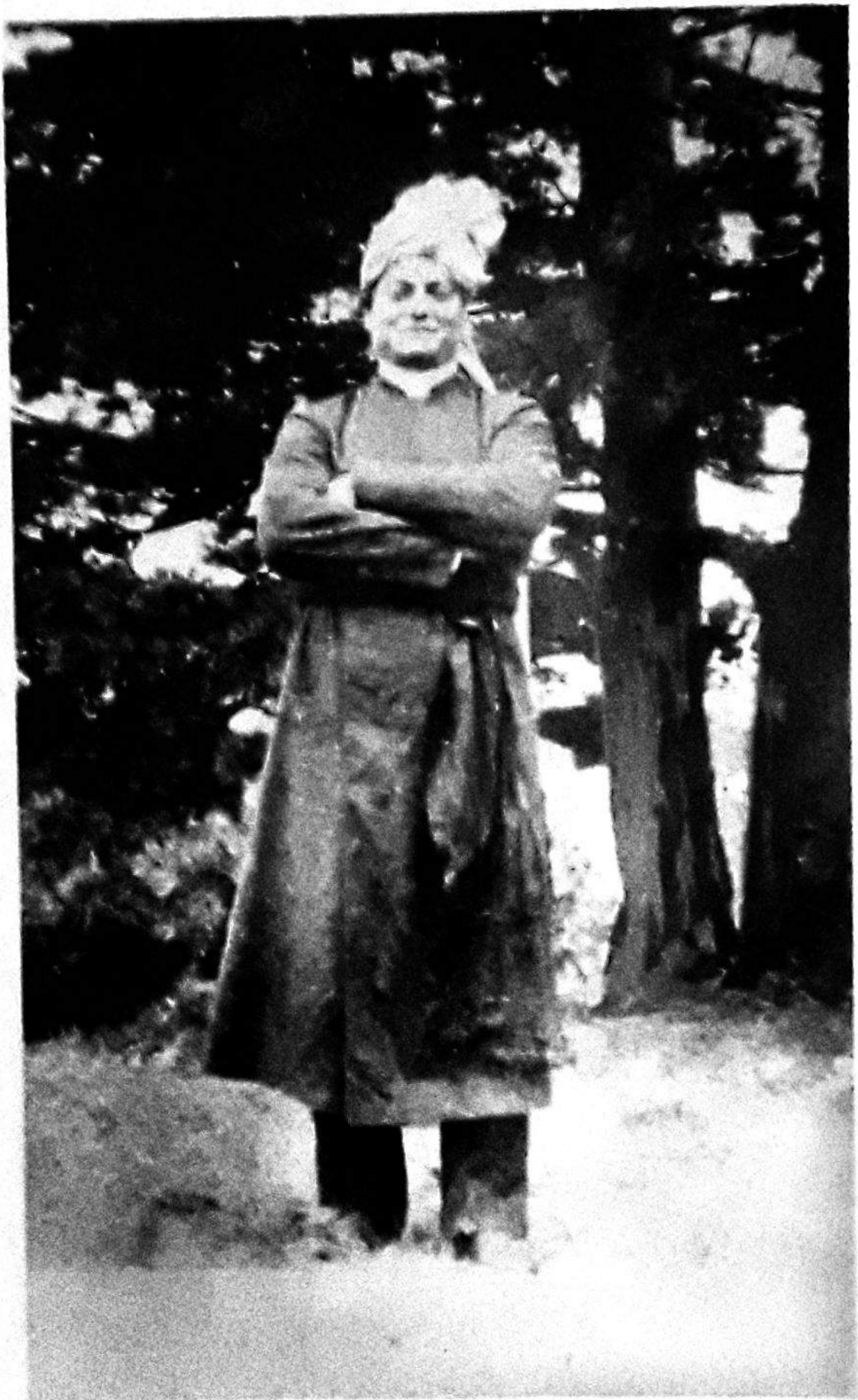
Sun Temple, Martanda

H. K. NARAIN and S. L. SHAU

THE KASHMIR valley holds a unique position in the Himalayas as it possesses extensive evidence of the continued evolution of its surface features. The valley as a whole is surrounded by an unbroken ring of mountains which give it the character of an enclosed vale. The fascination of the valley is highlighted by the level-topped *karewas*, which predominate the valley. These *karewas* have witnessed a series of palaeo-environmental and palaeo-climatical changes. They are therefore of vital importance to the economy of the region inasmuch as they contain exhaustive evidence of the cyclic phases of past glaciations as well as of human culture.

It is on one of these lofty *karewas* that the temple of the Sun at Martanda is situated. It is 68 kms. south-east of Srinagar and 8 kms. north-east of the town of Anantnag, near the modern village of Ranbirsinghpura. It commands a super-panoramic view of the valley down below, with a network of rivers, canals, lakes and snow-clad mountains in the distance.

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Swami Vivekananda in America—1894



The Martanda Temple as it stands today.



Burzahom : hunting scene showing carving of two suns with radiating rays at the top.

Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India,
Srinagar, Kashmir.

Construction of the Temple

The date of the construction of the temple has been a source of controversy among archaeologists. Kalhana in the *Rajatarangini* says Ranaditya built at the village of Simharotsika, the temple of Martanda which became famous under the name of Ranapuravamin. Most scholars, on the basis of its architecture, have attributed the construction of the temple as a whole to Lalitaditya Muktapida. Kalhana's reference in this connection is itself somewhat ambiguous and is open to doubt. The stanza has been translated as follows :

'That (King) built in the town rich in grapes, the wonderful Martanda colonnade of massive stones with the temple inside.* It assigns the usual meaning to both *prakara*, enclosure, and *prasada*, palace, and the compound described as a *bahuvrihi*, meaning 'having a temple in the interior' appears plausible. This is further supported by the following facts :

1. In the early thirties of this century, in the course of excavations at Martanda, for removal of the accumulated debris from the base of the temple, a very important fact was brought to light. This was that another temple, of somewhat smaller dimensions, had existed at this site prior to the construction of the present temple. When the new temple was built, the base of the older temple was not demolished but was enveloped by the new base. This fact is borne out by the existence of both the bases, one within the other, on the east side of the temple. The excavations also yielded a stone inscription in Sharda characters, which states that an image of the Sun-god was installed by King Avantivarman of Kashmir.
2. Probing on the external side of the enclosure wall, towards the south, confirmed the pre-temple level with associated evidence and thus supported the existence of an earlier temple which was later enlarged by Lalitaditya and enclosed within a peristyle.
3. Lalitaditya's practice of enlarging an earlier structure is also evidenced at Ushkura (ancient Huvishkapur), a city founded by the Kushan King Huvishka in the second century. Here, the surface indication of the base of the stupa had been attributed to King Lalitaditya. Quite recently, probing revealed that there had already existed a stupa prior

* शोडशविंशत्यमराकारं प्रासादात्तन्मध्यं च ।

मार्तण्डस्याद्भुतं वाता इत्या स्फोटं च पत्तनम् ॥ IV. 192.

to the visit of Hiuen Tsang (A.D. 631), and that Lalitaditya had only enlarged it.

In keeping with the above literary and archaeological evidence, it is beyond any doubt that the construction of the monument was the work not of one person alone but of three distinct rulers, Ranaditya (fifth century), Lalitaditya (A.D. 725-753) and Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883).

Description of the Temple

The temple at Martanda is a combination of art, landscape, romantic setting and delicacy. No doubt, the enlargement of the temple and erection of a colonnade bears eloquent testimony to the greatness of Lalitaditya-Muktapida. He is the most conspicuous figure in Kashmiri history. He raised the glory of his country to a height that it had never before reached. In its present form, this celebrated temple of Martanda possesses far more imposing dimensions than any other existing temple in Kashmir and is the most reliable indication of the high level of culture and civilization which Kashmir attained twelve hundred years ago.

Located within a spacious courtyard, the main temple built of immense rectilinear blocks of limestone, is raised on a high platform and consists of a *garbha-griha*, inner sanctuary, *antarala*, intermediate space and a *mandapa*, an open hall flanked by two small double chambered wings on either side. The recessed spaces between the pairs of pilasters on the enlarged part of the platform show miniature shrines shaped into trefoil niches containing images of Surya, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Parvati and other gods. The best preserved among these is the one of Surya riding on a horse, accompanied by Dandi and Pingala, his usual companions. He holds lotuses in his hands, wears long boots, a crown and ear-ornaments, and has a moustache. Access to the sanctorum, *antarala* or *mandapa* is through a staircase on the west. On the side walls of the *antarala* and *mandapa* are depicted the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, a three-headed Vishnu, with his two companions, and a bust of Prithvi between his legs, Mahadeva, twelve Adityas, Surya flanked by attendants on a chariot with the charioteer Aruna holding the reins of seven horses. The sculptured motifs of the *Vidyadharas*, *Kinnaras*, classes of semi-divine beings, lotuses, birds and so on, may also be seen.

In front of the two double-chambered wings, the northern and

southern walls of the *mandapa* each provide a doorway leading to the platform outside. These chapels contain two niches which face east and west respectively. Probably they indicate the rising and setting of the sun.

The open courtyard around the temple must have originally been paved with stone slabs, as some of them still survive in places. There is a small tank in front of the stairs which give access to the temple. The tank was fed by water brought through a stone channel passing from a canal on the hillside behind the enclosure wall of the temple. Lalitaditya is said to have opened a network of canals over the plateau which later on was further developed by Zain-ul-Abdin (A.D. 1440-72). The canal at the back is still known as 'Martanda Canal' and also 'Shah Kul'.

