



SAMVIT

[Knowledge that leads to enlightenment]



Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Calcutta-700 076
No. 9, March 1984

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CONTENTS

	Page
Universal Prayers	1
Reflections	2
The Taittiriya Upanishad and Modern Scientific Principles ... <i>Saunendra Nath Mukhopadhyay</i>	7
Tolerance and Acceptance—the Fulfilment of Spirituality ... <i>Pravrajika Nirbhayaprasanna</i>	10
Is Supernaturalism All Nonsense? <i>Kalidas Bhattacharya</i>	14
Vivekananda in Madras. Some Anecdotes <i>D. B. Raghunath Rao</i>	26
A Meditation on a Beautiful Temple <i>Helga Bluemel</i>	30

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	Page
Sri Sri Ramakrishna and the Motherhood of God <i>A. N. Roy</i>	31
Indra and the Brahmin <i>Shiv Dhawan</i>	39
Brahma Sutra Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya— The Means of Valid Knowledge <i>M. R. Yardi</i>	40
<i>Swami Adbhutananda</i> —A Review Article	46
Sri Sarada Math & Ramakrishna Sarada Mission	51

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SAMVIT

म नो बुद्ध्या शुभया मयुतान् ।

May He endow us with good thoughts.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad III. 4

Universal Prayers

त्वं हि नः पिता वसो त्वं माता शतक्रतो बभूविथ ।

अथा ते सुम्नमीमहे ॥

O Gracious Lord! Thou hast ever been a father and a mother to us. Now we pray for Thy bliss.

Rig Veda VIII.xcviii.11.



यो विश्वाभि विपश्यति भुवना सं च पश्यति ।

स नः पूषाविता भुवत् ॥

The Lord who directly looks upon the world and all other regions, and knows their real nature, may He be our Protector.

Rig Veda III.lxii.9.

REFLECTIONS

Towards Practical Vedanta

THE GENIUS behind the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta was Sri Ramakrishna. In his room at Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna was once talking about the Vaishnava discipline of showing compassion to all beings. While talking, he went into *bhava-samadhi*, a withdrawn state. Immediately after he regained partial external consciousness he said: 'No, not compassion, but service to all beings (जीव) looking upon them as veritable gods (देव)'. Others passively and mutely heard these words, but Naren (as Vivekananda was then known), left the room and said to a brother-disciple in an ecstasy of delight:

'Ahl What a wonderful light have I got today from the Master's words! In synthesizing the Vedantic knowledge, which was generally regarded as dry, austere and even cruel, with sweet devotion to the Lord, what a new mellowed means of experiencing the Truth has he revealed today! . . . Formerly when the *sadhaka* used to try to attain that knowledge in the old way, he used to regard the whole universe and each person in it as obstacles to the path of religion and, contracting, therefore, a hatred for them, he more often than not used to go astray. But from what the Master in Bhavasamadhi said today, it is gathered that the Vedanta of the forest can be brought to human habitation and that it can be applied in practice to the work-a-day world. Let a man do everything he is doing; there is no harm in that; it is sufficient for him, first, to be fully convinced that it is God that exists, manifested before him as the universe and all the beings in it. Those, with whom he comes in contact every moment of his life, whom he loves, respects and honours, to whom his sympathy and kindness flow, are all His parts—are all He Himself. If he can thus look upon all the persons of the world as Siva, how can there be an occasion for him to regard himself as superior to them or cherish anger and hatred for them or an arrogant attitude to them, yes, or to be even kind to them? Thus serving the Jivas as Siva, he will have his heart purified and be convinced in a short time that he himself is also a part of Isvara, the eternally pure, awake and free, and Bliss absolute. . . . If the divine Lord ever grants me an opportunity, I'll proclaim everywhere in the world this wonderful truth I have heard today. I will preach this truth to the learned and the ignorant, to the rich and the poor, to the Brahmans and Chandalas'.¹

And as all know he was given the opportunity which he wanted. An unknown *parivrajaka* went on the world-stage and preached his message of Practical Vedanta. The sum and substance of it is that Truth is eternal; it is nobody's property; no race, no individual can lay an exclusive claim to it. But it has to be made simple, so that it may penetrate every pore of human society, and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds of man, woman and child at the same time.

Writing to Alasinga Perumal in 1895 from America he said, 'Truth is my God, the universe my country. . . . I have a truth to teach, I, the child of God. And He that gave me the truth will send me fellow-workers from the Earth's bravest and best'.

Most teachers preach pity and compassion. One taught compassion, but could not give it a rational basis. Another taught love and said that by serving others we serve Him. Yet others preached pure devotion, absolute knowledge or selfless action as means to realize the highest ideal in life. But in the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda we have for the first time the most practical expression possible of the spiritual oneness of all beings.

Vedanta teaches that one should proceed towards the Supreme Goal in life through the discipline of *neti, neti*, 'not this, not this'. But the world does not disappear from us by our saying so. While we live in the body, *neti, neti* is incomplete, for the world is very much there. Therefore, *neti, neti* has to be completed and fulfilled by an assertion of the Reality, the One Self in all beings. This assertion cannot be in mere words. It must be made practical, it must take the form of service to others. Then can we say that work, nay, every action, is worship; only then can we say that love, which is also true knowledge, is worship.

Emphasizing this aspect of her Master's message, Sister Nivedita most eloquently said:

'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid'.

'This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher

of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jnanam and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field, are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.²

This is how Swami Vivekananda brought to the understanding of the common man, the Truth of the Oneness of all Existence as preached thousands of years before in the Upanishads, and exemplified in life in the present times by Sri Ramakrishna.

The Palsied Age

Today it is necessary to follow Swamiji's lead in marching forward towards this ideal of Practical Vedanta. It is the only cure of the illness from which we are suffering—a severe moral and spiritual palsy. In patients suffering from cerebral palsy there is a loss of volitional control over the motor function resulting from a brain disorder. Exactly in the same way, people are suffering from a disorder in their moral and spiritual being. The effect is a paralysing weakness and loss of delight in making unselfish and noble choices. This profound crisis in human consciousness is caused by a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. People, as a result, only desire to satisfy their personal needs and confine themselves to a selfish life of the senses and thereby live in vain. With all the material prosperity and intellectual acquisitions, the world has become for human beings only a confused mass of needs and impulses, ambitions and activities, without any control or guidance of the spirit. This has made them strangely aware of an emptiness that surrounds them. They have no goal in life. Neither a life of religious belief nor reason goads them to go ahead. Swamiji has rightly analyzed this situation:

'We do not like to move one step forward. I think of mankind just as I read of persons who become frozen in snow; all such, they say, want to go to sleep, and if you try to drag them up, they say, "Let me sleep. It is so beautiful to sleep in the snow," and they die there in that sleep. So is our nature. That is what we are doing all our life, getting frozen from the feet upwards, and yet wanting to sleep'.

Weakness, fear and superstition corrode our strength. Fear of society and of public opinion, fear of losing friends and cherished

superstitions make us feel helpless. Fervently does Swamiji pray for us: 'Would to God that no superstitions had been put into your head! Would to God we had not been surrounded from our birth by all these superstitious influences and paralysing ideas of our weakness and vileness!'

Thus, due to the loss of the urge to attain consciousness of infinity or the longing for perfection, or fear of losing our small individual identity, human beings have developed a strange conservative tendency as far as practising dharma—that is, moral and spiritual well-being—is concerned. How pathetic that human beings who are otherwise strong in body and mind, and powerful in intellect and emotions are all suffering from this terrible weakness in this palsied age!

A typical case history in our epic literature of one who suffered from this disease is that of Duryodhana of the *Mahabharata*. He was conscious of his weakness and so once said:

'I know what dharma is, but do not voluntarily practice it; I know what *adharma* is, but my volitional control over unrighteousness has been lost'.*

A proved case of moral and spiritual paralysis.

Sooner or Later

Sooner or later, however, everyone has to reach the ultimate goal of life. The causes for this stupor are multiple and variable. Idle ratiocination or dry metaphysics cannot take us forward. Swamiji's Practical Vedanta can. It reminds us that we are not just 'poor, sense-bound clods of earth'; it teaches us not to forget our true spiritual nature. It can help us to face the modern scientific temper and secular view of life and can also supply us with the spiritual filling that we need so badly. To synthesize the knowledge of the Oneness of all existence with selfless devotion, we are told to observe the following rules: Give up condemnation of others. Practise commendation. People condemn and criticize others because of the differences they observe in their lives. Explaining this Swamiji says:

'All is One, which manifests Itself, either as thought, or life, or soul, or body, and the difference is only in degree. As such we have no right to look down with contempt upon those who are not developed exactly in the same degree as we are. Condemn none; if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands,

* आनामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्तिः आनाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः।

bless your brothers and let them go their own way. Dragging down and condemning is not the way to work.'

After abjuring criticism, we have to develop the habit of commending others. People have not to be degraded to worldly slavery, but to be raised up to God. For achieving this stature, higher ideals are to be placed before them. Strengthening of character and will are essential. Character is built on self-confidence. Thinking of God as the infinite, almighty, ever-good and ever-beneficent one helps people to raise themselves to a higher level of existence.

Commendation helps people to shake off their slumber. Weakness does not allow them to move forward and function freely. Once people experience the first stirring of moral and spiritual awakening, they move forward. The Upanishads command us not to look upon ourselves as worthless beings. As also Swamiji says: 'If I teach you, therefore, that your nature is evil, that you should go home and sit in sackcloth and ashes and weep your lives out, because you took certain false steps, it will not help you, but will weaken you all the more, and I shall be showing you the road to more evil than good. If this room is full of darkness for thousands of years and you come in and begin to weep and wail, "Oh, the darkness," will the darkness vanish? Strike a match and light comes in a moment. . . . Build up your character, and manifest your Real Nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-Pure, and call it up in everyone that you see. I wish that everyone of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, "Rise, thou effulgent one, rise thou who art always pure, rise thou birthless and deathless, rise almighty, and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee." This is the highest prayer that the Advaita teaches.'²

This knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-being. On the contrary, all strength and all help come from within. Therefore, instead of disapproval and criticism, if we can praise and encourage others, they will be helped to recover from their paralytic disease and reach the consummation of the Vedantic Ideal.

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1. *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, tr., Swami Jagadananda (Madras 1952), 821-22.
2. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, ed., Prabodhika Atmaprana (Calcutta 1967), 9-10.
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Mayavati 1945), III.365.

The Taittiriya Upanishad and Modern Scientific Principles

SAUMENDRA NATH MUKHOPADHYAY

IN THE BhriguvalI chapter of the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, we see Bhrigu respectfully approaching his saintly father Varuna and praying for the knowledge of the Greatest. The father offers a working definition of Brahman (meaning the Greatest and not the Creator alone) as:

‘The One from which all these creations have come, by which all these are sustained and into which all these finally dissolve’.*

Then he tells his son who is a disciple he must now work out the truth and realize it himself. The son retires and applies himself to an intense search in line with his father’s instructions.

Let us pause and divert here for a moment to appreciate the saintly family life of the ancient Upanishadic society in India. The scripture is silent about the person who nurtures the young questioning mind of a son like Bhrigu and when the appropriate time comes, sends him to the man who knows. The mother in the background shines in her quiet luminous glory. The teacher of *brahma-vidya* (the knowledge which is the means to attain the Greatest) is the father himself who does not impose his knowledge on the son; instead he gives only guidance and allows full freedom to the disciple to obtain the truth according to his natural inclination and development. The son is also worthy and has complete faith in his master; and so after performing austerities, he comes back to his father with his interim finding:

‘Matter is Brahman’.†

‘Matter’ broadly meets the specification laid down by his father. The statement made by Bhrigu in the second chapter is possibly the best enunciation of the principle of conservation of mass that we have ever read in any book of science. But immediately after his submission, Bhrigu repeats his prayer for the Supreme Knowledge. Why? Either he was not satisfied himself and, though not yet fully aware, his

* यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत् प्रयन्त्वप्सिंसंविशन्ति ।

... तद् ब्रह्मेति । III.1.

† अन्नं ब्रह्मेति । Ibid., 2.

intuition could anticipate something still higher, or maybe, he could foresee the situation when mass would not be conserved as has been recently revealed by modern science in nuclear fission reactions. But true to his characteristic method his father Varuna gives no direct answer. Instead, as a true teacher of *brahma-vidya*, he prefers to transmit his wisdom silently; outwardly he advises his son to continue his research and find out the truth himself. He adds that the effort to know the Supreme is itself great.* Bhṛigu goes back to his investigation and after some time reports back to his guide:

‘Energy or Vitality is Brahman’.†

The findings stated in the third chapter are a wonderful exposition of the principle of conservation of energy. But inadequacy of the so-called inconscient energy is perceived and higher principles are sought after by Bhṛigu as has been unwittingly done by famous scientists like Werner Heisenberg in the indeterminacy principle or Louis de Broglie in the matter-wave theory. In fact, today the latest research into sub-nuclear particles and forces is revealing newer domains of existence which modern science is yet to grasp fully. But Bhṛigu in his spiritual insight realized the next higher level of truth and returned to his father to state:

‘Mind is Brahman’.‡

In fact when evolution reaches this plane of mental faculty with powers like reason, a human being stands out in the animal world as a distinct entity. So, when the famous Greek philosopher defines man as a rational animal, he summarizes the present state along with its past history. But Bhṛigu’s search does not stop here; beyond the equilibrating mental poise over the vital and physical existence, he enters into the new light of the supramental and comes back to his father to submit:

‘Idea or pure wisdom is Brahman’.§

He continues still further and rests only when he finally reaches the plane of eternal bliss. In the sixth chapter he announces:

‘Ananda or pure bliss is Brahman’.**

* तपो ब्रह्मेति । *ibid.*

† मनो ब्रह्मेति । *ibid.*, 4.

** आनन्दो ब्रह्मेति आनानन्द । *ibid.*, 6.

‡ प्राणो ब्रह्मेति । *ibid.*, 3.

§ विज्ञानं ब्रह्मेति । *ibid.*, 5.

'It is from Ananda that all these creations have come into being; it is by Ananda that all these live; and it is into Ananda that all these ultimately lose their identity'.*

The distinct possibility, rather the inevitable human destiny, of the supramental growth has been well-researched by Sri Aurobindo and the principles of science have been indicated in his writings on Integral Yoga. But the real beauty of the Upanishad lies in the fact that though subtler and subtler planes have been systematically exposed to arrive at the highest, it never loses its practical wisdom. The injunctions in the seventh and eighth chapters are emphatically clear that matter must not be ignored or despised,† because it is over a healthy material foundation that the remaining superstructure can well develop and firmly stand. It goes further and establishes the complete equivalence and identity between matter and energy‡—a principle discovered by Professor Albert Einstein in his famous Theory of Relativity and offered in the mathematical equation form as $E=mc^2$, where E is the energy equivalent of mass m, c representing the velocity of light.

All this encourages us to suggest that the search of the contemporary mind in any field of knowledge, be it science or arts, should refer to the wisdom of the Upanishad for it could well be that the issues have already been adequately resolved and presented in a unique suggestive style by the ancient seers of India. Swami Vivekananda initiated the movement in which the East and the West were to exchange material prosperity for the spiritual wealth of the Upanishads. That same movement is maturing into a stage when the East and the West must come so close as to lose their distinctive identity in unity of spirit. This alone will fulfil the eternal craving of the human heart—

'Lead me from falsehood to Truth,
from ignorance to Knowledge,
from death to Immortality'.§

OM SHANTI HARI OM.

* आनन्दाद्वेष्वल्लिङ्गमिति मूर्तानि जायन्ते । आनन्देन जातानि जीवन्ति । आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यपिसर्विच्छन्ति । Ibid.

† अन्नं न निन्द्यात् । अन्नं न परिच्छेदीत् । Ibid., 7, 8.

‡ प्राणो वा अन्नम् । Ibid., 7.

§ अन्नतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मा मृतं गमय । *Brihadaranyaka* I. iii. 28.

Tolerance and Acceptance—the Fulfilment of Spirituality

PRAVRAJKA NIRBHAYAPRANA

THE PROBLEM of the modern age is that most of us do not know, nor care to know, the purpose of our life and the way to its fulfilment. The result is that we are all the time either in tension or in confusion. Many of the ills in society are due to this aimlessness. Even society has become meaningless as we have forgotten the very purpose of forming it. The integration of character is being lost, both individually and collectively, and human beings are degraded from the standards of humanity; what then to speak of the standards of divinity!

In olden days it was just the other way round. Even in their casual talk people would not forget the aim of life. In the opening chapter of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* we see that all the Rishis are assembled in Naimisha-Aranya. They want to hear stories from the great narrator, Suta, but the question put to him is:

'Please tell us of those things by which the mind may become placid and tranquil.* To make the mind tranquil and serene, to become content in the Atman (आत्मारामः) is the aim of life, nothing else. The great Suta replied in the same strain before starting the narration of the *Bhagavatam*:

'That alone is the highest duty of men from which follows devotion to God—devotion which is absolutely motiveless and knows no obstruction; then only does the soul realize the all-blissful God.†

Sri Shankaracharya in his *Viveka-Chudamani* says:

'Among things conducive to liberation, devotion alone holds the supreme place. The seeking after one's own nature is designated as devotion'.‡ Swami Vivekananda also said that 'Determination must be the first impulse towards becoming religious. Religion is realization, not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming'.

So we must have a clear idea about the aim of life, which is to manifest the divinity already in us. To realize that aim, upliftment of

* ब्रूहि नः श्रद्धावानां येनात्मा सम्प्रसीदति । I. I. 11.

† स वै पुरां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरबोधजे । अहंभुवधप्रतिहता ययाऽऽत्मा सम्प्रसीदति । I. II. 6.

‡ मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी । स्वस्वकृपानुसम्भवात् भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ॥ 31.

the mind is essential. We have to become divine by realizing that we are already divine.

If we really want peace we have to get rid of tension in life; restlessness has to go, and serenity of mind has to be developed. When Sri Ramakrishna was asked by a devotee, 'In what condition of mind is the vision of God obtained?', he replied, 'When the mind is perfectly tranquil'.

Vedanta proclaims that the human being is divine and the final aim is to see God in everything. It has no theory of evil; but there is ignorance. The question is, how to make this Vedanta practical in day-to-day life.

The way of approaching religion as taught and practised by Sri Ramakrishna is a new guideline. From time immemorial, India has accepted the doctrine of 'unity in diversity'. 'Truth is one, people give it different names.' The verification of this theory is found in its perfection in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings.

Claude Alan Stark, in his book *'God of All—Sri Ramakrishna's Approach to Religious Plurality'*, wrote:

'The dilemma of religions is their plurality. . . . the approach of Sri Ramakrishna, an approach based on the experience of God, offers a workable hypothesis toward solving this central dilemma.' What is that workable hypothesis? 'There are as many paths as there are faiths.'

On 11 September 1893, in front of the august audience assembled at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda introduced himself saying, 'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but accept all religions as true.'

Swami Vivekananda was able to pronounce that sublime idea with full conviction and authority because he had realized this truth, sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. 'In him I found my highest ideal realized. . . . His whole life was spent in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism and dogma. He formed no sect. Quite the reverse. He advocated and strove to establish absolute freedom of thought. . . . My teaching is my own interpretation of our ancient books in the light which my master shed upon them. I am a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a perfect *sannyasin* whose influence and ideas I fell under. This great *sannyasin* never assumed a negative or critical

attitude towards other religions, but showed their positive side—how they could be carried into life, and practised. . . . So beautifully tolerant was he that every sect thought he belonged to them.'

Swami Vivekananda wanted all followers of Ramakrishna to accept, obey, and to show proper respect to that wonderful and sublime idea. It is recorded in *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, written by Swami Saradananda:

'Narendranath also kept a watch over the devotees of the Master to see that they paid due respect to the true *sadhakas* of all religious communities. "Paying reverence to the *sadhakas* of one's own community only and condemning all others, as people in general do, is," he said, "as good as showing disrespect to the Master's doctrine, 'As many faiths, so many paths', and therefore to the Master himself'."

Tolerance as such is a social and civic virtue. It is a discipline to move in society without creating trouble and problems. To put up with society one has to be tolerant. Nothing in this world is bad as such. It depends on individuals to make it divine or devilish. Tolerance without acceptance is only a negative virtue. It can make people selfish and hypocritical. On the other hand, if tolerance is practised with love and reverence, it develops into 'loving acceptance' and becomes a divine virtue. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

'Divine virtues lead us to liberation, while evil qualities lead to bondage and confusion.*'

Swami Vivekananda said that the difference between God and the devil lies in nothing but unselfishness and selfishness. If it is thought that we are divine, it means that godliness and unselfishness are our very nature. We must manifest that and make ourselves free from all meanness, selfishness and ugliness. How to do this? The Holy Mother gave a nice suggestion. She said: 'Just as flowers when handled give out fragrance, or sandalwood when rubbed, even so, when the reality of God is dwelt upon, enlightenment takes place.' If we go on thinking of our real divine nature, the fragrance of divinity will come out. Further, as Sri Ramakrishna says: 'When the fruit grows out of the flower, the petals drop off of themselves. So, when the divinity in you increases, the weaknesses of your human nature will all vanish of their own accord.'

* ईशो सम्पद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता । XVI. 5.

Swami Vivekananda's use of the word 'proud' in his introductory address is very meaningful. Tolerance and acceptance as practised by Sri Ramakrishna form the master key which can unlock all dark rooms. We get the idea of all-inclusiveness from Sri Ramakrishna's new outlook, not only in the spiritual sphere but also in all other aspects of life. A broad view of human relationships develops from this new outlook—to love and live happily.

We must try to own that master key of 'tolerance with acceptance'. Then alone will we be able to be free from all darkness, all ignorance, all meanness, all selfishness and all ugliness. This is the workable hypothesis which can stop all quarrels among different cults and creeds. Even the imaginary line of demarcation between spirituality and worldliness disappears.

How beautifully did the Holy Mother interpret spiritual progress. 'What happens when one finds God? Does one grow a pair of horns? No, but one can distinguish good from evil, discover knowledge, and pass beyond the realm of life and death. Ordinary human love results in misery, but love for God brings in blessedness.'

The last message of the Holy Mother is even more inspiring. 'If you want peace of mind, look not to the faults of others; learn to feel kinship with the whole world. None is a stranger; the world is your own.' What can be a more meaningful guideline for practising the virtue of tolerance and acceptance?

Thus, possession of the divine virtues of tolerance and acceptance is the hallmark of the highest human culture, the expression of true spirituality which helps to manifest the divinity within. This is the fulfilment of spirituality. The disorder in society can be set aright by practising individually and collectively this one virtue.

The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man. He alone is not destroyed, who possesses this quality.

Sri Ramakrishna

Is Supernaturalism All Nonsense ?