The peristyle is the largest example of its kind in Kashmir. In the middle of its larger side there is a pair of large fluted pillars, somewhat projected beyond the line of the other cells. The quadrangle carries seventy cylindrical fluted pillars and ten rectangular parallel pillars, which, with the four pillars of the central porches, gave eighty-four cells sacred to the sun. These cells contained various images of the Hindu pantheon. The horizontal mouldings of the pediments were ornamented with human-headed birds facing each other, and a smaller bird looking to the front. In the middle of the quadrangle is an imposing gateway. It is of the same width as the temple itself and resembles it in the disposition of its parts and in the elevation of its pediments and pilasters. It is double-chambered, forming inner and outer porticoes by cross-walls, with a doorway in the centre which was, no doubt, closed with a wooden door. The walls of the gateway are profusely ornamented, internally and externally, carrying rows of double pedimented niches alternating with rectangular panels. These contained motifs of birds, floral scrolls, and pairs of geese. Each of the large niches in the side walls of the inner channel contained tall figures of three-headed Vishnu standing in the company of attendants. The upper tier of the triangular roof carries a flying *vidyadhara* and above the roof is a frieze of rejoicing *ganas*, a class of demi-gods, attending Shiva. The temple has four subsidiary shrines at four corners like the ones we come across at the Avantiswami temple built by Avantivarman. These appear to have been built later than the main temple.

Worship of the Sun

Such was one of the most magnificent buildings dedicated to the worship of the Sun. Martanda or Surya, the visible celestial luminary, was regarded from very early times as a source of protection. The presence of two suns with their rays shining down on a hunting scene (1200-1300 A.C.), obtained from excavations at Burzahom in the district of Srinagar in Kashmir—a unique neolithic settlement of its kind—leads us to the conclusion that our ancestors in the neolithic age also looked to the sun for their day-to-day subsistence. The Shakas and Kushanas who ruled over Kashmir in the early centuries of the Christian era regarded the sun as a popular deity. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who came to Kashmir during the period of Karakotas (A.D. 627-939) maintained that the rulers of the dynasty were the worshippers of Vishnu, Shiva and Surya. Lalitaditya is said to have erected the shrine of Aditya at Lalitaditya (the present Latpur) on the right bank of the Vitasta. Though no ancient remains could be traced here above ground at present, the ruins of the enlarged temple of Surya under the name of Martanda still survive. Sun-worship continued to be in vogue even after the death of Lalitaditya.

Suravarma II (A.D. 939) proceeded on the seventh day of the bright half of *Ashadha* to visit the Sun-god, Jayasvamin. The day is still celebrated by Kashmiris in honour of the Sun-god by laying out in various colours the motif of the Sun-god with radiating rays in the compound or on the ground floor of their houses. King Kalasha (A.D. 1063-89), probably due to financial difficulties, destroyed the well-known copper image of Surya, Tamrasvamin. It is said that subsequently blood came from King Kalasha's nose and his health waned due to the continual flow of blood. In his belief that the Sun-god was angered by the destruction of Tamrasvamin, he started for Martanda to pay homage and presented a golden image at the god's feet. Knowing his father's fate on the destruction of the image of Sun-god, his son Harsha (A.D. 1089-1101) spared the sacred image of Martanda when he ruthlessly destroyed all the other divine images.

The Splendour of Martanda

About one mile to the north-west of the temple lie the sacred springs of the Martanda Tirtha, a sacred water tank, (the modern Mattan being but a corruption of the Sanskrit 'Martanda') which has to the

present day remained as one of the celebrated places of pilgrimage in the valley. A reference in the *Martanda-Mahatmya*, a hymn to Martanda, connects the springs with the story of the Sun from the lifeless egg (*mart-anda*) which Aditi, the wife of Kashyapa, brought forth as her thirteenth child. The *Nilamata Purana* (A.D. 500 or 600) also mentions the Tirtha of Martanda as sacred to the god Surya.

The splendid temple of Martanda, though in ruins, not only reminds us of the glory and prosperity of the people but of the faith and adoration these kings and their people had for the Sun-god. The style of the sculptures, bold trefoil arches, stupendous walls, elegant arcades, and the loveliness of the enchanting decorations at Martanda rank it as one of the noblest amongst the architectural relics of antiquity to be seen in any country. It no doubt carries something of the rigidity and strength of the Egyptian temples and something of the solemnity of Egyptian buildings. Though distinctively Kashmiri, it differs from the usual Hindu type and bears the influence of the Gandhara style. The sculptures, according to Marshal, show a close connection with the typical Hindu work of the late Gupta period. Sir Francis Younghusband has remarked,

‘But it is at Martand that there is the finest, and as it is not only typical of Kashmir architecture at its best, but is built on the most sublime site occupied by any building in the world,—finer far than the site of the Parthenon, or of the Taj, or of St. Peters, or of the Escorial,—we may take it as the representative, or rather the culmination of all the rest, and by it we must judge the people of Kashmir at their best.’¹

In short, this great temple of the Sun at Martanda became the model for all subsequent Brahminical temples of Kashmir.

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Yoga, the Path of Meditation

K. BHARADWAJ

THE PATH of meditation has eight stages; and is therefore termed *ashtanga-yoga*. These stages are : discipline, higher discipline, physical postures for meditation, control of the breath, control of the senses, concentration of the mind, meditation and ecstasy or *samadhi*

Discipline

The first stage, discipline (*yama*), has the following five parts :

1. Non-violence (*ahimsa*)

To inflict an injury on an innocent being is *himsa*. It may be done directly through one's own limbs, hands, feet or through one's teeth or, indirectly, through an instrument such as a sword, a bullet or by administering poison, and so on. The avoidance of such injuries is *ahimsa*. All vicious and violent acts are opposed to this concept, except in cases where they are resorted to in defending oneself from vindictive, aggressive opposition. *Ahimsa* is considered by saintly people to be the highest duty : (अहिंसा परमो धर्मः). One should not kill living beings. (मा हिंस्यात् सर्वभूतानि). The practice of *ahimsa* generates a feeling of fraternity, and according to Patanjali, even the wild beasts forget their ferocity in the presence of one who completely inculcates this quality in himself.

2. Truthfulness (*satya*)

One should always speak the truth. It helps the individual and society as well, and is thus the best policy for all. It does for the mind what soap and water do for the body. He who coordinates his mind, speech and action is truthful and he alone gains perfection. A person of truth may seem to be a loser sometimes, but he is a gainer in the long run. Prolonged practice of truth miraculously renders his words unailing. Events happen, therefore, according to what he says.

3. Non-stealing (*asteya*)

Taking away stealthily somebody else's belongings is an unsocial action. It brews maladjustment, indicating lethargy and bad intention

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on the part of the culprit who cannot earn his livelihood by legitimate means. The *Isha Upanishad* says : 'Do not have greed for other's property'. Like all moral offences, theft, even in the form of pilfering, has its deep roots in the subconscious of the perpetrator, spoiling his career and future. The Smritis and the Puranas tell us in what ways a person will reap in a future life the fruits of stealing committed in this one. Stealing is thus decidedly a sin, and is therefore to be shunned at all costs. Abstention from stealing is *asteya* which is to be practised by a person aiming at higher morality.

4. Continence and chastity (*brahmacharya*)

The *Atharva Veda* (XI.5) contains a beautiful psalm on the subject of continence, wherein it is said that it was through leading a life of purity and continence that the gods could overcome death. Indian medical science has recommended *brahmacharya* as the best means to longevity, and Sri Hanuman and Bhishma are ideal examples of this. The Indian sages were famous for their celibacy and continence. A yogic aspirant should give up desire for sensual enjoyment. Lust, wrath, greed, infatuation, vanity and jealousy are detrimental to spiritual advancement. The *Gita* calls the first three the 'gates of hell'. Lust overpowers the intellect of man. Left to itself, it simply increases, as fire does with oblations of butter. The sex instinct is indeed a part of human nature. The *Gita* therefore recommends gratification, but only in accordance with the injunctions laid down in moral codes. *Brahmacharya* is an essential quality for one desiring spiritual advancement. Under this discipline comes absolute abstention from all types of courtship connected with pre-marital, post marital and extra-marital love, not to speak of the ignoble form involved in venal lust.

5. Non-possession (*aparigraha*)

A man of the world must possess all sorts of belongings necessary for life. This is true, but what is more important is to cherish and translate into action the idea of owning only what is essential. A person who holds and hoards unnecessary things is likely to be interested in, and attached to, them to an extraordinary degree. On the other hand, one who is devoid of the desire to amass possessions remains more or less detached. Disinterestedness and detachment render the mind pure and fit for higher and nobler ideas.

Higher Discipline

The second stage, higher discipline (*niyama*), is also divided into five parts as follows :

1. Cleanliness (*shaucha*)

According to the *Gita*, cleanliness is one of the divine characteristics (*daivi-sampat*). Those who are opposed to divinity do not attach much importance to cleanliness. One should take particular care to be clean, so clean that not only no trace of impurity is left on the body, but its odour is also removed. Pure water is the best medium for the ablution which is obligatory for an aspirant, at least every morning. Rivers, lakes, ponds, pools and wells have fresh water which is conducive to health. The water of the Ganga is famous for its richness in natural resources which allow it to remain ever fresh, and it has, therefore, been considered to be the best medium for the purpose. The yogis prescribe six ways to make the body clean.* But they are all for physical cleanliness and preparatory to a higher level, viz, mental purity. The daily worship (*sandhya*) tends to render the mind cleaner and purer. It is, therefore, said that a person is not eligible for further religious duties until and unless the *sandhya* has been performed.