KALIDAS BHATTACHARYA

IF NATIVE faith in the supernatural is a human frailty, no less, so is its loud disclaimer in the name of science. Science, insofar as it passes as the best intelligible account of the world, is, no doubt, for that reason, the best testing ground too as to whether a thing is really what it is ordinarily taken to be. But suppose a phenomenon defies even the best scientific scrutiny! Suppose in spite of the best scientific exercise one fails to account for it—fails even to throw any significant light on it, and yet it stands out challengingly there!

Roughly, whatever is unamenable to scientific treatment is, so far, supernatural, and there are countless such supernatural events at every turn of our life. All *accidents*, for example, belong to this group. Most of them are, indeed, partly accounted for scientifically, but they are accidents just in so far as they fail of such accounting. Just insofar as they fail that way, what should be our (scientific) attitude to them? Obviously, it would be to discover in their behaviour as much law-abidingness (determination) as could be gathered under such circumstances, and this we do through statistical computation. Details of our micro behaviours are simply ignored by the scientist, but only at the cost of our actual life. The scientist himself cannot deny these details nor their impact on our actual life; only, he proposes to ignore them. He cannot claim that these accidents do not, or even ought not, to exist nor that we do not feel their impact. To deny all this simply on the ground that they are unamenable to scientific treatment would only be the height of folly.

Accidents, however, are not the only kind of the supernatural we experience. There are other kinds, much less amenable, even unamenable, to statistical computation. Cases of hypnotism, will-force and parapsychological phenomena are only a few of these which yet have a momentous influence on our life, however much we seek to ignore them. And why exclude our everyday dreams, illusions and hallucinations? What, again, of prayers at times of crisis? What even of our

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everyday communication with others, our pet animals included? Then, there are our creative approaches—our scientific knowledge itself based on hypotheses and experimentation, our arts, our moral and social norms and our religions, all based on what we call 'freedom'. These phenomena cover among themselves, half at least, of our human life. Why ignore this big half? Many of our 'free' activities can indeed be rationalized statistically, but freedom is not exhausted in that. Despite all macro averages, micro behaviours are each absurd to 'scientific' reason, and they do not 'merely happen'. They are not just dead data with which to feed a computer. They themselves are often our living activities, free in the literal sense of the term. Dreams, illusions, hallucinations and parapsychological phenomena are not indeed 'free activities', but, as certainly too, they are not wholly amenable to 'scientific' treatment, not even to probability calculus.

Why, then, should science ignore them as not worth serious study, seeing that in their own right they constitute a half of human life? Why always orient them to the other half which, rightly or wrongly, the scientist has cut out for himself as his own field of inquiry? Is there anything vitally all-important about this other half?

In older days, with supreme indifference, scientists did not even recognize them as some phenomena over there. Happily, that attitude is now changed. Since the days of Lavoisier they have learnt to recognize them as facts after all, though largely, if not wholly, unaccounted for. What the scientists have done till now is either to compute their statistical worth for the field of science or trace them to certain human inclinations and basic dispositions. This means that they are only projections of these inclinations and dispositions on the field of science. But why not consider them as they are in their own field and study them for whatever they are worth, though certainly not without their impact on the field of science?

Limitations of Science

If the scientists could not study these phenomena, it was because they started their inquiry with a narrow attitude, and they have unfortunately clung to it till now. The real, for them, is that which, primarily, is a brute 'given', physical or mental—something that just happens over against the knower; and if the mental too is so 'given' what it all means is that the knower, the subject, just receives it, is just affected by it, the knower, the person-as-such, always remaining (mysteriously

enough) outside the field of science. Not that for science the knower is unimportant therefor. The givens as such, both physical and mental—and comprehended within them what may be called 'organic'—constitute what we call 'nature'. It is the knower, the person who, manipulating them theoretically, works out a more or less systematic picture of this 'nature' and, manipulating it practically, i.e. through technological and similar applications, seeks to superpose on that theoretical construct a newly-built nature—society, economy, polity and what not—for an all-round happy human life. Through theoretical manipulation he not only constructs a systematic picture of nature, through this very process he also learns to postulate, in the very interest of that systematization, many infra-sensuous—maybe, in certain cases, even super-sensuous phenomena, too, like atoms and their sub-atomic behaviours, ether, gravitation, field, and so on. But because these manipulation processes are in terms of determination—determining Y casually, logically or in whatever other manner—all these non-sensuous phenomena constitute, for them, along with sensuous data, the entire field of science, called nature. The determination of Y by X is, by definition, demonstrable and manipulable; and where there is such demonstrable and manipulable determination, X has to be of the same category as that Y, i.e. itself as 'natural as Y' however unperceived or unperceivable it may otherwise be. This is why, unlike the supernaturals we spoke of earlier, the supersensibles of science are yet all natural.* Categorically, thus, the unperceivable in nature is continuous with the perceivable.

If this is how the natural—whether perceivable or unperceivable (non-sensuous)—is to be understood, the supernatural that we were speaking of earlier is just its opposite. For science, the knower, the manipulator, though an inevitable presupposition of science,† is as yet, outside of nature, most definitely supernatural. A little later it will be

* Where such natural determinants are themselves indeterminate (*v/de* modern physics) they are treated as accidents, quite as much as we treat accidents in our daily life. Again, as for the smooth running of our daily life we, in the face of accidents, resort to probability and statistics, so also is the case with our treatment of the micro phenomena of modern physics.

† If in order to avoid this anomaly some 'philosophers of science' have done away with psychologism, replacing it by 'logical' consideration; this 'logic' itself would share the same fate. (*v/de* Wittgenstein).

shown that all other supernaturals really centre round this primary supernatural, viz., the knower, the person, the subject.

The Data of Science

The prestige of science derives not so much from the initial delimitation of its field, as described above—conscious delimitation rather tends to denigrate—as from two other advantages derived from that. Because its data are clear 'givens' and because in extending its field to accommodate other unperceived or even unperceivable realities it employs clear methods of manipulation—to be precise, clear experiments and clear deduction—what, in effect, it really boasts of is just all-round clarity. The data it starts with are clear, its method of tackling them is clear and necessarily so is whatever new truth is concluded to; 'clarity' meaning everywhere that a normal man studying science finds nothing that escapes his comprehension, provided he has intelligence enough to follow the scientist step by step. This is just what does not happen with regard to the supernatural. The data there are oftener than not only personal experiences, contents that are clear to the speakers alone and, in case they are public data, largely intractable: we are never sure what they are really and how possibly they can be connected with other phenomena. We are never sure, in other words, of their exact nature, causes and whereabouts.

What further has contributed to the enormous prestige of science is its technological success—all clear, again, in the sense that the practical applications of scientific truths are every bit demonstrated in the concrete world and before the eyes of all. Still more, such applications, conduce to the material comforts of our life, than which nothing could possibly be clearer, i.e. more unquestionably acceptable.

Science can, indeed, rightfully claim these merits. But what does it all really amount to? If you are determined from the beginning to keep confined to that alone which is clear to all and avoid whatever is enigmatic, necessarily your data, method and results will all be clear. But that clarity would come to nothing substantial. Not that science never takes up the challenge of enigmatic phenomena. But it faces only those of them which are *prima facie* reducible to 'clear' phenomena and, therefore, manageable (by clear methods). Not only that, because of the inordinate prestige of science the types of things that science alone tackles, the methods it uses and the types of conclusion it arrives at have in course of time come to be considered the only 'clear' things, 'clear' methods and 'clear' conclusions.

The claim of science that it alone has a method to demonstrate and manipulate things successfully and the parallel *meta* claim that the method too is equally demonstrable and manipulable thus over-shoot the mark. It will be presently shown that the supernaturalists, too, can put forward an equally valid claim for their method. As for the 'clarity' of what a 'scientist' would call data, we have seen what it eventually comes to: eventually it means that these data are just 'natural'. And, similarly with the conclusions (theories) the scientists derive from their 'natural' data through the application of their 'clear' methods.

Claims of a Supernaturalist

Assuredly, the data a supernaturalist starts from are never wholly 'natural'. But they are never, on that account, 'unclear'. They are one and all 'given' concretely present before us. The special prestige of science apart, there is no reason why this clarity of his data should be rated lower.

There is no special reason, similarly, why his method too should be less clear than that of science. If the method of science is observation, experiment and logic, and if experiment and logic are, in science, designed only to discipline observation and legitimately construct objects that are otherwise unobservable, in supernaturalism too, observation is sought to be disciplined, and legitimately extended that way, by a sort of esoteric exercise, called *sadhana*. In supernaturalism experiment and logic are only replaced by *sadhana*. As in science the business of experiment and logic is to free our mind of all personal predilections and make it as much object-oriented as possible, so is the case with this *sadhana* too. While, however, in science this freeing process culminates in delinking the mind altogether from the world of objects, in *sadhana* the mind is only progressively freed of its prepossessions—its prejudices, moods and dispositions—not cut off altogether from objects. For science, the objects, with their full stock of properties, are already over there, disconnected from the knower; but for the supernaturalist, they are there only as they are *known to be*, as somehow related, in other words, to the knower and drawing sustenance from that source, though not without their own positive characters and standing.

So the supernaturalist too has a method which, he claims, is as reliable as that of science except that, not eliminating the

mind altogether, it remains esoteric to the end. As *sadhana*, it seeks indeed to eliminate prejudices, moods and dispositions, but that is achievable only progressively. Obviously, at a lower stage many of these prepossessions continue, and at the lowest stage, where *sadhana* has not yet started, all of them do so. Yet, however, we have in the meantime discovered where exactly science and supernaturalism differ; unlike the scientist, no supernaturalist would ever totally disconnect the mind (the knower) and the object. Supernaturalism is against all metaphysical bifurcation of reality into man and nature. Because throughout there is some sort of indissoluble unity of man (the knower) and nature. Naturally, at its lower levels, items of nature, i.e. objects, stand coloured by the prejudices, moods and dispositions of man, whether of the individual man or the community (tribe). It is only through *sadhana* that these prejudices, etc. are progressively got rid of, leading to higher stages of supernatural life, called spirit. Supernatural life is, thus, from the beginning to the end, an integral life, distinct from science which thrives only on separation of nature (object) from man the knower (subject). As, in science, man the subject is, from the beginning, kept at a safe distance; everything there, no matter whether it is a datum or a theory, is, notionally at least, a public affair—a pursuit open to all. In contradistinction, in supernaturalism, because man is very much in the picture throughout, its entire procedure is a personal affair, a secret, so far, known only to those who practise *sadhana* and also by the initiates. The procedure has to be kept a secret lest others, uninitiated into the field, might misuse it, much as it is the case with modern atomic secrets in science too.

The supernaturalists, it may be added, claim technological success too in their field, whether at lower stages in the form of magical and parapsychological feats or of moral purification at a higher stage or of religious progress at the highest leading to realization (perfection).

Through all these stages, supernaturalism is more of the nature of art than science ('science' meaning a system of truths with knowledge of how they are arrived at), and its science side is always a personal or party secret; why we have seen. All this is true even of such activities as poetry, painting, music, and so on,* which, as arts, transcend, beyond all measure, any methods that could be 'scientifically' formulated.

* These belong to some higher regions of the supernatural.

This is not merely because every genuine artist is endowed with some inscrutable originality but more because he has to follow a trans-'scientific' method, called *sadhana*. *Sadhana*, as different from *siddhi* accomplishment, is a method, and quite systematic for that.

Man the Subject

The real secret of supernaturalism is that, for it, reality is living, pulsating nature, centring as it does, round man the subject, the knower, the communicator, and—what is more important—in that happy game of communication, man and nature are equal partners. More appropriately, it is a communion game.