2. Contentment (*santosha*)

Man aspires after innumerable mundane objects of enjoyment and position. He strives hard day and night. But the thirst generated by ambition is not satiable. Even sovereignty over the globe is not enough, for he wants dominion over outer space as well. Efforts for aggrandizement leave no scope for poise and peace. Men of yogic wisdom therefore suggest the path of repose and contentment with a view to shaping the mind to make it eligible for the superior path of meditation.

3. Austerity (*tapas*)

A life of simplicity has its own merits. A man of austerity devotes less thought to luxurious ways, and holds spiritual values in high esteem. *Tapas* is physical, mental and moral discipline and is essential for a person desirous of becoming a true yogi.

* (घोती) *dhauti*, (बस्ती) *basti*, (नेती) *neti*, (नौली) *nauli*, (त्राटक) *trataka*, (कपालभाती) *kapalabhati*.

4. Study (*svadhyaya*)

The material contained in the books of revelation is a source of inspiration for the aspirant. A formal perusal is good, but sincere practice is better. Those who are not erudite enough to drink deep from the scriptural founts will do well to taste them even partially. Repeating sacred formulae is equally good for those who cannot devote more time to studies. Even chanting the divine names is efficacious and makes the mind ready to receive a higher truth.

5. Dedication to God (*Ishvara-pranidhana*)

A person aspiring to a higher life dedicates his actions to God and feels extreme anguish when oblivious of Him. Trance in its completeness can be attained through such dedication.

Physical Postures for Meditation

The third stage, physical posture, plays an important part in the path of meditation. One should be able to sit with comfort in a particular way for a considerable time. Sitting is better than any other posture. The *Gita* (VI.11) enjoins that a seat should be prepared from *kusa* grass, covered with a hide, such as that of a deer or tiger, and to be made softer with an additional cover of soft linen.

The scriptures have recommended several postures (*asanas*) for a novice. Some of them are given names after the objects which they resemble. For instance, *kurmasana* represents a tortoise, *mayurasana*, a peacock, *garudasana*, an eagle, *simhasana*, a lion, and so on. Most of them are meant to keep the different parts of the body in a fit condition. *Siddhasana* (literally a posture adopted by the perfect) is held in much veneration for concentration of the mind.

Control of the Breath

Control of the Breath (*pranayama*) is the fourth stage. One would like to equate breath with life inasmuch as the former is essential for the latter. This was a topic for Vedic poetry. For instance, the fourth hymn of the eleventh book of the *Atharva Veda* is a psalm on breath, consisting of twenty-six stanzas. Control of the breath is *pranayama*. The exercise of breathing is threefold. It is *puraka* when the air is inhaled to the full capacity of the lungs. It is *kumbhaka* when the air is retained, and it is *rechaka* when the air is exhaled. The process must be slow and steady and care is to be taken that no haste is made

in any one of the three stages. One must do this exercise under the able guidance of a bona fide instructor, otherwise the result may be harmful.

The *Bhagavata* (XI.14.35) advises a person aspiring to reach higher levels of meditation to perform ten *pranayamas* thrice a day, that is, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.

Control of the Senses

The fifth stage is withdrawal of the senses (*pratyahara*). Man is extrovert by nature, and it is his interest in external objects that keeps his senses directed outwards. But meditation requires a contrary position, that is, introversion, which is called by yogis *pratyahara*. According to the *Vishnu Purana* (VI.7.44), it brings the senses under full control. The *Gita* (II.60) says: 'The senses are turbulent. They violently snatch away the mind of even an intelligent person; wisdom becomes steady when one completely withdraws the senses from external objects.'

Concentration of the Mind

Concentration of the mind (*dharana*) is the sixth stage. One has to fix one's mind on a particular object. It requires long practice to succeed in the art. It is deemed to be complete, according to the *Vishnu Purana* (VI.7.87) when the object does not depart from the mind of the person, even when he is walking, standing or doing any other work voluntarily. A person may choose any favourable object to concentrate his mind upon, but the Indian sages preferred divine images for the purpose. The *Bhagavata* (II.2.8) says, for instance: 'Some yogis fix their mind on the form of the Lord with four arms bearing severally a lotus, a discus, a conch and a mace, and residing in the cavity of their heart'. Concentration of mind presupposes its purity and suppleness. The following four methods are suggested to help render the mind tender and pure:

- (a) Be friendly with those who are happy;
- (b) Sympathize with those who are afflicted;
- (c) Feel happy when you hear of a virtuous deed.
- (d) Do not be interested when you come to know of a vicious action.

Meditation

The seventh stage is meditation (*dhyana*). Concentration develops

into meditation when the mental image is exclusive and very clear. The practice of meditation, the quintessence of the system of yoga, is very ancient. It is referred to in the Vedas. The famous *Gayatri mantra* says: 'We meditate upon the adorable light of the Deity, the Creator of the universe. May he direct our thoughts (for a noble and sublime life)'. The Upanishads also mention meditation. The *Katha*, for instance, refers to *yoga-vidhi*, the *Brihadaranyaka* advises *nididhyasana*, and the *Shvetashvatara* suggests a posture of sitting for meditation. There are certain Upanishads, for example *Yoga-Tattva*, *Yoga-Chudamani* and *Yoga-Shiksha*, which are exclusively about meditation or concentration of mind. Similarly, the Smritis recommend meditation to those who aspire after spiritual life. For instance, the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* enjoins that the Deity residing in the heart is to be meditated upon.

Even the systems of Indian philosophy other than yoga have great regard for meditation. The *Brahma-Sutra* has for instance, an aphorism, (*dhyanat-cha* IV.1.8), which purports that since the Self is to be meditated upon, the act requires concentration of mind as an essential condition; for by meditation is understood thought directed upon one object and not disturbed by ideas of other things.

Ecstasy or Samadhi

The eighth and final stage is ecstasy (*samadhi*). It is here that the observation of mundane objects miraculously gives way to spiritual experience. It is a state of excessive joy in mystic revelation. It is the culmination of yoga, and the *summum bonum* of human existence.

The *Vishnu-Dharmottara Purana* describes *samadhi* in the following way. The absence of any extra, external thoughts after meditation is called *samadhi*. A person who has attained that stage can never be overcome by others. There is no bliss better than that of *samadhi* in the three worlds. *Samadhi* is not disturbed even by a grave affliction. A person in *samadhi* does not feel disturbed, even if a hundred conches are blown and drums are beaten near his ears. There is, however, one pang which a man in *samadhi* feels; that is that he understands that he will have to return to the normal waking stage. Neither on the celestial plane, nor on the etherial, nor on the human, is available that joy which one experiences after reaching steadiness in *samadhi*. Having concentrated the mind by *dharana* and then having reached the state

of meditation, one enjoys *samadhi* and attains similarity with the Supreme.

The path of meditation as detailed above is held with great regard by all those who aspire after the higher values of life. The followers of the path of action praise it; those who tread the path of devotion approve of it; and those who practise *jnana* admire it immensely.

The Sacred Kailas Mountain and Manasarovar

THE HEXAGONAL shape of Kailas is extremely tempting to a mountaineer but because of its religious sanctity no one has so far been able to set his foot on the summit. Apart from Kailas, mountains like Kanchenjunga, Pandim, Nanda Devi, Janu, Trisul and Shivaling are considered sacred and are duly respected by the climbers. During the first successful climb of Kanchenjunga by the British team in 1955 the summitters stayed a few feet below the summit in keeping with the sacred sanctity of the mountain.

Herbert Tichy during one of his travels in Tibet could not resist the temptation of climbing Kailas. All attempts by his Sherpa Nima to deter him from undertaking such an attempt failed, and he started climbing alone. It was a "lovely day", according to him. Herbert Tichy in his book, *Himalaya* writes: "I was still a long way from the summit when the clouds came up from the valleys and enveloped me in an icy gray pall. Soon, I was being lashed by gigantic hailstones, and unable to find a single hospitable rock behind which to shelter, I beat an ignominious retreat. Back at our camp Nima gave me a broad grin and positively enjoyed telling me that down at the camp there had not been a spot of rain the whole day and indeed the earth was bone-dry. Yet the mountain was still swathed in a great black cloud that was like a warning to stop frivolously desecrating the realms of the god". "That sacred mountains are no joke was something I learned," said Herbert Tichy.

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Kailas-Manas region is haven for the poet, painter and historian and it is equally so for the botanist, zoologist, geologist and climatologist.

The monks of the monastery here do not depend for water on the brooks, but drink the holy water of the lake, which has in reality the taste of the purest and most wholesome spring water. To the Westerners the water of the lake is better than sparkling champagne. Travellers have often mentioned having seen an old inscription in Tibetan language made on a stone wall next to the lake, the translation of which reads:

"Tso-mavang is the holiest place in the world. In its centre dwells a god in human form who inhabits a tent composed of turquoise and all kinds of precious stones. If anyone washes once in the lake he is cleansed from sin and all impurities, the sins of his forefathers are forgiven, and their souls are relieved from purgatorial fires."

Sven Hedin, who was aware of the sanctity of the lake wanted to make a boat trip in order to do a systematic sounding of the bed so as to study the origin and formation of the lake. In spite of the warnings given by his guides and local monks, he undertook this trip. He safely conducted his experiments for two days but on the third day while he was in the centre of the lake, suddenly a furious storm appeared, the centre of the lake rose to form a transparent dome and the boat started to shoot down with a tremendous velocity. The whole area became dark, the boat broke to pieces and Sven Hedin along with his companion was thrown on the shore, badly hurt. Two of the monks who saw him and his companion from the roof of a nearby monastery rushed to rescue them.

"Has the storm subsided?" asked Sven Hedin. "What storm . . . it has been a lovely and clear day", said the monk.

From Eternal Himalaya by Major H. P. S. Ahluwalia.

Ganesha and Angaraka-Chaturthi

NALINEE CHAPEKAR

IN MODERN times Ganesha is popularly worshipped. The special day on which he is worshipped is the *chaturthi*, that is, the fourth day of both fortnights of the Indian lunar months. And the *chaturthi* which falls on an *Angaraka-vara*, that is, a Tuesday, is called *Angaraka-chaturthi* and it is most important for the worship of Ganesha. Since the Puranic days Ganesha has been considered an important god in the Hindu pantheon but he did not enjoy the same importance in the Vedic, Upanishadic and Epic periods. Doubts have been expressed whether this god is at all referred to in the Vedic Samhitas. There is a great controversy about the time when the worship of Ganesha was begun and many great contemporary Indologists like MM.* Rajavade, MM. Ghuleshastri, MM. Dr. Kane and MM. Mirashi have expressed divergent views about it. In early Sanskrit literature there are references to Kartikeya as the only son of Shiva and Parvati. Kalidasa, for example, refers to him in the *Raghuvamsha*.† Ganesha is not mentioned in any important early writing. In the Epic and Puranic period the cult of Ganesha was associated with the cult of Shiva as the adopted son of Shiva and Parvati.

Ganesha has some peculiar aspects like an elephant face, *gajamukha*, one tooth, *eka-danta*, and a big belly, *lambodara*. The Purana literature refers to all these iconographical and mythological details and also has some interesting material about the relationship of Ganesha with the *Angaraka-chaturthi*. Stories about the birth of Ganesha also occur in different Puranas. Though there are certain minor differences in details, generally all stories mention that Parvati created a child from the dirt, *mala* of her body and then, to please Parvati, Shiva granted many boons to this child. At two places in the *Skanda Purana* (Sk) it is mentioned that Parvati created the child as

* MM. is the abbreviation of Mahamahopadhyaya, an honorific title conferred on Sanskrit scholars who have made a substantial contribution in the field of Sanskrit studies.

† उमावृषाङ्गो शरजन्मना यथा यथा जयन्तेन शचीपुरन्दरो । III. 23.

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her play thing for sport, *kridartham*, (VI.214.4) or for diversion of her mind, *vinodartham*, (VII.iii.32.3). In *Sk* (VII.3.52.18,25), however, it is said that Parvati practised penance to have a son and then Shiva granted her a boon saying, 'You will get the son born from your own body on the fourth day of the month.* This son of Parvati became well-known by different names like Vinayaka, Dhundhi, Kapardi and Gaja-mukha. Interesting etymologies of all these names appear in the Puranas.†

Ganesha and Chaturthi

The special relationship of Ganesha with *chaturthi* is mentioned often in the Puranas. Ganesha is described as *chaturthi-vrataka-priya*, one to whom the vow of the *chaturthi* is dear. He fulfills the wishes of one who worships him with different food offerings on the *chaturthi* which falls on a Tuesday.‡ The *Mudgala Purana* also states that Ganesha was born on the *chaturthi* and hence that date is his favourite.§ Actually, it mentions the contrary that the *chaturthi* day personified, observed penance and got the boon from Ganesha himself, that this day would be his favourite, that it would be considered auspicious and have special importance in connection with him.** This *chaturthi* in both the bright and black fortnights of the month (*shukla-paksha* and *krishna-paksha*) are prescribed for keeping the Ganesha-vow. The *chaturthi* in the bright fortnight is named *varada-chaturthi*, that which gives boons. On this day fasting is to be observed during day and night. The breaking of the fast, *parana*, is to be done on the next day. The *chaturthi* which occurs in the black fortnight is named *sankashta-harini*, that which removes adversities. On this day fasting is to be observed only till moonrise (IV.2.22-44).

* सुतार्थं सा तपस्तेपे । . . . तस्मात्ते भविता पुत्रो निजदेहसमुद्भवः । मत्प्रसादादसंदिग्धं चतुर्थे दिवसे प्रिये ॥

† मूर्ध्नि चैनमुपाध्याय ततः शर्वोऽब्रवीदुमाम् । नायकेन विना देवि तव भूतोऽपि पुत्रकः ॥

यस्माज्जातस्ततो नाम्ना भविष्यति विनायकः । *Vamana*, LIV. 72-73.

अन्वेषणे दुन्दिरयं प्रथितोऽस्ति घातुः । सर्वार्थदुन्दिततया तव दुन्दि नाम ॥ *Skanda*, IV. 57. 33.

कपर्दाकारमुदरं यतोऽस्य समुदाहृतम् । ततोऽस्य नाम जानीहि कपर्दीति महात्मनः ॥ *ibid*, VII. i. 38. 59.

‡ चतुर्थ्या भौमवारेण भक्ष्यभोज्यैः समोदकैः । पूजयेद्विधिवद्देवि तस्य सिद्धिर्भवेत् ध्रुवम् ॥ *ibid*, VII 324.3.

§ लोभामुरविनाशाय प्रकटोऽमृद्गजाननः । देवविप्रेः प्रजानाथ प्रायितो भक्तलालसः ।

चतुर्थ्या मध्यगे भानौ देहधारी समागतः । सा तिथिः परमा तस्य प्रीतिदा संबभूव वै ॥ IV. I. 19-20.

**मदीयव्रतजा पुण्या तिथिस्त्वं च भविष्यसि । व्रतेषु त्वत्समं नैव दायकं कुलं वर्तते ॥ *ibid* IV. 1. 61.

There is no specific mention of any month but the *Mudgala Purana* mentions that the *chaturthis* in the months of *Jyestha* (mid-May), *Magha* (mid-January) and *Bhadrapada* (mid-August) have special importance. Certain other days such as the tenth day of the bright half of the *Ashvina* month (mid-September) or the twelfth day of the bright half of the *Kartika* month (mid-October) are also prescribed for the worship of Ganesha. However, such references are very rare.

Ganesha Worship on *Angaraka-vara*

Of all the different *chaturthis*, the *chaturthi* that falls on the *Angaraka-vara*, Tuesday, has been given great importance because Ganesha was born on that day.* Here the month of the birth of Ganesha is not mentioned but the day and date—*Angaraka-vara* and *chaturthi* have been mentioned. Now the question arises, why is this *Angaraka-vara* so important in connection with Ganesha? It is well known that the *Angaraka-vara* is named after the planet Mangala, Mars. This planet *Mangala* is also called *Bhumi-putra*, the son of the earth.† This *Angaraka* is also mentioned in the Puranas as *Shambhu-putra*, *Mahadeva-suta* or *Hara-amsha-sambhava*, all three meaning 'son of Shiva'. The *Sk* IV.17.5-7 states, 'In ancient times, when Shambhu, who was separated from Dakshayani, was practising penance, a drop of his perspiration fell on the earth. From that drop was born a son, who was nourished by the earth and therefore became known as *maheya*, son of *mahi*, the earth.'‡

In *Sk*. V.ii.43 Shiva says to *Angaraka*, 'You are born from my body, so are called *Angaraka*.' In *Sk* V.i.37 we get the description of *Angaraka* born from a drop of Shiva's perspiration. In *Sk* V.ii.43.2 again, Shiva mentions to Parvati, 'I have created a son from my limbs; I have given him a place to stay in *Maha-kala-vana* and I have made him the leader of all the planets (प्रधिपति).§ In *Sk* IV.17 it is described how

* अंगारकचतुर्थ्यां तु पुरा जज्ञे गणेश्वरः । अतएव तु तत्पर्वप्रोक्तं पुण्यसमृद्धये ॥ *Skanda*, IV. 17. 19.

† अंगारकः कुजो भौमो लोहिताङ्गो महीसुतः । *Amarakosha*, I. iii. 25.