Scientists, in their zeal for the brute 'given' and proud of their success in demonstration and manipulation, have, in effect, denigrated man to the level of things and treated him as just an item of nature, even though they continue, as they must, to speak of him as the perceiver, demonstrator and manipulator. They have not noticed, however, that while no mere item (inanimate or animate) of nature can ever look at that nature—we mean, the world of objects—from a distance, whether by questioning it and seeking answers or by rearranging its large tracts according to certain principles called values, this is what precisely man as man, i.e. as more than nature, does.

Man, just insofar as he thus transcends nature, is subject, categorically different from 'nature' and all that belongs to it, called object. For any human pursuit this 'subject' is unavoidable. Even when a scientist understands nature as over there, i.e. independent, he understands it as independent of *man the subject*. Man the subject, as distinct from the physical, organic and even psychic man,* is no object among objects, nothing that is independent of himself and 'natural'. And yet the scientists have persistently figured him like that.

They have not seen also that even when 'I', as a subject, talk to you as another subject this 'you' is not wholly independent of me and, therefore, no object, nothing that is 'natural'. A 'he' comes to be a 'you' only as I address him. Even though as bodily, living and psychical he is independent of me, as a subject 'you' he necessarily hangs on

* Psychic man is one whose mental behaviours are all determined by outside factors or by other mental behaviours which, in turn, are determined by other such outside factors. Psychic man, so understood, is yet far from the subject. It is still an object or several such objects integrated into a system.

to me. And, similarly the 'I', though, maybe, only largely: I am an 'I'—subject (largely) as I communicate with others. All inter-personal activities—all activities that are social—thus involve the supernatural in whatever measure.

A little examination of the so-called human sciences, say medicine and psychology, will confirm our point. Everywhere in these sciences we come across cases of resistance—resistance to many foreign bodies—and yet, unaccountably enough, of glad acceptance of some of them. This resistance/acceptance, though a common expression used in those sciences, is only loosely spoken of there. The concept 'man's own initiative', though so often used in those sciences, has always been an unsolved paradox. Reactions of man are understood in the language of physical sciences, as fully calculable results of causes operating from outside, a measurable spill-over, as it were, of 'affects' produced. But the phenomena of rejection and glad acceptance are obviously, to man the subject, an *original* source of activity, no matter whether it is conscious or just vital. This secret of 'one's own initiative' (in the psychic field, called 'freedom') has been systematically (though unacknowledgedly so far) ignored by *human* scientists, and they have managed all idiosyncratic and recalcitrant human phenomena through probability and statistics. But we have already seen how far and where this 'scientific' method leads us. They are excellent methods leading to surprising technological success in the social field and even in the macro life of an individual, but that success concerns only the objective 'natural' side of man—the gross physical, physiological, and psychological sides. It does not touch the *subject* 'man' except fringily. And yet the subject 'man' is decidedly the core of all that is truly human, however unmanageable it may be by science. There always remains over some subject-centricity. This is the supernatural hang-over which human scientists have systematically ignored on the ground that it is unamenable to scientific treatment. Yet they cannot dismiss it altogether as nonsense. To dismiss it that way would be as foolish as to have co-ordinated it with 'natural' things, holding that it is only additionally real. When the supernaturalists call it real they do not mean that it is independent of the subject, nor that even as unperceivable it is in the same category with other objects of nature.

Even the concept 'object' is sufficiently intriguing. 'Object' is, no doubt, what is independent of the subject that knows it. But the

intriguing question is there—Is it *known* to be so independent of the knowledge or just *is* so independent? Its 'independence' in the latter sense explains, indeed, why it is taken as an item of 'nature' and its properties generally as 'natural'. But the very fact that its 'objectivity' is after all no 'natural' property decides in favour of the former sense of the term 'independence'. That a certain thing is an object can never be just a fact over there in its own right. Its being an object is only another way of *saying* that *I know* it as independent of *my 'knowledge'*. Not that its just being over there comes that way to be denied. But that is only a part of the total situation 'I say that I know it as independent of my knowledge', implying thereby that all nature is, after all, only an abstraction from out of an over-all supernaturality. And a dangerous abstraction for that, for the moment it is restored to the original unity 'I say I know it as etc., etc.' all nature comes to be engulfed in the supernatural and all that science speaks so confidently of nature gets restored to the over-all supernatural context and transmuted beyond recognition.

From the point of view of the supernatural, which so far is the more concrete truth, nature is what is gladly accepted by man the knower, and precisely as so accepted; which means that it is no self-sufficient 'in itself' that knocks me (the knower subject) down, the way it is usually understood by the scientist who, it may be added, has always, in the interest of such 'in-itself', either ignored man the subject or permitted nature (object) to have absolute hegemony over it.

The Keynote of Supernaturalism

The keynote of all that is supernatural is that the subjective and objective sides here are in close communion. Much of the so-called 'object' here is somehow, through that communion, determined by the 'subject': the object here is X because the subject wants to have it as X, and neither is some intrinsic character of the object denied nor is the additional character dismissed as *illusory* construction, the object and the subject being in constant communion. For science, the object is as it is in its intrinsic character, but that is only an abstraction, and the additional character, said to be contributed by the subject, is not illusory because that communion works successfully in our life; not only on this or that occasion but throughout. To put the matter in a different way, the so-called scientific object is, in supernaturalism, at least another *subject*—a 'you' subject—which is in constant communion

with the subject that is 'I'. Nature is neither colourlessly there to knock me down, nor to be just exploited by me, but is only supplicated almost as every other person is supplicated by me in order that we lead a successful joint life. Success in supernatural life lies in mastering the art of this communion. Everywhere in olden days elaborate schemes of this mastery were developed. Science appears to have suppressed that art; yet it continues as much secretly in secret societies—and more obviously, though mechanically, in extant rituals—as, in its still respected highest form, in what is called religious or spiritual life at its best. Everywhere the keynote is subject-centricity, whether that subject is 'I' or 'you'.

In an inter-personal relation specially where it is cordial, the subtle way I benefit others, and they me, is an obvious fact, though unamenable to scientific treatment. Equally obvious, and more unamenable to scientific treatment, is how even our pet animals behave toward us and we toward them. Again, by stretching our imagination a little beyond we can visualize how we may profit through our supernatural cordiality with the vegetative world and seas and clouds, storms, fire and so on. Science may decry all this as outdated anthropomorphism. But these are facts. If science is one species of the art—a predatory one—of utilizing nature there may well be other species of art, though this time not of exploitation but of profiting through loving communion. These other species were publicly in the field till the other day, and one such species, however undervalued, is extant to this date; it is religion as spiritual pursuit. The only difference is that while the method of theoretical science and technology are very largely a public affair, thrown open indiscriminately to all, the methods of the communion-art are, for obvious reasons, sealed secrets except to initiates. Even science today thinks twice before throwing open new powerful secrets to all and sundry. This it has learnt after much mischief has been done. Communionists have always been wiser: they would rather face extinction than arm people indiscriminately with powerful communion-weapons.

Communion-Art

Subject-centric communion-art is of various grades of excellence according as the subject—mainly the I-subject—is purified of its individual predilections, its diverse earthly attachments and aversions, its

six *ripus*, enemies.* Till these are conquered the subject is liable to be swayed by individual inclinations and passions, though one even with all inclinations and passions may have mastered the art of communion. That art at such levels is magic or, better, myth, but not, for that reason, a hoax. The supernatural powers these people attain are still facts, though the entire method, systematic in its own way and masterable only through *sadhana*, is beyond the pale of science. The modern attempts at scientificizing this method is only a wild-goose chase. Communion-art is basically subject-centric, and, ideologically, all science is subject-denying.

It is only when in spiritual pursuit proper one has got rid of, or conquered, all personal predilections and inclinations that we find this communion-art in its superior forms. The conquest, again, has to be achieved through grades, and according as we advance forward this art passes through forms called, in succession, normality, religion and realization of perfection.

But does not science, too, one may ask, seek equally to get rid of all personal predilection, called personal equation, and does it not seek also that all 'natural' data are ultimately engulfed by reason and form a system where all their erstwhile recalcitrance gets reconciled. And is not their 'reason' subjectivity *par excellence*, called reasoning or thinking?

Even granting all this, we may yet note a characteristic feature of science which keeps it a long way off from communion-art. That characteristic is as follows:

Because of its primal antipathy for all genuine subjectivity science feels compelled to understand reason either in an objective language as the logic over there, embedded in nature, or, in case it is still taken as subjective, it is understood as only a method, a conventional instrument, that never *enters into* Truth; and even there, in the latter case, the subjectivity understood as convention is no more than a special type of 'natural object'. We have already seen how in human sciences man has been understood as a 'natural object' of a type with all his physical, physiological and psychological features, and never as a *subject* proper. It follows that where science seeks to keep itself aloof from

* The six *ripus* are *kama*, attachment, *krodha*, anger, *lobha*, greed, *moha*, delusion, *mada*, arrogance and *matsarya*, jealousy.

personal equation what it wants that way to avoid is all idiosyncratic predilection, none of the generic dispositions of man. Communion-art, on the other hand, as centring round the *subject* man from the beginning, is not worried so much about personal individual dispositions at the lower levels, though as it seeks to proceed to higher and higher stages of supernaturalism it gets more and more serious about progressive elimination (or conquest) of all these dispositions, rendering thereby the *subject* man purer and purer, which means that the object side too is approached that way in greater and greater authentic cordiality, till at the highest stage it is all-cordial communion between subject and object, between man and nature.

Vivekananda in Madras

Some Anecdotes

D. B. RAGHUNATH RAO

MY FATHER, the late D. R. Balaji Rao, was a close friend of Swami Vivekananda. He used to tell us that Swamiji was an arresting personality with handsome features, always smiling and had a robust constitution. His voice had a pleasant ringing tone. Being older than my father by a little more than two years, he used to call my father 'Balaji' affectionately. Whenever he entered our house (42 Singara-chari Street, Triplicane, Madras) in pure Marathi, he would ask my eldest sister, Amritha Bai, then about six years old, whether father was at home. She would always run up and announce with excitement the arrival of Swamiji saying, "Father, Swamiji has come, come and receive him." My sister was being given lessons in Sanskrit at home then and she would reel off *shlokas* with a clear accent at his request and he thus became very fond of her and blessed her not in the usual way but by saying, "Let God give you great *jnana*".

Swamiji, it appears, was fond of visiting Madras and the many holy shrines scattered all over the Presidency. Whenever he visited

D. B. Raghunath Rao is the youngest son of D. R. Balaji Rao.

our house, he would ask my mother to give him *dhal* soup with plenty of *jeerakam* (cummin seeds) in it and fried *vadam* and *appalams*.

Discussions and Discourses

In the upstairs hall (which has been hallowed by his frequent visits) many philosophic discussions took place, and also discourses on the *Gita* to a select gathering of admirers and intellectuals. Swamiji would revolt at the impotence of Indian nationhood, express how we have been emasculated politically, economically and otherwise and say that it was still not too late to rise and drive away the foreigner and shed the foreign yoke, even though the country was rift with a narrow-minded and communal and jealous outlook. However, it appears, he would also say in a stentorian voice, that all was not lost and that India would have its resurgence and ultimately become independent. He laid great stress on manliness in any form.