‡ पुरा तपस्यतः शंभोर्दाक्षायण्या वियोगतः । भालस्थलात्पपातैकः स्वेदविदुर्महीतले ॥

ततः कुमारः संजज्ञे लोहिताङ्गो महीतलात् । स्नेहसंघटितः सोऽयं धान्या धात्रीस्वरूपया ॥

माहेय इत्यतः क्वाति परामेष गतः सदा ।

§ रौद्रस्वंगारसहस्रो मम गात्राद्विरानने । मया धृतो धरण्यां स विख्यातो भूमिपुत्रकः ॥

दत्तं पुत्रं मया स्थानं महाकालवनोत्तमे . . . । मध्ये ग्रहाणां सर्वेषामाधिपत्यं मया तव . . . दत्तम् ।

Angaraka practised penance till a bright lustre like a burning flame came out of his body. He was therefore known as Angaraka, which means fire. The *Sk* V.3.115 also gives the story of the penance undertaken by Angaraka. Mahadeva granted him boons whereupon Angaraka asked for a place among the planets.* Curiously enough this Angaraka also has a special relation with the *chaturthi*. The *Sk* V.3.115.8 states, 'One who worships Angaraka on the *chaturthi* day gets a beautiful form.'† The *Sk*, IV.17.15 says, 'One who worships Angaraka on the *Angaraka-chaturthi* never suffers from the evil effects of planets.‡ In *Sk* V.3.148 the worship of Angaraka is prescribed on the *chaturthi*, *angaraka-dine*, on Tuesday. In *Sk* V.ii.43 Mahadeva says to Angaraka, 'the *chaturthi* is the day I have given to you.‡ The *Padma Purana* also says, 'Bhauma, the son of Shiva, worshipped with red flowers and red sandalwood on the *chaturthi* falling on Tuesday gives intellect and money.** The *Mudgala Purana* states that the *chaturthi* falling on a Tuesday is six times or twelve times or twenty times more profitable. In this Purana thirty-three chapters are devoted to a detailed description of the importance of *chaturthis* of the different months, without any special mention of a particular day. In the sixth chapter there are a few lines about the *chaturthi* on *Angaraka-vara*. It says,

'Bhauman, the son of the earth worshipped Gajanana and observed penance for a hundred years. When Gajanana was pleased and bestowed boons upon him, Bhauma said, "O Gana-nayaka, make me a planet so that I can drink nectar. I should be called by the name Mangala and should be the bestower of money. . . . As I have seen

* ज्वलदंगारवत्तेजो यावत्तस्य शरीरतः । विनिर्ययौ तपस्तावत्तेन तप्तं महात्मना ॥
ततोऽंगारकनाम्ना स सर्वलोकेषु गीयते ।

† चतुर्थ्यांगारके यस्तु स्नात्वा चाभ्यर्चयेद्ग्रहम् । अंगारकं विधानेन सप्तजन्मानि भारत ॥
. . . रूपवान् भवेत् ।

‡ अंगारकचतुर्थ्यां ये स्नात्वोत्तरवहांभसि । अभ्यर्च्यांगारकेशानं . . . ॥
न तेषां ग्रहपीडा च कदाचिदपि जायते ।

§ तिषिर्दत्ता चतुर्थी ते . . . ।

** एवं भौमः समुत्पन्नो हरांशो भूसमुद्भवः । तस्य पूजा चतुर्थ्यां तु भौमवारे च सुव्रतैः ।
त्रिकोणे मण्डले चैव रक्तपुष्पानुलेपनैः । एवं वै पूजितो भौमः प्रयच्छति मतिं धनम् ॥ 79. 42-44.

you on the *chaturthi* day, this *chaturthi* related to me should have a special significance".*

This is the reason why *Angaraka-chaturthi* is important.

Ganesha and the Planet Angaraka

These stray references indicate some relationship between Ganesha and Angaraka, the planet Mangala. This has resulted in attaching special significance to the *Angaraka-chaturthi*. In early literature, no special day was mentioned for the worship of Ganesha. In the whole Purana literature, Puranas like the *Padma*, *Shiva*, *Saura* and *Vamana* mention stories about Ganapati (Ganesha), but do not make any reference either to the *chaturthi* or to the *Angaraka-vara*. Certain other Puranas like *Varaha* and *Vayu* note the importance of the *chaturthi* but are silent about the *Angaraka-vara*. The *Mudgala Purana*, which is wholly devoted to Ganesha legends, have only a few lines to explain the importance of the *Angaraka-chaturthi*.

Again, where the legends about the *Angaraka-chaturthi* occur in some detail, one finds some confusion between Ganesha and Bhauma. In *Sk* IV.17.5, the importance of the *Angaraka-chaturthi* is mentioned in connection with *Angaraka-graha*, the planet Mars. Ganesha is also said to have been born on this day. In such places one finds almost a merging of Ganesha and *Angaraka-graha*. The worship of different planets is prescribed in the Puranas. In connection with the Mangala planet, the worship is prescribed on a Tuesday and a *chaturthi*. From these observations it seems that the *Angaraka-vara*, which originally was closely connected with *Angaraka-graha*, does not have any special significance in connection with Ganesha. But due to the striking similarity between these two, the methods of the worship of the two were intermingled.

The similarity between the two is clear from their descriptions in the Puranas. Both have a special relationship with the colour red. Angaraka is unmistakably described as having a red body, *lohita-anga*,

* मरुताजात् समुत्पन्नः पूष्यां भौमो महामतिः । गणानां त्वेति मंत्रेण पूजयामास विष्णुपम् ॥
नरवेहेन युक्तोऽहं तथापि गणनायक । इच्छामि चामृतं पातुं ग्रहं मां कुरु मानद ॥
तव भक्त्येकनिलयं नाम्ना मंगलसंज्ञकम् । ऋणहर्तारमेवं मां प्रभो कुरु वनप्रदम् ॥
माघकृष्णचतुर्थ्यां यद्दर्शनं ते मया कृतम् । मया युक्ता ततो देवी महापुष्पप्रदास्तु सा ॥
तथेति गणनाथेन कृतं सर्वं नराधिप । अतोऽङ्गारयुता पूष्या चतुर्थी मुख्यतां गता ॥

(*Sk* V.3.7.) and as having red eyes, *rakta-aksha*, (*Sk* V.i.37).^{*} Ganesha's relation with the colour red is well known. The red flowers—*rakta-pushpa* (*Sk* V.i.28) and red sandalwood, *rakta-chandana* (*Sk* VI.238.10) are specially recommended for the worship of Ganesha. Again, both Angaraka and Ganesha are described as lovers of sweets, *modaka*.[†] Both were created for the welfare of mankind.[‡] Ganesha is known as the fulfiller of all desires, *asha-puraka*. Both he and Angaraka get boons from Shiva. Shiva makes Angaraka *graha-pati*, the Lord of the Planets, and Ganesha, the *gana-pati*, Lord of Men. Mangala is a synonym of Angaraka. The word also means 'auspicious'. So, this name of Angaraka is also applied as an epithet to Ganesha, who is called *mangala-murti*, the Auspicious One. Further, Angaraka is *vakra*, one having a curved figure, and this *mangala-murti* is again and again mentioned as *vakra-tunda*, one with a curved face. Mangala is famous for creating trouble, so is Ganesha. He is a troublemaker for those who do not worship him, *anarchita-vighna-karta*. Mangala is auspicious if worshipped, *mangala-karaka*. Similarly, for his worshippers, Ganesha is the destroyer of difficulties, *vighna-harta*.

Due to these various points of similarity it is possible that the *Angaraka-vara*, prescribed for the worship of Angaraka is used for that of Ganesha also, in some later period. In the whole of Purana literature *Angaraka-vara*, is rarely mentioned in connection with Ganesha, though reference is generally made to the *chaturthi*.

In *Sk* V. i. 37 in a reference to *Maha-vinayaka* and Ganesha it is said, 'One who worships Ganesha on the *chaturthi* day does not have trouble in this world or in the other world.'[§]

* Vide also, विपुलविमलमूर्तिः किङ्कसाक्षोकवर्णः । स्फुटस्त्रिभुवस्तप्तताम्रप्रभाभः ॥

Brihatsamhita, धौमचार्याध्याय, VI. 13.

† a. . . . मोदकोपरि संस्थितम् । ब्राह्मणाय निवेद्यं तत् कुजो मे प्रीयतामिति ॥ *Skanda*, V. 3. 148.8

b. Ganesha is described as- मोदकाशनतोषकृत् *ibid*, VI. 214.5.

and . . . ततो गौरी ददौ भोज्यपात्रं मोदकपूरितम् । *ibid*, VII. iii. 32.20.

‡ Shiva says to Angaraka, लोकानां स्वस्तये नित्यं मंगलोऽसि मया कृतः । *ibid*, V. ii. 43.13.

§ माघमासे चतुर्थ्यां यो गणेशं पूजयेन्नरः । न तस्य जायते विघ्नमिहलोके परत्र च ॥ *ibid*, V. i. 37.

An Adventure

KALIPRASAD CHANDRA, long before he became Swami Abhedananda, was staying in the Cossipore garden house with Sri Ramakrishna. One day Vijay Krishna Goswami came from a visit to Gaya and spoke highly of a powerful Hatha yogi whom he had met at Barabur Hill. Hearing this, a strong desire to see that Hatha yogi arose in the impressionable mind of the young Kaliprasad. The following day, without telling anyone, not even his guru, Sri Ramakrishna, he managed to get the round trip fare and started out alone for Barabur Hill.

This was to be the first long distance journey that Kaliprasad undertook alone. At that time, a young man, full of the spirit of adventure and renunciation, he dreamt of going about the country alone like a wandering mendicant, living on alms. He took the train from Bally and arrived at Gaya. After travelling eight miles on foot across hilly terrain, he arrived at the village situated at the foot of Barabur Hill where he spent the night in a pilgrims' rest house.

There he chanced to meet a monk who had with him a book on the procedure of *sannyasa diksha*, consecration into monkhood. Kaliprasad borrowed the book from him and copied out the *mantras* of the *viraja homa** in his small notebook.

The next morning he dressed as a monk and got ready to climb the hill to meet the Hatha yogi. He first went about the village getting directions from the villagers how to go to the yogi's cave. Everyone tried to dissuade the curious young man from going there and warned him that the disciples of the Hatha yogi would not allow anyone to see him and would throw stones at those travelling along the road to the cave. But the bold youth was not frightened by what they said. Rather, he made a firm resolve that he would meet the Hatha yogi even at the risk of his life.

The following morning Kaliprasad enthusiastically climbed up the hill along a narrow path through the jungle which led to the cave. Silently and cautiously he made his way slowly along the path, looking around from time to time to see if anyone was following him. Suddenly, he found he had arrived right at the entrance of the cave. He saw

* A ceremonial rite to be performed during initiation into *sannyasa*.

the Hatha yogi with his disciples sitting in the cave in front of a smouldering *dhuni*, fire. The yogi and his disciples were startled and immediately stood up and rushed toward the entrance to beat the intruder. Kaliprasad, too, was startled. He had not expected to come upon them so soon. But instead of cringing with fear, he had the presence of mind to make obeisance to them saying, 'ॐ नमो नारायणाय', 'Om, salutation to Narayana'. The disciples saw he was wearing the garb of a monk, so they returned the courtesy saying, 'Om, salutation to Narayana'. Then, to test him to find out if he was a genuine monk, they asked him some questions. Fortunately he could answer them as he had learned these things from the monk whom he met the previous night. It then occurred to him that this was possible only through the saving grace of Sri Ramakrishna, who had mercifully led him to meet the monk and learn these things from him. When this idea dawned on him he mentally saluted Sri Ramakrishna. Because he could answer the questions correctly the Hatha yogi affectionately gave him permission to sit by the fire. His disciples also welcomed him as a genuine monk.

After some time Kaliprasad expressed his desire to learn Hatha yoga. They then asked him to go inside the cave. He was alone and was not sure what they would do next. At last, he suppressed his fear and went inside. At the bidding of the Hatha yogi he sat close to him before the smouldering fire. He began to ask the yogi many questions regarding Hatha yoga, *pranayama* and so on. The Hatha yogi answered the questions and then asked Kaliprasad to stay there and learn yoga from him.

While seated in the cave Kaliprasad noticed that the cave was spacious and plenty of food was kept there. A goat and fowl were tied on one side. It became evident to him then that the Hatha yogi belonged to the Aghora sect.* He also noticed that one of the disciples was suffering from asthma and he reflected that he, too, might be attacked with asthma if he took lessons in *pranayama* and yoga from the Hatha yogi. After putting more questions to him, Kaliprasad found that because he had merely read the book, *Pavana-Svarodaya*, and had practiced *pranayama* to some extent without having mastered it, his

* Aghora is a sect of worshippers of Shiva who are addicted to loathsome food and disgusting practices.

knowledge of yoga philosophy was very limited. The more he began to feel disinclined to take lessons from him, the more the yogi expressed a great deal of interest in making this new boy his disciple.

Then, in this strained situation, Kaliprasad began to see the image of Sri Ramakrishna arise in his heart. He compared Sri Ramakrishna with the Hatha yogi and realized that the Hatha yogi was merely a *sadhaka*, spiritual aspirant, with very limited knowledge. He saw Sri Ramakrishna looking at him compassionately and tears came to his eyes. He suddenly understood that Sri Ramakrishna was a Master of masters and an ocean of knowledge. He felt he did not want to stay in that cave any longer.

The Hatha yogi gave Kaliprasad soup and bread for lunch and tried to persuade him to stay with him for a few days. He was thus in a great predicament. As he became more and more desperate to get out of his reach and escape, the more persistently the image of Sri Ramakrishna came to his mind. Kaliprasad began to pray to him plaintively that he might show him a way out. The fear that the disciples of the yogi might attack him by throwing stones if he tried to disregard the Hatha yogi's words and escape made him extremely anxious. Finally, he mustered his courage and asked for permission to go, saying in Hindi, 'I am going now'. But the Hatha yogi did not allow him to go; rather he forbade him saying, 'It is a rare good fortune to get a disciple like you'. This further increased his suspicion.

At last, in the evening, Kaliprasad, taking courage, came out of the cave on the pretext of fetching some water and snatching the opportunity, ran down the hill through the jungle as fast as he could. He dared not turn around as the disciples of the Hatha yogi were throwing stones at him. He ran along the path, not looking in any other direction till he reached the village at the foothill. From there he proceeded on the eight mile walk to the Gaya railway station. Safely far from the Hatha yogi, Kaliprasad felt his mind very strongly drawn to Sri Ramakrishna. Every moment away from him seemed to be an age. He somehow spent the night at the Gaya station.

The next morning he took a train to Bally. From Bally he crossed over to the other side of the Ganga and, returning to Cossipore, he prostrated to Sri Ramakrishna, putting his head on his guru's feet. Seeing him back, the Master said with a grin, 'Where did you go without telling me?' Kaliprasad narrated the whole story. The Master

asked, 'How did you find the Hatha yogi?' Kaliprasad said, 'I did not like him. He is nothing compared to you, so I hurriedly came back to the shelter of your feet.' Sri Ramakrishna said, 'I know all sadhus and *siddhas*, men of enlightenment, however great and wherever they may be. You may go to the four corners of the earth, but you will not find anywhere what you see here (putting his hand on his chest).' So saying, he put his hand on Kaliprasad's head and blessed him. Kaliprasad's whole body became soothed. He later said, 'Even if I had millions of mouths I would not be able to describe how profusely he showered his grace on me every moment.' The Master then told him the parable of the bird on the mast:

A bird sat absent-mindedly on the mast of a ship anchored in the Ganga. Slowly the ship sailed out into the ocean. When the bird looked about it could see no shore in any direction. It flew towards the north hoping to reach land; it went very far and grew very tired but could find no shore. What could it do? It returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After a long while the bird flew away again, this time towards the east. It couldn't find land in that direction either; everywhere it saw nothing but limitless ocean. Very tired, it again returned to the ship and sat on the mast. After resting a long while, the bird went towards the south, and then towards the west. When it found no sign of land in any direction, it came back and settled down on the mast. It did not leave the mast again, but sat there without making any further effort. It no longer felt restless or worried. Because it was free from worry, it made no further effort.

Sri Ramakrishna explained to Kaliprasad that without making comparisons it is not possible to distinguish between great and small, good and bad. Kaliprasad said, 'So it was well that I went to see the Hatha yogi. I can now better appreciate your greatness.' The Master smiled on hearing this.*

* The source of this incident is *My Life Story*, the autobiography of Swami Abhedananda, retold here with the kind permission of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta.

Sri Samartha Ramadas—A Revolutionary and a Reformer

BINDUMATI GHATE

THE THIRD centenary of the birth of Sri Samartha Ramadas, a saint who is said to be the preceptor and guide of Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of the Hindu empire in the seventeenth century, was celebrated in 1980-81. A saint and a *sannyasi* taking active interest in the matters of politics is very rare, and even seems contradictory, because a *sannyasi*, who has cut asunder all worldly bonds, is supposed to be indifferent to any matter concerned with this world. Traditionally, he is expected to ponder over only metaphysical and philosophical problems. Even to many of Ramadas's disciples the advice of their guru was a guiding light only for liberation, *moksha*. His writings, therefore, which lay down practical rules for day to day life, and which would have contributed to success in all aspects of life, were totally overlooked by them. When, however, one now carefully reads all his published writings, one understands that he was not only concerned with the spiritual well-being of the people but he also wanted to bring about an all-round awakening—political, cultural and religious.

Ramadas and Vivekananda

There are some striking similarities between Swami Vivekananda and Sri Samartha Ramadas. Both were *sannyasis* but not aloof from others. They had both sacrificed their personal attachments and comforts for the uplift of their motherland. They had a strong faith that the inculcation of self-confidence, physical strength and cultural heritage are the three-fold means to strive for the improvement of Hindu society. Both men had minutely observed the then prevailing social conditions and diagnosed the remedies. They had travelled the whole interior of India, length and breadth, to preach their ideals.

The Development of a Heroic Saint

Ramadasa was an independant thinker from his very childhood. His parents lived in Jamb, a small village in Marathavada in Maharashtra. Worship and devotion to Rama was practiced in his family. Ramadas, whose original name was Narayana, was born on Rama-Navami, the

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birthday of Sri Ramachandra. Narayana showed extraordinary seriousness of mind and detachment from others. When he was a child of six or seven his mother asked him, 'What do you do, sitting in a solitary place while other children are playing games?' His prompt answer was, 'I am worried about the world*, and meditating on a means to set it in order'. Even at this early age he showed a tendency to worship God. As he grew up his awareness of social and cultural decadence made him restless.

The atmosphere at home was favourable until the age of twelve, when he was to be married. Early marriage was then the custom in their society. His parents thought that once married he would take interest in worldly life. On the other hand, this was a great turning point in his life. During the marriage ceremony, while the Brahmins said '*savadhan*', 'beware', in the course of chanting holy *mantras*, Narayana suddenly became enlightened and ran away from the marriage-*mandapa*, the place where the rites were being performed, at the very beginning of the ceremony! How strange! This sort of thing never happened before. Why did he run away? Though they tried, his relatives could not find him anywhere. At last they lost all hope.

Narayana was on his way to his life's mission, to awaken society. He had to make vast preparations. The first step was to engage himself in rigorous penance to achieve self-possession and physical sturdiness. The reform of society would not be an easy nor a quickly accomplished task. It would require patience and clear thinking. He wanted to chalk out his line of action; he did not waste a single minute. After observing austere penance and deep meditation at Nasik and other holy places, he travelled all over India, from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas and from Rajasthan to Assam. He desired to observe the details of the every-day life of the people and their mode of thinking. Then he came upon a master-plan for measures to teach them to love their country, and, put up a defensive as well as an offensive opposition to the then foreign rule.