Regular discourses on the *Gita* used to be held in the Ice House under the able organization of another of his close friends, Alasinga Perumal, whom Swamiji would affectionately call 'Alasinga'. At Swamiji's request, father accompanied him on his South Indian tour to some of the holy shrines. Swamiji would say that this part of India was a blessed land. He had great faith in the strength of Indian Nationhood and said his task was to unify the forces, gone at a tangent, and galvanize the nation to work, strive and succeed. My father who was fond of tying his turban in various modes, presented one such length of cloth to Swamiji. It is this that adorns his head in the popular photographs published; and the sash around his waist which we also see in the photos was presented to him by the Maharaja of Khetri. One of those responsible for urging him to go to Chicago to attend the Parliament of Religions was my father, because of a philosophical bent of mind and also because he was a journalist, contributing to the *London Journal of Psychology and Mind*.

Swamiji narrated an incident to father stressing how he had a mission in life and that all his actions were guided by a superior divine force. During his peregrinations in the Punjab, Rajasthan and Kashmir, he said, due to incessant wandering from shrine to shrine and sometimes without any regular food, he one day lay down exhausted, stricken with fever and fell fast asleep under the shade of a big tree where the jungle was wild. When he woke up, he was terribly weak and hungry. A nobleman of the place at this time had a dream that a



Swami Vivekananda in 1893

Give us strength O thou who saw thy whole
family destroyed before your eyes with your
hands crossed on your breast Come Lord
come thou great teacher who has taught us
that the soldier has only booty and
great loss Come Lord come dojuni
chariot and teach me as thou one
teaches him that resignation in thyself
is the highest aim and end of this life.
So that with those great ones of old
I may also firmly and resolutely cry
I Om Sri Krishnarpanam astu

May the Lord send you peace is
the prayer day and night of

Sachidananda

very pious and good person lay helpless due to fever and hunger and he should repair there immediately with food and fruits. When Swamiji opened his eyes after some time, he beheld a great nobleman with an array of servants holding trays of tasty food which was most welcome to him to keep his body alive.

Victor in Wrestling Bout

Swamiji had a beautiful voice and could sing well some of the *kirtans*. Once he was walking on the Marina with father and other friends and was challenged as a bachelor to wrestle with a *pahilwan*. Swamiji accepted the challenge and defeated him on the sands of the Triplicane Beach. Sometimes he would do Hatha Yoga and show by cutting his finger with a knife that he would not bleed. Swamiji said to father that there was ample sympathy for India in America and elsewhere for gaining independence and all that was needed was a unifying force.

In a lighter vein, Swamiji informed father that the urge to enjoy a *hukka* was so great that when he neared Port Said he borrowed one from an Arab and enjoyed smoking it. On his return from America, Swamiji said to father that he dreamt of seeing lots of palm leaf manuscripts and treasures of wise sayings and other precious literature lying buried somewhere in an island near Cyprus.

During his itinerant days of *parivrajaka* Swamiji changed his name several times in order to avoid recognition and one such name was Sacchitananda by which he was intimately known to father, Alasinga Perumal and some others. It was at the request of the Maharaja of Khetri that he changed his name to Swami Vivekananda, but still he wrote to his friends from abroad as Sacchitananda.

Spiritual Power

Swamiji had glimpses of divinity. When he used to wait for father in the house, he would close his eyes and say *Om* with a hum vibrant with energy. Mother used to say that the whole house would, so to say, shake with his spiritual power. He wanted to give *upadesham* [instruction] to father and called him thrice (since he was just finishing his bath) but when father did not turn up, told him later that he still had to eke out his Karma in this birth and in the next birth he would surely attain salvation. Swamiji would say that God would try a man in many ways, not in heaping material prosperity but subjecting him to

many difficulties and miseries and calamities. He who by the strength of his mind was able to withstand the storm like a man would surely be blessed by the Lord. He foretold to father before he left for Bengal that God would try him in many ways and all these came to pass. My father lost two sons aged eight and six in quick succession and when Swamiji heard about this he wrote a beautiful letter of condolence which is reproduced below.

This treasure of advice from a great Vedantin like Swamiji is fit to be taken as wonderful consolation under any condition of adversity which afflicts human beings. As prophesied by Swamiji, father lost all in 1907, in the Arbuthnot Bank crash but he was undaunted and carried on. Swamiji would say that a man could attain salvation even by being a householder and doing his duties correctly.

On his second trip to America in 1899, the boat touched Madras but was in quarantine. Father with others went in a small boat but were not allowed to board the steamer. Only Alasinga accompanied him to Colombo. He blessed them all from the deck.

Letter to Mr. Balaji Rao

Dear Balaji,

"Naked we came out of our mother's womb, naked we return: blessed be the name of the Lord". Thus said the old Jewish saint when suffering the greatest calamities that can befall man and he erred not.

Herein lies the whole secret of existence. Waves may roll on the surface and tempests rage but deep down there is the strata of infinite calmness, of infinite peace and of infinite bliss. "Blessed are they that sorrow for they shall be comforted" and why? Because it is during these moments of visitation when the heart is wrung by hands which never stop for the father's cries or the mother's wails, when under the load of sorrow, dejection and despair the world seems to be cut off from under our feet—that the internal eyes open and when the whole horizon seems to be nothing but an impenetrable sheet of misery and utter despair, light flashes all of a sudden, the dreams vanish and intuitively we come face to face with the grandest mystery in nature—Existence. Yes—then it is when the load would be sufficient to sink a lot of frail vessels—the man of genius, of strength, the hero sees

that infinite, absolute, ever blissful existence *per se*—that infinite being who is called and worshipped under different names under different climes. Then it is that for a time the shackles that bind it down to this hole of misery break as it were for a time and the unfettered soul rises and rises until it reaches the throne of the Lord where “the wicked cease to torment and the weary are at rest”.

Cease not brother to send up petitions day and night, cease not to say day and night “Thy will be done”.

“Ours not to question why,
Ours but to do and die”.

“Blessed be thy name, thy holy name, O Lord, and thy will be done. Lord, we know that we are to submit. Lord, we know that it is the mother’s hand that is striking, but the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. There is, father of love, an agony at the heart which is fighting against that calm resignation which thou teachest. Give us strength O thou who saw thy whole family destroyed before your eyes with your hands crossed on your breast. Come Lord come thou great teacher who has taught us that the soldier has only to obey and speak not. Come Lord come Arjuna’s charioteer and teach me as thou once teachest him that resignation in thyself is the highest aim and end of this life. So that with those great ones of old I may also firmly and resignedly cry *Om Sri Krishnarpanamastu*.

May the Lord send you peace is the prayer day and night of
Sacchitananda.*

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A Meditation on a Beautiful Temple

HELGA BLUEMEL

**THE LORD has built a temple of life,
And we have decorated it
With the worst things we could possibly find.
In our ignorance we cannot discern
From whence the noxious odors come
Or why our eyes are weary of seeing
And our minds are filled with confusion
And our hearts do not feel anything.**

**I go out into this temple of life,
And think, 'What a peculiar thing
To associate with the Lord!
But it is indeed the Lord's.
All is indeed according to the supreme law.
Under the law, we may choose
To grow a plant to sustain life,
Or to poison and destroy life.**

**I go out into this temple of life
With a thought of the Truth
Which can sustain us through anything,
Which can be found anywhere,
And which is really within.
It will teach the wisdom we need to learn
From the darkest moments of doubt and destruction.
We can stand firm.**

**I go out into this temple of life
And sometimes see a temple of mortar and stone.
A temple is only as good as the people within—
Not the priests or the monastics or the members—
But all the people.
'My house shall be called a house of prayer,
But ye have made it into a den of thieves.'**

**O Mother, make our temples of mortar and stone, and flesh and blood
True vehicles of lasting love and service,
True temples of life.**

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Sri Sri Ramakrishna and the Motherhood of God

A. N. ROY

SRI RAMAKRISHNA says that looking upon God as the Mother of the Universe is the last word in the practice of spiritual discipline. This motherhood of God represents both the *saguna* and *nirguna* aspects of Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna, identified with the Divine Mother, was born for the good of the world. An incarnation of God, an *avatara*, is also an *adhikarika purusha*, a man of authority.

Advent of an Avatara

Ordinary people do not recognize an *avatara*. Only a few of his intimate disciples can recognize him. Twelve Rishis knew that Rama was both Brahman and an *avatara*. Other sages knew Rama only as Dasharatha's son. When Arjuna said that Sri Krishna was Brahman, Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to follow Him and took him to a huge tree where hung clusters of blackberries. Sri Krishna told Arjuna that those were not blackberries but clusters of Krishnas hanging from the tree. In other words on the tree of the Absolute Brahman there are Divine Incarnations without number. When Bhairavi Brahmani came to Sri Ramakrishna she cited the scriptures to show that it is not correct to say that there are only ten or twenty-four incarnations. The number of incarnations depends on the will of Brahman to descend whenever there is a decline in religion.

Sri Ramakrishna came as an incarnation with his Shakti, the Holy Mother, and his innermost circle of devotees—the *antarangas*—who are parts of his being. Sri Ramakrishna said about his disciples that they knew who he was, and he also knew who they were.

God is great and infinite, but His essence manifests Itself through man by His mere will. This incarnation of God as a man cannot be explained by analogy. Sri Ramakrishna says that an analogy can give us only a little glimpse. By touching the horns, legs or tail of a cow we in fact touch the cow but, for us, the essential thing is the cow's milk which comes through the udder. Similarly the essence of Brahman comes through an *avatara*. We see God Himself if we see His Incarnation. Sri Ramakrishna says that if a person goes to the Ganga and

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touches its water he will say that he has seen and touched the Ganga. It is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of the river from Haridwar to Gangasagar.

Brahman and Shakti

Sri Ramakrishna says that every *avatara* has worshipped Shakti, the Creative Power of Brahman. Shakti is a name of the Divine Mother in the Hindu scriptures. No one can become a *loka-guru*, a world teacher, without the grace of Shakti. He explains the idea of Ishtadevi, the Shakti of an *avatara* in this manner: an *avatara* has two *bhavas* or attitudes to preach to people; one is *bhakti* and the other *jnana*. He gives the simile of the tusks and teeth of an elephant—who uses outer tusks to attack and teeth to eat food. Pointing to his body Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Look, this is only the sheath. The Divine Mother, the Pure Consciousness of Bliss, sheltering this body, is teaching people. Therefore if you come near It, if you touch It, if you serve It, your spiritual nature will be aroused and you will realize God. But you should serve It with great care and reverence. I shall not be angry if you do not respect me, but, if the one who is inside me is disrespected and 'snaps at you even once, then you will be restless with pain'.¹

Sri Ramakrishna says that the only proof of God is by realization and that the existence of God cannot be proved by reasoning. He gave mankind the fruits of his spiritual realization. Two of his conclusions should always be remembered: first, God exists and can be seen; second, Brahman is real and the universe is also real. Sri Ramakrishna says that his relation with the Divine Mother is that She is the Mother and he is the child. Swami Vivekananda came to Sri Ramakrishna as a student steeped in doubt which is typical of modern men. He asked Sri Ramakrishna if he had seen God. This question was asked on behalf of all mankind. The answer which Sri Ramakrishna gave was an answer which might have been given to the whole of humanity. He said: he *had* seen God, as he was seeing Swamiji, and could also show God to him, as clearly as Swamiji was seeing him.

Sri Ramakrishna invoked the Divine Mother, 'Teach me Mother how to realize you, who else can help me! Are you not my only refuge and guide? Teach me what to do and what to say. Your will is paramount everywhere and is for the good of your children. Merge my will in yours and make me your instrument'. We know that the Divine Mother revealed Herself to him in the Kali Temple. She showed

Sri Ramakrishna that it was She who had become everything. The mage, the altar, the marble floor, all was consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna then found everything inside the room soaked, as it were, in the Bliss of God.

Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy of the Motherhood of God is that Brahman and Shakti are one. Shakti is not the female counterpart of the Absolute but is the active aspect of the Absolute which is inactive. These two aspects of Brahman, *nirguna* and *saguna*, *nirvishesha* and *savishesha*, Para-Brahman and Apara-Brahman represent the *paramarthika* or transcendental and *vyavaharika* or empirical points of view. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says, 'Thou art woman, Thou art man'. It is the very nature of Brahman to project the phenomenal universe with the help of the *Maya-shakti*—the inscrutable Power—that rests in Brahman and cannot exist independent of It. Nirguna Brahman is unchanging and yet it is the very foundation of relative existence. The Absolute is both a bridge and a dike. As the bridge It connects one being with another, and the present world with the future world. The individual soul is a microcosm. The totality of souls is a macrocosm like a forest being a collection of trees. Brahman is *Sutratma*, the Lord in the form of the thread which joins all through it. The thread is *prana*, the vital life force. *Prana* is verily Brahman. The mind is verily Brahman.* Let a man meditate on the mind as Brahman, says the *Chandogya Upanishad*. As a dike he keeps asunder these worlds to prevent their clashing together.

The eternal question which has arisen in the mind of man is, 'Who regulates and controls the events in the world?' In the course of meditation the answer which seers and sages received is that the controller is the Primordial Power. These seekers of truth entered the innermost recesses of their minds and found that in the world outside, as well as in the world inside, everything moves by that Power. Scientists in their analysis of gross physical matter and properties of the universe have found that Power is the root-cause of the universe. To comprehend it we have given different names to it: Maya, Prakriti, Saguna Brahman, Ishvara, Jagat-janani and so on. It is not ordinarily possible to think of the *nirakara*, the impersonal aspect of Brahman. As long as we have bodies we can think of a Personal God. *Upasana* or worship is a

* प्राणो वै ब्रह्म । मनो वै ब्रह्म । *Brihadaranyaka*, IV.i 3,6

mental activity in relation to Saguna Brahman. *Upasana* is uninterrupted meditation on an object of worship. Worship through a *pratika* or symbol is the idea of Brahman superimposed on a deity which represents the idea. This form of meditation leads to faith in the soul, or God as the doer of all actions.

In the Devi Sukta of the *Rig Veda*, Vakdevi, the Goddess of speech, says, 'I am the Empress of the whole universe. I am the Self of Brahman. I am the origin of the universe. I am all-pervading in the form of the universe'. In the *Rig Veda* this One is imagined as Aditi. Aditi is ever effulgent, Jagat-dhatri, Protectress of the Universe. Aditi means 'one who cannot be divided into parts'. Sri Ramakrishna asks us to adopt this attitude in relation to the Divine Mother. 'Mother I am the instrument and you are the player of the instrument. I am the room and you are the dweller in the room. I move as you move me. Not I, but you.' When we think of Maha-maya as the Eye of our eyes, *Prana* of our *pranas*, Mind of our mind, then we come near Her.

Sri Ramakrishna's conception of the Motherhood of God is Saguna Brahman, Brahman and His Shakti of the Upanishads. Shiva and Kali of the Tantras, Purusha and Prakriti of the Samkhya school. They are not two but are one like fire and its burning property, milk and its whiteness, a word and its meaning. Like the sea water and its foam, Brahman and His Shakti are indivisible, like Shiva and Kali or Purusha and Prakriti. Sri Ramakrishna says Chidatman and Chitshakti are one. When Prakriti is active it is Yoga-maya.

The Spiritual Discipline of Sri Ramakrishna

In the three books, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* there is a record of the spiritual disciplines and divine manifestation of Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation. Sri Ramakrishna worships the Divine Mother like a child and yearns for a direct vision of the Mother of the Universe. He feels the pangs of a child separated from his mother—'Do you exist?' This is his cry. Just when he rushes to seize the sword to put an end to his life unless the Divine Mother reveals Herself to him, he finds himself submerged in the effulgent ocean of consciousness and he feels the presence of the Divine Mother. Just as a lump of salt dissolves in the sea, his consciousness dissolves in the sea of the divine consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna practised spiritual discipline in the Tantrik, the Vaishnava and Vedantic forms according to the dictates of the Divine Mother. According to the Tantra the Divine Mother is the Creative Power and contains the universe in Her womb. All women are Her symbols. The awakening of the *kundalini* from *muladhara* and its union with Shiva in the *sahasrara* (from the lowest to the highest spiritual centre of consciousness in the body) is the consummation of Tantrik disciplines. In essence it is the blossoming of all the lotuses within the *sushumna* nerve-centre by the grace of the Divine Mother. Mother Kali is one of Her several forms. Meditation on Kali is the central discipline in Tantrik meditation. At the time of practising the Tantrik discipline Sri Ramakrishna one day saw a woman of exquisite beauty, about to deliver a child, emerge from the Ganga. He also saw that she gave birth to a child and nursed it. Soon after, she assumed a terrible form and seized the child between her jaws and, crushing it between them, re-entered the Ganga. Thus, Creation, Preservation, Destruction, the three aspects of the Divine Mother were revealed to Sri Ramakrishna as Pure Intelligence. As a snake may be superimposed on a rope, so the world is a superimposition, *vivarta*, on Brahman. 'By the mind alone It is to be perceived' (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* IV.iv.19) and 'That which cannot be thought of in the mind' (*Kena Upanishad* I.5) are not contradictory. Brahman is brought into contact only with the mental state but not with the help of another consciousness to reveal Itself because Brahman is self-luminous. Sri Ramakrishna told us again and again that Brahman and Shakti are One, indivisible and inseparable like fire and its burning power.

Sri Ramakrishna shows us that according to the Vaishnava scriptures God is not an intangible Absolute but Purushottama, the Supreme Person. There is only one Purusha in the universe. Man regards himself as woman in order to develop the most intense love for Krishna. Gradually the idea that he is a woman gives way to a higher idea that he is neither man nor woman but Impersonal Spirit. The Impersonal Spirit alone can enjoy real communion with the Impersonal God. Swami Vivekananda says that this *madhura-bhava* of God as practised by Sri Ramakrishna is a most difficult path and can be practised by very few.

When Sri Ramakrishna was asked by Tota Puri to practise the Vedanta discipline, Tota Puri appeared, as it were, summoned by the

Divine Mother. At the beginning of his practice of Vedantic discipline Sri Ramakrishna found that the Divine Mother was always before him; he used his discrimination as a sword and with it cleaved Her image into two. This is how his last barrier fell and his spirit soared beyond the relative plane. Sri Ramakrishna shows us that Maya, the mighty weaver of the garb of this universe is none other than Kali, the Divine Mother. She is the Primordial Energy. The world is the manifestation of the Divine Mother.

It may be noticed here that when Sri Ramakrishna practised different disciplines the Divine Mother asked him to remain in *bhava-mukha*. *Bhava-mukha* is a state between the Absolute and Relative planes of existence. It also bridges the gulf between the Impersonal and the Personal aspects of Reality. Sri Ramakrishna also says that only an Incarnation or an *Ishvarakoti*—a perfected soul—can constantly journey between the two planes of the Absolute and the Relative. This is the life of Sri Ramakrishna. At one time he appears as God Incarnate and at another time he is just like an ordinary human being, simple as a child.

Identification of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother

Sri Ramakrishna once declared to Swamiji that 'He who is Rama is also Krishna and is now Ramakrishna'. We have also the declaration of the Holy Mother that she is Sita and she is Radha. The real import of these declarations is the truth that Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother are the Divine Identities of Rama and Sita and Krishna and Radha. Sri Ramakrishna at the time of his spiritual practice and penance worshipped God as Hanuman, the ideal attendant. At that time Sri Ramakrishna had a vision of Sita who entered his body and disappeared with the words, 'I bequeath to you my smile'. This smile remained as his own. This vision of the Motherhood of God in the form of Sita permeated the whole being of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji said that Sita is the embodiment of purity and is our national goddess. Sri Ramakrishna says that the Holy Mother is Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge descended upon the earth to give mankind the knowledge of Brahman. He said that the 'Mother who was worshipped in the temple, the mother who had given birth to his body and the Holy Mother who was stroking his feet were one and the same Divine Mother'.

The culmination of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual disciplines in establishing the Motherhood of God was in the worship of the Holy Mother as *Shodashi* or Goddess of unparalleled beauty and the third of the ten Maha-vidyas. The surrender of all his spiritual practices and their fruits to the Holy Mother, at the end of the worship, made her his spiritual consort and power. The same Supreme Power of the Divine Mother which manifested Itself through Sri Ramakrishna also expressed Itself through the Holy Mother. Sri Ramakrishna invoked this prayer while worshipping the Holy Mother 'O Mother, embodiment of all Powers, O Tripurasundari, open the doors of perfection, make the body and mind of this one (the Holy Mother) pure and be revealed in her for the welfare of all'. Sri Ramakrishna surrendered his rosary at the lotus feet of the Holy Mother and made this salutation, 'O Thou Embodiment of Auspiciousness, Thou Doer of all work without obstruction, Thou Refuge of all, Thou Three-Eyed home of Shiva, Narayani, I offer salutations to Thee'. The worshipper and the worshipped became one in the Divine Mother on the transcendental plane. This is for the understanding of aspirants that Brahman and Shakti are in unison leading them from the unreal to the Real.

In the *Kena Upanishad* we read that Brahman saw the vanity of the gods who won a victory over the demons, and He appeared before them. But they did not recognize Him. The gods sent the god of fire and then the god of wind to find out who had appeared as the Yaksha, Spirit, before them. When the god of fire could not burn even a straw and the god of wind could not blow it away, Indra approached the Spirit. The Spirit vanished and in His place stood Uma of exceeding beauty. Uma told Indra, 'That Spirit was Brahman'. This is how the Divine Mother gave *Brahma-vidya* to the gods. In the same way Sri Ramakrishna gave to the world the Holy Mother to impart spiritual knowledge of the Supreme Reality with these words, 'You have to do many things. What has this one (pointing to himself) done? You will have to do much more'. After the departure of Sri Ramakrishna the Holy Mother said that he left her on earth to reveal the Motherhood of God.

The Holy Mother does not represent the Motherhood of God in the way that some cults conceive of divinity as having male and female counterparts. The Divine Identity of the Motherhood of God as incarnated in Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother is the most meaningful

manifestation of Brahman and Shakti. It is to be treasured in the innermost recess of our hearts. The Upanishads describe *Akasha*, the Boundless Sky, as the Father, and the Earth as the Mother, the two shells containing the Universe. Our scriptures speak of Ardha-narishvara—the God which is half male and half female—Brahman and Shakti. Sri Ramakrishna considers the idea of the Motherhood of God as the highest ideal in spiritual practice. Humanity originates in the Mother; it is liberated because of the Grace of the Mother; and the shelter and support of the universe is in the Divine Mother of the Universe.

The Holy Mother said that after attaining wisdom one sees that gods and deities are all *maya*. Everything comes into existence and disappears in time. Visions of gods and goddesses disappear at the dawn of knowledge. The aspirant then realizes that the Mother alone pervades the entire universe. This is the simple truth.

Swami Vivekananda described this Knowledge in this way. One morning he was looking at a snow-covered mountain range dazzling in the light of the dawn, and said, 'There, the height of the snow-covered mountain range is Shiva and the light that spreads over that is the Mother of the Universe'.²

References

1. *Bharate Shakti Puja* (Calcutta 1967), 54.
2. *Yuganayaka Vivekananda* (Calcutta 1969), III. 117.