Kindling the Fire of Patriotism

To understand Ramadas's teaching and doctrine, it is essential to know the political and social background of that time. The Moghuls

* बाह्यो विस्वादि चिन्ता ।

were the sovereign rulers of the whole of India. Their main policy was to force conversions by ruthless means. They greedily and cruelly looted coin and kind, kidnapped women, destroyed temples or converted them into mosques and disfigured images of gods. Everything was stolen away; only the land remained, simply because it couldn't be taken! That is how Ramadas described the plight of his people who, as a result, lost all confidence and became so helpless that they could not oppose their invaders.* The whole society was devastated and hopelessly ruined and people were totally deprived of their rights and position.

An interesting question arises: why did Ramadas choose Sri Rama, his devotee Hanuman and Rama-vara-dayini Tulaja Bhavani as the ideals of his followers when Panduranga of Pandharpur had been the popular deity in Maharashtra for over 400 years? He chose them as his ideals because he found the conditions of his time similar to those at the time of Sri Ramachandra. He was highly inspired by the bravery and glorious deeds of Rama in relieving the society from the demoniac and demoralizing rule of Ravana and establishing *Rama-rajya*, ideal kingship. It was an appealing and convenient pretext which Ramadas used to convey his revolutionary ideas to the people. The foreign rulers could not ban or proscribe what he preached as he wrote about a rule bestowing peace and happiness on all. He was shrewd enough not to directly attack the Moghul rule as it would have nipped his movement in the bud.

Ramadas urged his followers to act in three ways: to rise up to oppose, to capture the rule of the country, and to progress and to prosper.† His movement succeeded in arousing the fire of patriotism and bravery.‡

The essence of Ramadas's teaching was: 'First, one should look after one's family, then one can work for one's own spiritual well-being.§

* पदार्थ मात्र तितुका नेला । नुस्ता देशधि राहिला ।

माणसा खावया धान्य नाही । अंधरूण पांघरूण तेही नाही ।

† बुडाला घोरंग्या पापी । तुझा तो बाडवी राजा । उदंड भाते पाणी स्नान संध्या करावया ।

‡ बन्ही तो चेतबाबा ।

§ आधी प्रपंच करावा नेटवा । मग परमार्थ वाडवाबा ।

Only after one's worldly duties are fulfilled can one transcend them and be devoted to other-worldliness.* His advice was that one should go step by step; temporary detachment does not help in the end. Thus it is clear that Ramadas was well-versed in the psychology of the common man.

Literary Work

Written in Marathi, the language of Maharashtra, Ramadas's two most popular books, *Dasbodh* and *Manobodh*, have the widest appeal to ordinary men. They carry to them an exceptional message. Ramadas wanted to effect a renaissance of religion as a result of which people would be mentally strong and ready to oppose and conquer the foreign invaders. *Dasbodh* lays down, in minutest detail, how to conduct oneself in the world (18.1.2), and how to correct oneself when one goes wrong (18.3). It also contains his thoughts on politics (*Raj-karan-nirupan*, 19.9). He describes what kind of leader is required for the uplift of a nation (19.9.25-31). When describing a *mahanta*, leader of a monastery or sect, Ramadas says that he should be like a saint, free from all personal ambitions and desires; and he must make people constantly conscious about their rights (11.6). It is particularly notable that he asks people to be reciprocal in their dealings with others.† He brings to their notice that irresponsible behaviour leads to grievances, hardships and ultimately, to general chaos (8.6, 19.3). In this context he warns against extravagance and unwieldy growth of population.‡ His pertinent words are: 'Something is achieved only when you put the ideal into practice'§ *Dasbodh* contains an exhaustive list of rules for practical living.

It is specially interesting to note that of all the *Bhagavat-bhaktas*, devotees of God, in Maharashtra, Ramadas devoted a major portion of his writing to advice for society and the individual. He was aware that worldly prosperity generally makes one indifferent to society and its

* नाना सामर्थ्ये वाढवावी वैराग्यबलें ।

† घटनटासी घटनट ।

‡ नेकुरें उदबं भाली । तों ते लक्ष्मी निघोन गेली । मेलवितो तितुके भक्षितो ।
ते कठिण कारीं मरोन जातो । दीर्घ सूचनेने वर्ततो । तेचि भलें ॥

§ केल्याने होत पाहे रे ।

well-being. On the other hand, complacency becomes socially devastating. Both are to be equally balanced so that society is well-maintained. All the saints of Maharashtra preached a kind of spiritual democracy in which all men are of equal status regarding their right to achieve oneness with God. But Ramadas prescribes the same principle of democracy on the social level. The similarity between the ideals of Ramadas and Swami Vivekananda is clear : to find humanity in God and Godhood in humanity.

This idea led Ramadas to write *Manobodh*. He calls the mind *sajjan-saint* because he was fully aware that every activity depends on how the mind changes. He, therefore, coaxes it by addressing it in highly honourable terms. It is the pivot on which all action revolves; it is the master that controls everything. He advises the mind what to do and what to avoid. His lesser works are *Arati*, *Karuna-Ashtaka*, *Abhangas* and so on. They are on prayer, worship and meditation.

Ramadas was a social reformer, a political mentor and, at the same time, a master of psychology.

Ramadas's Movement

Ramadas was not a mere preacher. He established Maths, monasteries, in different cities in almost all parts of India, especially numerous in Maharashtra, where Hanuman, the presiding deity of physical strength was chiefly worshipped. Hanuman is also called the most intelligent devotee of Sri Rama, not a blind follower. Sri Rama was the ideal king, so devotion and prayer to him was one of the main practices in these Maths. *Sangathana*, cooperation, was the basic principle observed in them.* Every Math had a leader who was a disciple of Ramadas. People in nearby villages would gather in the Maths for worship and prayer. These Maths were a sort of training ground for all-sided development. People would be trained in valour, hero-worship and self-confidence. A vast number of followers were made conscious of their rights, status, religion and cultural heritage. Thus a favourable background for establishing Hindu *Swarajya*, independent rule, was prepared. This was a helpful foundation for Shivaji's patriotic and valorous deeds. He recruited soldiers and patriots from

* मराठा जिजुबा बेतबाबा ।

those vigilant masses who were trained according to the teaching of Ramadas in these Maths.

It should be taken into consideration that Ramadas always kept himself in the background as he felt a true *Mahanta* should.* He never took an active part in politics. When Shivaji was to meet Afjul Khan, Ramadas only wrote a letter of guidance to him. Historians have proved with evidence that though folk tales might say that Shivaji and Ramadas often met, it is not so. They met secretly only once or twice. India will ever be proud of the great historic era which Ramadas created. The country will forever be grateful to him for guiding Maharashtra victoriously through this crisis in the history of Hinduism.

* घायी केले मग सापितले । OR बास डोंगरी राहती ।

The Humanism of Swami Vivekananda

ARUNA HALDAR

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, like any other individual, was a product of his environment which was constituted by earlier and contemporary socio-political factors. The flowering of the Indian Renaissance started in the nineteenth century; its beds were prepared much earlier, and the seeds were sown by Rammohan Roy in about 1815. This spirit of Renaissance developed, with the spirit of the Indian Reformation as its ally, from about 1829 to 1878. This Reformation was directed towards two main channels. One was religious, the other social. Both could be seen in the activities of the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal. In their zeal for reform, they over-valued the western way of life and thought and disregarded the noble heritage of their own people. The reforms took no notice of the common man; they remained completely dissociated from the masses and cut off from traditional roots. That is why we find that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya in reaction to this outlandish type of

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reform, returned to Hindu culture for national revival. By 1893, Indian Nationalism, already established culturally by Bankim Chandra, grew politically as well. Its best constructive cultural efforts were being made by Rabindranath Tagore who in his poetry and prose laid the first foundations of creative politics. The best and finest cultural expression of this spirit of the new movement was revealed in a poem he wrote in 1893, *Ebar Phirao More* which may be translated as 'Turn me now towards the objective reality of life from abstraction'. The other side, the religio-political aspect of the nationalistic movement was found in the work of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Swamiji and Rabindranath, although contemporaries, worked in different fields and according to different methods. But both were mature products of the Indian Renaissance. They wanted a free expression of the Indian spirit in every way. Their differences resolved into an expression of life for their own people and into a profound love for mankind. The Indian Freedom Movement owed a lot to both Rabindranath and Vivekananda who, though wide apart as far as their standpoints were concerned, they tried to keep their respective organizations beyond the reach of active politics and themselves became a burning inspiration for political sufferers.

Rabindranath wrote '*Vairagya sadhane mukti se amar noy*', 'Liberation by the path of renunciation is not for me'. Vivekananda, having a different idea, became a monk. He renounced everything and at the same time maintained a deep and genuine love for his family, his countrymen, and for humanity at large. To attain this objective, he desired to organize a pioneer force of unselfish, untiring workers for India's betterment.