I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself, 'I have a mother'.

Sri Sarada Devi

Indra and the Brahmin

SHIV DHAWAN

A BRAHMIN had a garden, colourful and bright,
which he guarded zealously day and night.
Once a stray cow slipping in, calmly began to graze,
a fact which sent the brahmin into a storming rage.

Forgetting that the cow was a beast regarded as sacred,
he belaboured it with a stick till—dead.
The neighbours were appalled upon hearing about the ghastly deed,
the brahmin had grievously sinned, they unanimously decreed.

“I have not sinned, ‘tis Indra, and this is how—
he is the presiding deity of the hand that killed the cow.”
Thus with glib talk the wily old brahmin justified the fact
denying his having had anything to do with the heinous act.

Indra in his heaven heard the argument, logically sound,
and assuming a human form, decided to have a look around.
Humbly approaching the proud arrogant owner of the garden,
he politely inquired, “Whose garden is this, O holy one?”

Chest puffed up, nose held high, the brahmin replied, “All mine,”
upon which Indra complimented, “You, sir, are indeed a gardener fine.”
This was like pouring water into a cauldron of boiling ghee,
for the brahmin now bragged about how he had planted every tree.

“Ah! so all this is your handiwork,” repeated Indra patiently,
“Yes” grinned the brahmin, “All this has been done by me.”
In a flash Indra revealed himself and said,
“Taking credit for everything else, why now dump this cow-killing
sin on *my* head?!”

Hence to act as you desire you are forever free,
but whatever path you choose, don’t shirk its corresponding
responsibility.

Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya of Sri Shankaracharya

M. R. YARDI

-3-

The Means of Valid Knowledge

VEDANTA HOLDS that the realization of Brahman is the highest aim of human life; for it is the only solvent of all ills, such as ignorance, which constitute the seeds of future life. All Vedantins acknowledge that Brahman is an eternally existent entity (Sat), which is pure, sentient, free by nature, all-knowing and all-powerful.¹ The word Brahman is derived from the root *brimh*, which means to grow, to expand and the suffix *man* added to it signifies an expanse without any limitation. The other characteristics of Brahman such as purity, eternality and so on follow as a matter of course from its limitlessness. Everyone instinctively feels that his Self exists and he never feels that he does not exist. Had there been no universal recognition of the existence of Self, everyone would have felt, 'I do not exist'. The existence of Brahman is established by the fact that it is the Self of all.²

If then Brahman is well-known in the world as the Self of all, is there any further need for realizing it? There is such a need, as conflicting views are held about its distinctive nature. Common people recognize that the Self is merely the body possessed of sentience, as do the materialists of the Lokayata school. Some others hold that the Self is different from the body, but is nothing more than the mind. One idealist school of Buddhists, the *Vijnanavada*, says that there is no such thing as the mind, but only momentary consciousness. Another idealist school of Buddhists, the *Shunyavada*, thinks that it is mere void. The Naiyayikas, logicians, the followers of the Nyaya School of thought, believe that there is a transmigratory Self, separate from the body and that it is both the agent of work (*kartri*), as well as the experiencer of its fruit (*bhoktri*). The Samkhyas hold that the Self is not the agent of work, but only the experiencer of its fruit. Among the Vedantins, the dualists believe that God is different from this individual Self and is all-knowing and all-powerful. The non-dualists, on the other hand,

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declare that He is not different from the individual Self.³ Since liberation is attained only through the realization of the true nature of Brahman, it is evident that if a person has a mistaken notion about the *nature* of Brahman, he is not likely to arrive at the final destination of human life.

Four Means of Knowledge

What then are the means available to us for attaining to the true knowledge of an object? According to the logicians, an object is known by four means of valid knowledge, *pramanas*. They are perception, inference, analogy and verbal testimony. Of these, perception is the foremost of all means of valid knowledge. In the *Nyaya-Sutra* I.i.4 Gautama points out that the contact between the sense-organ and the object is an essential factor in perception. Since Brahman is devoid of form, it cannot become the object of ordinary perception as defined by Gautama. But according to scriptural testimony, there is another kind of perception, which is not due to contact between any sense organ and object. It is stated in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* (iii.19), 'He sees without eyes and hears without ears'. Besides this divine perception, the religious experience of God by realized souls is also a kind of perception. When Narendra, as Swami Vivekananda was then known, asked Sri Ramakrishna whether he had seen God, straight came the reply, 'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense'. In regard to this kind of experience, the famous scientist Shroedinger says, 'We know, when God is experienced, this is an event as real as an immediate sense perception or as one's own personality'.⁴ Gautama's definition does not cover this kind of perception and has been criticized on that ground as too narrow. Gangesha, another Naiyayika, has given a different definition of perception: 'Knowledge which is not due to the instrumentality of another knowledge'. We need not enter into a discussion as to whether this is an adequate definition of perception; it would be sufficient for our purpose to bear in mind that besides sense perception, there is another kind of perception of God, which is supersensuous and available to God's chosen few.

The second means of valid knowledge is inference. The *Nyaya-Sutra* I.i.5 defines it as a specific form of knowledge preceded by the perception of 'the invariable relation between the *proban* and the *probandum*'. Inference is a powerful instrument to extend our

knowledge. It tells us about things which are beyond our range of perceptual knowledge. If we examine the *Brahma-Sutras* closely, we will find that they present inferences based on logical reasons as stated in them. The famous *sutra* I.i.2 (ब्रह्मस्य शब्दः) states that Brahman exists (inference), because from it ensues the origin, continuance and dissolution of the world (logical reason). Sri Shankara, however, disagrees with this view on the ground that the sole purpose of the *Brahma-Sutra* is to string together the Upanishadic sayings and thereby establish the existence of Brahman. If this were so, it was not necessary to follow it up by another *sutra*, I.i.3 of similar import: 'Brahman exists because this statement is based on the scriptures' (शास्त्रयोनित्वात्). Sri Shankara explains that since the scriptures were not alluded to in the second *sutra*, it became necessary to clarify this point in the third *sutra*. A study of the *Brahma-Sutra*, however, shows that Sri Badarayana has relied both on logical arguments (*yukti*) and the scriptures (*shabda*) in establishing the Vedanta doctrines and in refuting the tenets of other philosophical schools.

Analogy is defined in the *Nyaya-Sutra* I.i.6 as a means of valid knowledge of an object, derived through its similarity with another well-known object. For instance a person knows very well what a cow is and also knows that there is a species of animals called *gavaya*, a species of ox, but he has not seen it so far. He comes to know from a forester, who has seen a *gavaya*, that it resembles a cow in all respects except the dewlap. Later when he wanders in a forest and comes across an animal which has many points of similarity with the cow, he recollects what he had been told by the forester and knows that the animal before him is a *gavaya*. Sri Badarayana has also adopted this proof by analogy in some of his *sutras* as, for instance, when he says in *sutra* I.ii.7 that the all-pervading Brahman has a limited abode in the heart in the same sense as the all-prevading space has a limited abode in the eye of a needle.

Verbal testimony, which is the last means of valid knowledge, is defined in the *Nyaya-Sutra* II.i.68 as a communication from an authoritative person (*apta*). The Mimamsakas accept the authority of the Vedas on the ground that they are *apaurusheya*, of divine origin, and hence free from human error. According to Sri Shankara also, scriptures like the *Rig Veda*, containing all-embracing knowledge, cannot possibly emerge from any source other than the All-knowing God.⁵

Some of the later Naiyayikas also consider that the authoritative person referred to by Sri Gautama is none else than God. But the term *apta* seems to have been intentionally used by the author of the *Nyaya-Sutra* to include persons other than God. His commentator Vatsyayana, too, refers to the 'seers' of the Veda as authoritative. The authority of the Vedas, therefore, rests on the fact that these 'seers' had received a revelation from God and had spoken the Vedas through His inspiring grace.

Reasoning

In addition to these four *pramanas*, the Nyaya system recognizes reasoning or logical argument (*tarka*) as an accessory to them for the attainment of true knowledge. An example of how such a logical argument proceeds is given by Vatsyayana in his commentary on the *Nyaya-Sutra* I.i.1. The question under examination is whether birth is due to an impermanent cause or a permanent cause or an accident. Now if birth is due to an impermanent cause, then cessation of birth is possible when that cause is destroyed. But if birth is due to a permanent cause, then cessation of birth is impossible. Again, if there is no cause for it, there will be no cause for its cessation also, therefore there will be no cessation of birth. This is how a logical argument like this supports and reinforces the *pramanas* which prove that birth is due to karma.

The Possibility of Error in All These Methods

All these four means of knowledge are, however, subject to error; and reasoning is, more often than not, inconclusive. For instance, the perceptibility of the moon indicates that the moon exists and has magnitude, but it would be erroneous to conclude that its size is exactly what it appears to be to the naked eye because of its distance from the earth. This perceptual knowledge has, therefore, to be supplemented by inferential knowledge through mathematical calculations and by verbal testimony, for example, a reference to a text book on astronomy. Sometimes the means of valid knowledge converge and present a consistent knowledge of the object. When there is such a convergence of the means of valid knowledge (प्रमाण-प्रशिक्षण), then there is some assurance of our obtaining true knowledge of that object. But as Sri Shankara has pointed out, in his comment on *sutra* II.i.11, Brahman cannot be known through perception, being devoid of form, nor through inference, being devoid of any indicatory mark (*linga*).

We are, therefore, left with only verbal testimony and reasoning in order to ascertain the true nature of Brahman.

Sri Badarayana makes the point in *sutra* II.i.11 that reasoning lacks finality, (तर्काप्रतिष्ठानात्), and there is no way to deny it. It is often seen, Sri Shankara argues, that a logical argument of one adept is proved to be false by another adept and the argument advanced by the latter is shown to be illogical by somebody else. Intellect differs from person to person. So one cannot rely purely on a logical argument. In the case of true knowledge there should be no divergence of views, but the views based on reasoning are well-known for their mutual dissensions. How can the views based on reasoning be conclusive, when they do not lead to definite knowledge? If it is suggested that we should choose someone renowned for his genius and rely upon his reasoning, how does one choose from among the founders of different schools of philosophical thought such as Samkhya, Vaisheshika and so on, who are equally great and entitled to our respect? There is also no agreement amongst the logical thinkers that a particular doctrine, such as the Samkhya doctrine of Prakriti, is the true knowledge. In view of this it is evident that reasoning, independent of any other means, cannot lead us to definite knowledge of the ultimate Truth.

Testimony of the Scriptures

The Hindus have traditionally accepted the authority of the Vedas, including the Upanishads, in all matters connected with religion and philosophy. Sri Shankara explains the reason for this in his comment on *sutra* I.i.3 as follows: scriptures like the Vedas, expounding spiritual truths, cannot possibly emerge from any source other than the all-knowing One. For it is a well-known fact of experience that the author of a text dealing with multifarious subjects is more well-informed than what is apparent from the text itself. It, therefore, goes without saying that the Great Being is more omniscient than the Vedas, since the Vedas have emerged from Him effortlessly as though in sport like the breath of a man, as is stated in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (II.iv.10). 'Those that are called the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and so on, are like the breath of this Great Being'. However, as explained before, the Naiyayikas such as Gautama and Vatsyayana believe that Vedas were spoken, not by God, but by the Vedic seers. This latter explanation would be more acceptable to the modern mind and could

be reconciled with the former on the basis that the Vedic seers spoke the Vedas from the depth of their religious experiences under the direct inspiration of God. Saints all over the world in different times are known to have had this experience of God and have spoken of their experiences with one voice, irrespective of their religious faiths and background. In modern times in India Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi exemplified Vedanta in their lives, even though they had no occasion to make a regular study of the Upanishads. The Upanishadic seers have explained their religious experience in the form, 'I am Brahman', (अहं ब्रह्म अस्मि)। Schroedinger observes, '... the mystics of many centuries, independently, yet in perfect harmony with each other (somewhat like the particles in an ideal gas) have described, each of them, the unique experience of his or her life in terms that can be condensed in the phrase DEUS FACTUS SUM (I have[†] become God)'.⁶ This religious experience is not susceptible to scientific verification or explanation, but it is real and cannot be dismissed as a form of hallucination or makebelieve. We can therefore very well conclude that the authority of the Vedas rests on the religious experiences of the Vedic seers.

It would be wrong to regard the Upanishadic texts as dogmatic utterances without any logical basis. The Upanishadic seers unambiguously declare that they have realized the Supreme Truth. For instance, there is the ecstatic statement of sage Shvetashvatara, 'I have realized this Great Being of the colour of the sun, beyond darkness'. Sri Shankara describes this knowledge as 'knowledge dependent on the thing-in-itself' (वस्तु-तन्त्र-ज्ञान), the Supreme Reality. But the knowledge arising from inference or logical argument is dependent on the reasoning power of an individual (बुद्धि-बुद्धि-वशेन) and, so, it is subject to error. The Upanishadic texts are therefore authoritative in all matters relating to the Supreme Reality. The Smritis on the other hand, establish their doctrines with the help of logic and so have a limited role in this regard. Insofar as the Smriti texts are in agreement with the Shruti texts, they are acceptable for the purpose of corroboration and clarification of doubtful points. It is true that the Shruti text 'The Self is to be heard of, reflected upon' in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (II.xiv.5) enjoins reflection over and above hearing. But the implication of this passage is that reflection should follow the hearing of a Shruti text.

Sri Shankara admirably sums up his view on the validity of the *pramanas* and reasoning in his commentary on *sutra* I.i.2 as follows:

'It is for these reasons that the *Brahma-Sutras* refer to and discuss the Upanishadic passages. The realization of Brahman results from reflection on, and apprehension of, the meaning of the Upanishadic texts and not from any other means of knowledge. But where there are Upanishadic texts dealing with the origin of the world and other cognate matters, inference or reason need not be ruled out insofar as it supports and reinforces those texts'. Hence the quest of Brahman should start with the examination of the Upanishadic texts bearing upon Brahman with the help of reasoning which is not at variance with it.

References

1. *Shankara-Bhashya on the Brahma-Sutra*, I.i.1.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*
4. *What is Life? & Mind and Matter* (Cambridge 1967), 150.
5. *op. cit.*, I.i.3.
6. *op. cit.*, 93.

SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

(A Review Article)

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MY INITIAL reactions were negative—I had not even read through *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and here I was being asked to read the life of his illiterate disciple, Swami Adbhutananda. But, as a matter of fact, this gem of a book of 175 pages opened my mind. *Swami Adbhutananda, Teachings and Reminiscences* is an excellent brief introduction to the joyful personality of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples. This well translated book, neatly arranged into appropriate sections, with pleasing photographs, would make a handy book to delve into off and on. Adbhutananda was the monastic name given to Latu Maharaj, or Latu the monk, by Swami Vivekananda. *Adbhuta* means wonderful and it is indeed a marvel how Sri Ramakrishna's all encompassing love transformed Latu from his unthinking existence to that of an illumined seer, from whose lips dripped spiritual and philosophical truths with all

the precise clarity of Latu's simple nature. So this is a tale of not one but two spiritual souls—the Great Master Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Latu.

With amazing insight, Latu Maharaj compares Ramakrishna's love for him and the other disciples to the invisible magnetic pull of Lord Krishna. The milkmaids were aware of their mad love but did not know that it was God's deeper love that drew them to Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna's disciples realized the greatness of their Master's love and would try to prove that each was loved the most. Seeing their endless squabbling, Latu remarked with a bit of the Master's humour, 'The Lord alone knows whether you would have gone to court if he had left any property.' And why did they hanker so much for the Master's love? Because it was divine love. It was Ramakrishna himself who had said that divine love forgot all the ninety-nine bad turns and remembered a single good turn. Latu was nurtured in this all-forgiving absolute love.

Since Latu could neither learn to read and write nor change his accent, Sri Ramakrishna had no other option but to ensure Latu's spiritual progress through personal service to himself. For a full six years till the Master's death in 1886 Latu had the pleasure of looking after him and would scold him familiarly if he did not eat enough. Not even Sri Ramakrishna's consort, Sri Sarada Devi, was so privileged as to enjoy his company so constantly. The Master kept up educative conversations while Latu massaged his feet. Once he told Latu that Lord Rama was at that moment trying to pass an elephant through the eye of a needle. This meant that Ramakrishna was transmitting his spiritual powers to Latu through the mind and the massage.

Sri Ramakrishna did turn Latu's head with his unstinted love. Latu would not start his day without first seeing and saluting his Master. If the Master was not in the room, Latu would shout and Ramakrishna would have to go there so that Latu could open his eyes. When Latu lay exhausted on the ground after a holy dance, it was the Master who went lovingly round him over and over again with the sweetest of songs in praise of Rama. Ramakrishna even provided a mother's affection for this orphan cowherd boy of Bihar. Latu had to knead the flour for Sri Sarada Devi and carry messages to her. The Holy Mother felt drawn to this pure soul as she was also a villager and talked freely to him. Thus young Latu was one of the few male disciples who saw the Holy Mother unveiled and accompanied her on her

pilgrimages after the Master's passing away. As Hanuman was to Lord Rama, so was Latu to his Master. Even in the Master's absence his steady, unwavering faith drew many to Ramakrishna's Hanuman, that is Latu, for first hand accounts of the holy and godly couple. Latu was only too happy to oblige and relate his evergreen memories with all the freshness of the present.

Latu took his Master too literally at first. He would walk miles to bypass the smell of a wineshop. Ramakrishna taught him the trick of switching off the mind from all disturbing objects by just chanting the Lord's name. Remembrance of God was the Master's infallible remedy for many things.

In the separate 45-page section of the book under review, dealing with Latu Maharaj's teachings, one cannot but admire how Latu had studied the workings of his own mind and was able to present this psycho-philosophical subject so lucidly. He could now bring a bottle of liquor on his Master's request for the actor Girish Ghosh, who drank a lot, for Ramakrishna coaxed his devotees but never forced them. Latu watched the Master humbling the actor's ego by bowing lower and lower from the waist till Girish was constrained to return his salutations with a full length prostration on the floor. Ramakrishna saw the devotion behind Girish's abuse and blessed him. Girish was like the mythological serpent who could offer only poison to the dancing Krishna as he was born with poison and not nectar in his mouth. Latu learnt to accept both the bad and the good as God's creations and controlled his temper against disrespectful visitors. He found nothing wrong in staying with the tough and rowdy workers of a printing press for at least they were not learned hypocrites. Latu had come to see the oneness of God in all beings.

Sri Ramakrishna arranged for debates between Girish and Swami Vivekananda solely for the benefit of Latu. Latu had to report and was taken to task for not countering Vivekananda's statement that creation was a natural process. The Master firmly corrected the record in Latu's mind by saying that there could be no effect without a cause and there was a powerful being behind this creation. So though Sri Ramakrishna had earmarked Vivekananda as the leader of his disciples and called him a dazzling sun in whom the eighteen powers worked simultaneously, he expected Latu to be true to his own nature and the Master's teachings. No one could win an argument with the mighty mind of

Vivekananda, but, Latu was able to hold his own with his developing wisdom. Vivekananda would then call him Plato. It is Latu who made Vivekananda salute the ancient masters like Buddha and Shankara by drawing his attention to the fact that he had only followed in their footsteps in his brilliant missionary tours.

Latu readily agreed to become a monk but the funeral ceremony or the *shraddha* he performed for himself and his ancestors was peculiarly his own. Instead of the traditional Sanskrit *shlokas*, he invoked his forefathers thus; 'Father dear, do come here; take your seat; accept my worship; take this food and drink, and so on'. Only one who grasps the essence of any ritual can act so independently. After two years of conscious struggle Latu had conquered his evening sleep leaving the night free for prayers and meditation. Later, in the monastery established by Swami Vivekananda, he who kept awake at night could not join the group-meditation of the monks at 4 a.m. as he felt he had no control over his meditation—it was all in the Master's hands. Latu who, when young, was so fond of wrestling and exercise protested at the physical fitness routine of the monastery. He wanted to be free of all habits, fixed attitudes and customs, old or new. Neither Vivekananda nor Brahmananda could make him accept the trusteeship of the monastery. He did not want to get entangled in anything and be bound by it.

He was such a true monk that he even left the seclusion and security of the monastery. He started sleeping in the open as before till a devotee persuaded him to accept a corner of his house where, like a true *fakir*, he could come and go as he pleased. To Girish, Latu was the embodiment of the man of perfect equipoise of the second chapter of the *Gita*. Latu felt no obligation to anyone and he did not get attached to any place. If food came, he did not relish it; if it was not there he did not miss it. The costly Kashmir shawl which Vivekananda presented to him, he was ready to give away to a more appreciative devotee. When all the other disciples went to welcome Vivekananda on his surprise return, Latu continued meditating on the banks of the Ganga. Latu could never forget the God that had been in Sri Ramakrishna's body and felt his guidance and presence even after the Master's death. It was Sri Ramakrishna's love and Latu's loyalty that gave him the strength to continue in spiritual practices and other austerities right up to the end of his life in 1920. It was with constant meditation

that Latu saw more and more light and understood the Upanishads and other scriptures that the other disciples were poring over night and day. Because Latu had also experienced a similar working in his own mind and heart, he was able to explain them so easily in the difficult question and answer sessions. This spiritual wisdom did not come in a flash but over the years, to be precise, thirty-four years of continuous practices after Sri Ramakrishna's death.

Latu's teachings have all the flavour of original thinking. On the day of the worship of Shiva, Latu asked his devotee to eat rather than fast. If one is not used to fasting it can be disturbing and Latu preferred the devotee to have a full mind, heart and soul in worship. I like Latu Maharaj's simplified version of the three possible relationships with God. They are much easier to remember than Human's version. '“My God; I am God; I am God's;” the last one is the best as it does not tempt pride.'

When I read Latu's long discussion with two western women on the subject of philanthropy I cannot help smiling. Years before, Latu had jumped into the icy water of a lake in Kashmir when Vivekananda had sent him a betel roll through a young girl. Now it was Latu who cross-examined the women and asked them why they did social work. Latu had not only thought things through for himself but, like a true teacher, was making others also think for themselves. He told them that it was belief in God that sustained all the humanitarian activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. When one feels one is working not only for the welfare of others but for one's own spiritual welfare then one can work on a long term basis. When one works for God one neither builds up any resentments at the immense sacrifices involved nor does the ego get puffed up at success.

Sri Ramakrishna used to emanate bliss during his most painful last days. For he said, 'Let the body and disease look after each other; O mind, be happy.' Latu also did not feel the pain of his fatal gangrene and passed away in God-consciousness. We come to the end of Latu's life but not to the wonder wrought by his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Latu's life shines like an uncut diamond polished to spiritual perfection and is the CREST JEWEL of the Ramakrishna Order.

KALA MATHRANI