Departure from Tradition and a New Approach

The years 1887 to 1893 were the formative period of Swami Vivekananda's ideal. This period of wandering as a mendicant helped him to see Indian life in all its aspects. He understood that basically Indians were good people in their lives and outlook. This human element, goodness, could not be properly utilized because it was obstructed in its expression by various difficulties such as lack of education, ignorance, untouchability, lack of faith, and economic ruin due to longstanding foreign subjugation. All these limitations made life difficult and stagnant through fear and frustration. Swamiji understood

what was his real field of work and where he had to begin. As a man of dauntless courage he uttered the message of fearlessness, *Abhi Abhi* or *Ma Bhaishi*—do not fear. He knew that if a man is not fed properly his body will be weak; the weak body would nurse a weak mind—a nightmare of fear. Therefore he emphasized the principles of strength and fearlessness. He understood that India needed material change. Strength would come through good food and right education. This was the thought dominating his mind while he prepared to go abroad to attend the Chicago Parliament of Religions. He had two motives. One of them was to gather material help for India's upliftment and the other was to establish the fact that India, though a colonial empire, was not really backward in her thought. His noble mission was a success.

This mission was in keeping with the ancient Indian tradition of working for one's fellows in distress without any selfish motive (*nishkama karma*). Many of the great teachers of India had said and done the same. Thus Buddha in the fifth century B.C. had asked his disciples to work for the greater good of the greater number of people (*bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya cha*). Sri Shankaracharya in the ninth century A.D. had once more announced that a monk should work to liberate himself and also his fellows. Swamiji, in the later part of the nineteenth century, established a new phase of this same tradition of humanism 'for the liberation of self and the welfare of the world' (*atmano mokshartham jagat-hitaya cha*). Every particle of dust of Indian soil was sacred to him. His heart claimed every poor, destitute, naked, uneducated Indian as his brother; he was gloriously proud to be an Indian; he wanted to be a better Indian himself and wanted to see his brethren become better Indians. He also wanted to see greater recognition of India in the world.

New Philosophy In a Wider Aspect

Swami Vivekananda was a monk of one of the Shankarite sects (the *Dashanami Purj Sampradaya*). Shankara in his commentary on the Upanishads, (for example, *sarvam khalu idam Brahma*), had maintained the complete identity of the noumenon and phenomenon—the Absolute and the individual. This abstraction remained too high and difficult for ordinary people to understand. Swamiji, though a follower of Shankara, wonderfully interpreted the relation between God and man. Analysis

shows that the spirit of identification between God and man is still there; but the point of emphasis is changed. Swamiji, unlike his predecessors, started with the man who was now God and good. He wrote about this spirit very clearly in a poem : You need not go far and wide in search of God, for God is before you in the various forms; for whoever loves living creatures serves God. This change of emphasis immediately appealed to the head and heart of his contemporaries. Swamiji's new contribution to ancient Indian wisdom was recognized by both the orthodox and liberal sections of the Indian people.

There is another rational feature in Swamiji's new approach. This feature is based on the recognition of traditional Indian culture. Indian culture was always tolerant, universal and harmonious. Indian religion, though orthodox, had always accepted a spirit of cultural assimilation and expansion. Swamiji had inherited this ancient wisdom from his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who had preached *yato mat tato path*, there are as many ways to reach the Truth as there are theories. Sri Ramakrishna had realized this great principle through his spiritual *sadhana*. The universal spirit of all the religions remained the same although recognized differently as God or Krishna or Allah or Ahuramazda or by any other name. Vivekananda spoke about this religious harmony in the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

Recognition at Home and Abroad

By the time Vivekananda left for the Chicago Parliament of Religions his views had already gained recognition among the different sections of people he met in India. In South India, where the Shankarite tradition and a tradition of Sanskrit learning and the monastic way of life never died, Swamiji was accepted more cordially than in the North which came forward afterwards. His patriotism was evident in his Madras lectures delivered after coming back to India in 1897. There he explained clearly the two purposes of his attending the Chicago Parliament. One was to uphold Indian culture with religion at its centre, and the second to enlist support for his struggle to uplift the Indian people. His spirit was very much appreciated by the people representing different nations of the world who assembled in the Parliament.

The audience recognized India in Swami Vivekananda; it was evident that, though a colonial country, India was not really backward in

her spiritual culture and had something really distinctive to give to the world. Besides, Vivekananda's erudition and scholarship had provided much food for both head and heart.

He remained in the U.S.A. for a year, and then went to England and the continent. He went back to the States before returning to India in 1897. By that time, several centres of his monastic Order had been opened in the U.S.A. and London which received Swamiji's ideas in all earnestness. His dynamic personality had gathered many talented devotees and lifelong followers.

During the period between 1893 to 1896 Swamiji had seen both America and Europe from a very close perspective. He thought that western civilization was constituted of two contradictory aspects. He saw the capitalistic civilization at its zenith; he appreciated its initiative, energy and constructive ability; and side by side, he saw its greed, inhumanity, exploitation and brutalized degeneration. Both these aspects made him think about the path India should take to achieve material prosperity without imitating the western methods blindly, and thus avoid their pitfalls. Swamiji knew that material changes would automatically follow the spread of education. He wanted Indian people to shake off their inferiority complex which was the inevitable outcome of suppression under a foreign yoke. Further, he inspired the Indian people to muster courage to fight for the cause of freedom from poverty, ignorance and foreign domination. Swamiji helped them to know that all three were interrelated.

Field of Work

After he returned to India, Vivekananda worked in all earnestness for the establishment of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It was not an easy task. Indians and foreigners had donated money. Several centres were opened. Various activities were taken up. A number of idealistic and educated youths joined the Order. Swamiji had various plans, and a hectic period of activity followed to work these out. The purpose of the Order, and the scheme of the different activities to be taken up, were all examined by him in the minutest detail; he was a good and efficient organizer who knew how to inspire team work. With love and respect, he worked along with his brethren and the public. The different aspects of the working plans were made definite. He formulated a religio-ethical code for the monks and clarified the moral

and legal implications of the monastic Order. He also supervised the maintenance and progress of the Order. Work was looked upon as worship, therefore all kinds of work—nursing, relief work, team work in village upliftment, teaching, opening libraries, living in a self-sufficient manner and raising food materials—were encouraged, in addition, religious practices and scholarly traditions were carefully and zealously cultivated. Swamiji suggested that a women's organization be created, separated totally from that of the men. Although a strict follower of traditional monastic life, Swamiji, by his own ingenuity had planned a modern monastery which could be recognized as a meeting place for both the East and the West. Swami Vivekananda admired the efficiency of western people and very correctly emphasized order and discipline in his organization. At the same time he had made provision for freedom from ritualistic custom and rigidity. His plan for the temple of Sri Ramakrishna at the Belur Math and the mode of worship conducted there illustrated clearly what Sri Ramakrishna meant by the harmony of all religions. Thousands of devotees—laymen, householders, monks, students, educated men as well as simple believers—all thronged to this new shrine. The new faith was recognized by people of all places, and all types.

Many educated young men made Vivekananda their hero while they joined the Freedom Movement of India. For a long time the monks had given shelter to many young national workers who were looked upon by the British Government as political suspects. Some of them later took to monastic life.

Swami Vivekananda was initiated three times : first, he was initiated by his Master in the ancient wisdom of the people of India. Next, he received initiation from the life of the Indian people while travelling all over the country. In 1899 he started on his second tour of Europe and America and returned home in 1900. This time he saw imperialism in its real colours all over the West; he also became clearly conscious of some kind of socialism which already was given recognition in European thought. The developments of earlier Utopian Socialism and Syndicalism did not escape his notice. The more he came in contact with the stark naked reality of western civilization, the more shocked he became. As a result, his conception of humanism became wider and clearer. This was his third initiation. Vivekananda understood the problem of common humanity in all its universal and international

aspects. He saw clearly that a new era awaited human civilization, and, socialism was dawning over Europe. His progressive attitude did not fail to recognize this new feature. His spirit of service was still the same. He served the poor as the emblem of God and called them *Daridra Narayana*, God in the poor. His outlook towards *Daridra Narayana* had undergone a qualitative change. His thoughts were all for the amelioration of the proletariat. He maintained that Shudras or the downtrodden people were going to overpower the Vaishya or the ruling capitalists. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas of the ancient Hindu society had already gone down in power and the Shudras were destined to rule. His statement revealed that the wheel of time was turning, even in India. He felt the pulse of irrevocable justice which was moving in favour of the long forgotten and long neglected oppressed people. As an advocate of humanism he could not but foresee the upsurge of these neglected forces in perfect accord with the inevitable path of history.

Conclusion

Swamiji remained a source of influence and inspiration for the National Freedom Movement in India during the entire period between 1905 and 1935. The spirit of service and the spirit of international co-operation infused by Swami Vivekananda are still to be found in the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. There are various branches of the Order all over India and abroad. Various activities and cultural centres have been opened by them. Hospitals, dispensaries and maternity centres, reading rooms and libraries, schools, colleges and technical courses, hostels, arrangements for talks and seminars, relief and nursing work and other similar works are performed by the different units of this huge organization. Money or gifts come from the public, the Indian Government, different trusts, and sometimes from the cultural societies of foreign countries. Today idealistic young people are joining the Order with earnest zeal and remain faithful to the ideal through devoted work. Many monastics are excellent scholars and modern-minded individuals who are still bearing within them the torch lighted by Vivekananda more than half a century ago.

Swamiji was a fiery patriot, a dynamic personality and a fighting hero. He served the *Daridra Narayanas* of his country. He was a

believer in internationalism and in universal humanism. He was the first Indian who pioneered a mechanism for constructive socialistic thought in India. His message was for the progressive peace and happiness of all mankind which he loved and for which he lived.
